

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Protesters: Free 200 Haitians arrested on Florida coast!

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Cubans: 'We go to Africa to pay our debt to humanity'

BY JAMES HARRIS AND ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

ATLANTA—Imperialism's more than century-long exploitation of the African continent and its peoples "is the reason Cuba went to Africa. That's why Che went to Africa," said Víctor Dreke to an audience of more than 100 people at Clark Atlanta University. The Cuban revolutionary spoke there October 29 on "Cuba's Aid to the African Liberation Struggle."

Students were riveted by Dreke's talk as he spoke from his experience as a commander of the Cuban Revolution, who for nearly four decades has been involved in Cuba's internationalist solidarity with Africa.

Since the victory of the revolution on Jan. 1, 1959, he said, hundreds of thousands of Cubans have joined anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles in Africa, from Algeria to Guinea-Bissau to Angola. In 1965 he served as second in command under Ernesto Che Guevara of an internationalist combat mission in which 128 Cuban volunteers joined national liberation forces in the Congo.

Over a 13-year period in the 1970s and '80s a total of more than 300,000 Cuban combatants fought in Angola alongside Angolan and Namibian forces, repelling repeated assaults by the South Africa apartheid army and finally decisively defeating the invaders in 1988. Today Cuban doctors, **Continued on Page 11**

## Australia sugar farmers demand gov't relief from price slump

BY BRENDAN GLEESON AND RON POULSEN

INGHAM, North Queensland—The sugar mill owners "want farmers to work longer and harder and to shorten the harvest season" said sugarcane grower Max Menzel at a protest meeting of 600 people here on October 9. The meeting was one of a number organized by Queensland farmers to demand relief from the slump in sugar prices and to protest government plans to carry out a new round of deregulation of the industry.

The meetings have attracted thousands in towns and communities up and down the state's "cane coast." A group of farmers who call themselves the "gang of eight" have initiated the gatherings and presented an eight-point plan to those in attendance.

The plan demands that the government set a minimum payout to the farmers of A\$300 per metric ton of sugar (A\$1 = US 55 cents). It also demands the maintenance of the existing centralized selling system, organized through Queensland Sugar Limited—a body that is subject to government oversight. This setup is targeted by the Liberal-National Party government **Continued on Page 4**

## Transit workers confront New York City's real 'rats' Unionists to Transit Authority: 'Find the money!'

BY SETH DOBBINS

NEW YORK—Flanked by two giant inflatable rats representing the Transit Authority bosses, some 10,000 members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 turned out in the rain for a rally and march here October 30 as part of their fight for a contract. They demanded improved health benefits, sick leave, and wages, as well as an end to an abusive disciplinary system. The current three-year contract, which covers 34,000 transit workers and 20,000 retirees, expires December 15.

In the face of claims by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and city officials that union demands can't be met on account of the "budget deficit," TWU members responded defiantly, "Find the money!"

Blowing whistles and horns and beating drums in front of the Transit Authority's headquarters in midtown Manhattan, the crowd responded enthusiastically to speeches by union officials with chants of "Second class no more!" Some 10,000 unionists took part in the rally.

Many workers interviewed at the rally said health care was one of the main issues in their fight. The union has accused the MTA, a state agency, of holding back money from the employer-funded Health Benefit Trust, saying it is already \$30 million in the red and in danger of running out. In addition, the Transit Authority is demanding a medical plan with higher prescription costs, deductibles, and co-payments.

"I get prescription drugs and they want to take that away when I retire," said Sandy



Militant/Martin Koppel

Some 10,000 transit workers rally in Manhattan October 30. TWU members are fighting for their health benefits, for improved wages, and to end hated disciplinary system.

Olson, a train operator on the No. 1 subway line. "I think I've worked hard enough to get adequate medical coverage," said Olson, an 18-year union veteran.

Tony, who works as a mechanic on city buses, explained that the lack of prescription coverage for retirees effectively means that "you can't retire."

Many signs in the rally read, "Five sick days are not enough."

A tollbooth operator who did not give her name reported that they are demanding 12 sick days a year. "We have to come to work sick just to feed our families," she said. She was also concerned that the current contract **Continued on Page 7**

## U.S. bombers turn more of Iraq into no-man's land

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. Navy planes overflying the "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq have been conducting practice bombing runs in the area. At the same time the Pentagon has given U.S. pilots the authority to attack a broader array of targets, including command and control centers, communications relay centers, and radar stations.

The U.S. military's objective is to knock out Iraq's air defense network prior to an aerial assault.

"You go through everything you would do...as if you were actually dropping the weapons," stated Comdr. Jeffrey Penfield, who leads the VFA-115 strike fighter squadron that flies over southern Iraq. The squadron, equipped with the latest generation of

strike bombers, is based on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* stationed in the Arab-Persian Gulf.

U.S. and British aircraft have patrolled the "no-fly" zones over northern and southern Iraq since they were imposed by imperialist forces after the 1990-91 Gulf War. Over the past couple of months the Pentagon has stepped up the number of bombings of targets there.

### Imperialist naval blockade is reinforced

Washington has also tightened the imperialist naval blockade of Iraq. Under the overall command of Vice Adm. Timothy Keating of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, U.S., British, and Australian ships are more aggressively enforcing the embargo on Iraq's

shipping lanes.

These forces are boarding twice as many boats as last year and have stationed an Australian warship inside Iraq's territorial waters.

A *New York Times* article described how Australian sailors boarded approaching vessels as U.S. Sea Hawk helicopters hovered overhead with their .50-caliber machine guns aimed at the crews.

Almost 320 vessels, some of them small boats, were boarded in September alone. "What was a blockade that was probably only 30 to 40 percent effective previously is now in the 80 to 90 percent range of effectiveness," said Commodore Peter **Continued on Page 2**

## N.Y. event boosts Pathfinder Fund; big push is needed to reach goal

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The 11-week campaign to raise \$105,000 for the Pathfinder Fund has made important progress in the last week, reaching 66 percent of the goal. It remains a challenge for supporters of the fund in every area, however, to raise the \$35,000 that is needed to reach the international goal by the end of the drive on November 17.

The Pathfinder Fund received a big boost at the November 2 public meeting in New York, "Campaigning for Communism, Responding to Political Openings: The Struggle against Imperialism Today." More than 370 people attended the program,

which featured Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and other speakers. Many in the audience made contributions, totaling \$4,882. Others increased earlier pledges or made new ones that added up to \$4,040.

Building on this success is the key to reaching the goal in the campaign. *Militant* editor Martin Koppel, who made the fund appeal at the New York meeting, urged those present not only to make a contribution but to help raise the remaining funds pledged in their local areas. Doing so, he said, "is well within reach, but only if special steps **Continued on Page 6**

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# U.S. planes widen Iraqi no-man's land

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Sinclair, the Australian officer who commands the blockading flotilla.

"We are operating continually inside Iraq's territorial waters," he added. "The smugglers know there is a big gray warship blocking the river before they even set sail." The *Melbourne*, an Australian frigate, is stationed just six miles off Iraq's coast, well within the country's 12-mile-wide territorial waters.

"The combination of Australian bravado, advanced United States military technology and indirect Iranian cooperation has enabled Washington virtually to close the tap on oil smuggled through the gulf," reported the *Times*. The naval embargo has also virtually halted Iraq's export of dates, adding to the devastating impact of the decade-long UN embargo.

U.S. military commanders report that coastal units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard are lending assistance to the imperialist actions. The *Times* noted that the Iranian government—dubbed a member of the "axis of evil" by U.S. president Bush in January—might be acting "to deprive the Americans of a reason to venture into Iran's territorial waters."

## Buildup continues

Alongside these aggressive actions, the U.S. military is continuing to build up its forces in the Middle East and broader region.

The Navy's Military Sealift Command, which is in charge of transporting armor and military supplies for the U.S. armed forces, is planning to charter a vessel to move 550 containers of ammunition and explosives from the U.S. East Coast to four ports in the Red Sea and Gulf. Pentagon officials say that the weaponry will be unloaded between November 19 and December 3.

Debates over a U.S.- and British-sponsored resolution in the Security Council have not impeded this buildup. In these exchanges, the French government, in particular, has continued to express disagreements with Washington, in part to stake its own nationalist claim in the coming war.

Senior *Times* columnist William Safire pointed to the place of the UN in these developments, and the concerns of the French

imperialists, in his October 28 column. He described "UN coloration for our"—that is, Washington's—"overthrow of the outlaw [Iraqi] regime" as "useful, though not necessary."

After an imperialist victory, wrote Safire, "Britain would replace France as the chief European dealer in Iraqi oil and equipment.... The government of New Iraq... would reimburse the U.S. and Britain for much of their costs in the war."

The "New Iraq" government, added the conservative columnist, would also "repudiate the corrupt \$8 billion 'debt' that Russia claims was run up by Saddam. Even more troubling to [Russian president] Putin will be the heavy investment to be made by the U.S. and British companies that will sharply increase the drilling and refining capacity of the only nation whose oil reserves rival those of Russia, Saudi Arabia and Mexico."

The October 30 *Guardian*, a British newspaper, reported that at least one British oil baron does not share Safire's confidence that companies in the United Kingdom will come out ahead in a U.S.-led assault on Iraq.

Lord Browne, the chief executive of British Petroleum, the biggest company in the United Kingdom, "has warned Washington not to carve up Iraq for its own oil companies in the aftermath of any future war," reported the newspaper. Browne has "impeccable political connections," it noted, including a close relationship with Prime Minister Anthony Blair.

"The thing we would like to make sure, if Iraq changes regime, is that there should be a level playing field for the selection of oil companies to go in there," said the industrialist.

## El Salvador strikes block privatization of health care

BY RÓGER CALERO

A proposed plan to dismantle and privatize the national health care system in El Salvador was pushed back after six weeks of strikes and protests by doctors and employees of the country's social security system. Salvadoran president Francisco Flores



Navy fighter jets sit on deck of U.S. aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* off coast of Iwo Jima, Japan, during training exercises. Warship provided a launching pad for helicopters in assault on Afghanistan and its crew awaits orders for attack on Iraq.

Browne "believed there was plenty of oil and gas waiting to be discovered in Iraq and that BP should be in prime position to capitalize because it had found most of the country's oil before being thrown out in the 1970s," reported the *Guardian*.

Meanwhile, some 400 troops from the U.S. Central Command are expected to arrive shortly in Djibouti to establish a headquarters for the 800 U.S. troops, including

Special Operations forces, already in the East African country or on ships offshore.

Announcing this move at an October 29 news conference, Gen. Thomas Franks, the commander of U.S. forces in the Arab-Persian Gulf, said, "we have security relationships or engagement opportunities—however you choose to think about them—in a great many countries in the Horn of Africa: Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen."

announced October 31 that he would withdraw the proposal and would not veto legislation passed by the national assembly—in response to the protests—prohibiting the sell-off of the public health system.

Some 1,500 workers from hospitals and clinics covered by the Social Security Institute took part in escalating strikes and street protests beginning September 18. The action was extended when doctors and nurses from public hospitals and clinics joined a 72-hour strike October 31, paralyzing seven of the country's largest public hospitals. The day before Flores announced his retreat, 10,000 people marched in San Salvador, the capital, blocking major boulevards and entrances to the city.

A week before, tens of thousands of trade unionists, transportation workers, students, and peasants paralyzed the city in a protest rejecting the government's plan and demanding legislation barring privatizations. Students and faculty at the University of El Salvador emptied their classrooms to join the march, canceling 80 percent of classes. "The state and the government are consti-

tutionally obligated to guarantee health care for Salvadorans," said Ricardo Alfaro of SIMETRIS, the union that organizes doctors in the social security system. "The government blames us for abandoning patients, when what we are doing is fighting so that the population won't really be abandoned with the privatization," he said, responding to the government's campaign against the strikers. The government declared the strike "constitutionally illegal" October 28, saying it affected essential services.

Placed on the defensive, Flores stressed that hospitals and clinics within the system would not be sold, and that only certain services will be transferred to private physicians and hospitals. He has promoted the plan as a way to "democratize" the preventive health care system, offering to extend coverage to domestic workers, farm workers, and children not covered by the government programs.

Alfaro noted that 30 percent of the population has no access to health care, and said that number would increase if the social security system is privatized.

## THE MILITANT

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# Textile strikers in Scotland fight bosses' concession demands

BY ANNE MACDONALD

HAWICK, Scotland—"It's like going back to 1880 when they expect you to tip your cap and do anything they want," said Brian Hosie about the demands of bosses at Barrie Knitwear. Hosie was one of about 40 pickets on the early shift outside the plant October 23, marking the second strike action taken by the 170 workers here.

Fortified by barbecued breakfast and coffee, pickets "welcomed" the bosses to work and elicited support from passing cars and vans. "There's more morale here on the picket line than in there," reported Doreen Purves. "They think they can just walk all over us," said another striker, Cathie, "but they've got a shock."

Workers had voted to take the action in pursuit of a 5 percent pay demand, which the company refused to discuss until workers agreed to a wide-ranging attack on their union-won gains and working conditions. Following a previous two-day strike, workers were issued 90-day notices giving them until January 1 to sign up to the company's demands or be fired, with no redundancy money (severance pay). The company could then rehire the workers under the new conditions.

Dawson International, the parent com-

pany, is seeking to tear up an agreement that guarantees workers four days work per week, an important wage safeguard in a highly seasonal industry. The company also wants to be able to force workers to work at its Ballantyne Cashmere plant in Innerleithen, 28 miles away, send workers home without pay if their machines break down, and increase piece rates, which would result in wage cuts.

The bosses called talks for the day prior to the strike. Union steward Rob Redhead reported that they offered no concessions, insisting the new agreement must be signed. "This 90-day notice period is meant to be for consultation, but the company isn't consulting," he added.

The workers, members of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union (GMB), are now moving toward balloting for strike action over the new conditions. "We have no choice" but to strike, said Purves. "If we lose, we'll be on three days, and you can't live on that money."

Workers on the picket line discussed how to make the action effective. Many pointed to the need to take stronger strike action than before, noting that bosses can find ways to cope with a one or two days action. At a



Militant/Spiros Andreas

Textile workers on picket line at Barrie Knitwear in Hawick, Scotland. Strikers are standing up to company demand that the guarantee of four days work per week be ended.

meeting of 90 workers the day after the notices were issued, they also decided to organize a march through Hawick to enlist support from other working people.

"If we lose this, everyone in Hawick will lose," said Shona, who has worked at Barrie since being forced two years ago to transfer

there from another mill then owned by Dawson.

Many mill workers in the town are aware that other textile companies are ready to follow Dawson's lead. Union steward Redhead reported that "bosses at Lyle and Scott have already said that they will do it."

Pickets said they have received support from former mill workers and retired workers as well as workers at other mills. While *Militant* reporters were at the picket line, a postal worker due to deliver Barrie's mail honored the picket line and spent a few minutes in a friendly chat with strikers.

Workers at Ballantyne Cashmere, report they are waiting to see the outcome of the Barrie dispute. Ballantyne insisted workers there sign the same agreement as the one bosses want to impose on workers at Barrie. According to Redhead, half the workers at Ballantyne signed, half did not. Afterward, they were all still given 90-day notices. The workers at Ballantyne are not covered by the four-day week agreement, and have been working only three days a week for 10 weeks.

How to reach out to these workers is another question trade unionists at Barrie are discussing. "They're trying to play one off against the other," said Cathie.

Workers are planning another meeting to discuss their position and where to go from here.

## Cuban representative speaks in New Mexico

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL

LAS VEGAS, New Mexico—"Social justice and human dignity can be achieved: that's what socialism means to us in Cuba," declared Fernando Garcia Bielsa, the featured speaker in a public meeting held here at Highlands University October 22.

Garcia Bielsa is the first secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington. "When the revolution triumphed, we extended our solidarity to the rest of the world. Cuba contributed to the national liberation of African countries. Today there are 6,000 African students in Cuba," he added.

The Cuban diplomat was welcomed by the mayor of Las Vegas, Henry Sanchez, and by a representative of the president of Highlands University. A city official from Springer, New Mexico, was also present. Sixty people attended the event, including 10 students from The United World College in the city.

Other panelists at the meeting included Miguel Angel and Arnold Trujillo, both from the Las Vegas, New Mexico/Banes, Cuba, Sister City Association and *Peloteros por la Paz* (Baseball Players for Peace), and Louis Head of the Cuba Research and Analysis Group (CRAG) of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"Cuba has not only faced hostility in the economic arena," Garcia told the meeting, referring to the U.S. embargo against the island. He recounted the early history of United States hostility toward revolutionary Cuba. "The Missile Crisis of 1962 was not over missiles. The U.S. government's goal was to

bring about the overthrow of the Cuban government after their failure in the Bay of Pigs in 1961. The October Crisis was a new pretext to justify military intervention.

"From 1960 to 1965 we fought off gangs of *contras* in Cuba organized and trained in Florida," Garcia said. He recalled how 100,000 young people volunteered to eradicate illiteracy and raise the general level of culture in Cuba during those opening years of the revolution.

Washington has continued to carry out a relentless campaign to overturn the revolution. The first victims of a U.S.-sponsored attack on a plane were the Cuban Olympic team, whose aircraft was bombed in 1976, he said. They were all killed by a U.S.-trained counterrevolutionary, "Orlando Bosch, who now walks free in the streets of Miami."

In pointing to more than 40 years of hostility toward the Cuban people by Washington, he condemned U.S. president George Bush's remarks about using "preemptive strikes." He told the audience that when Washington speaks of "preemptive," it is saying it has the right to attack other countries as it has in the past.

Trujillo and Angel spoke on the sister city projects between U.S. and Cuban cities. Trujillo enumerated 15 cities across the United States that have sister cities in Cuba. Nine other U.S. cities want to do the same, he said. Through the sister city project and *Peloteros por la Paz*, "we have sent shipments of donated baseball equipment to the youth in Banes and we're working on the

next one," explained Angel.

Trujillo also announced the Cuba Medical Scholarship Program. Through this project students of oppressed nationalities in the United States are studying medicine at the Latin American School of Medical Sciences in Havana free of charge. Two of the six students participating in this six-year program from Highlands University were present and will depart for Havana in December.

Louis Head, of CRAG, spoke on the role of his organization in "facilitating academic, cultural, and informational exchanges between the two countries, including journalist assistance and applied research." Head announced a public meeting on Cuba that will take up the fight to defend the five Cuban political prisoners. The event will take place on the same weekend as the National Network on Cuba's national conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 16.

## Farmers win suit to end pork tax

BY JOE SWANSON

DES MOINES, Iowa—Working farmers scored a victory October 25 with the elimination of a tax on hogs used to fund an advertising campaign for "the other white meat" promoted by wealthy farm interests.

In a lawsuit against the U.S. secretary of agriculture, a federal district judge, Richard Enslin, ruled that the fee, generally known as the "pork checkoff," violated the hog farmers' right to free speech and association. "Forcing men and women to pay for messages they detest," he said, "is at the bottom unconstitutional and rotten."

Several farm and rural groups in the Midwest formed the Campaign for Family Farms (CFF) in 1998 to fight to end the pork tax. In a national petition drive in 1999, more than 19,000 hog farmers signed a petition calling for a national vote.

In September 2000 hog farmers voted down the tax by a 53 percent margin in a referendum in which more than 30,000 participated.

Under the checkoff, hog farmers are required to pay 45 cents for every \$100 of pork sales to the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC). The tax brings into the trade association up to \$50 million a year. The NPPC, as a trade group of "pork producers" run primarily by wealthy farmers, receives 91 percent of checkoff funds. On Feb. 28, 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) overturned the results of the referendum vote.

At a March 26, 2001 news conference in Washington, farmers' groups presented an open letter to President George Bush say-

ing the pork checkoff "has not helped independent hog farmers stay in business, hog prices to farmers have steadily fallen since the pork tax was started in 1986, and it uses hog farmers' money against them to pay for research and media to promote factory farms and agribusiness corporations."

After the USDA overturned the referendum vote, CFF filed a lawsuit against the Agriculture Department including a specific claim that the mandatory pork checkoff violates hog producers' constitutional rights by infringing on the First Amendment.

From 1990 to 1999 more than 130,000 hog farmers went out of business, according to Agriculture Department statistics, leaving only 98,000.

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, large hog farms—operations with 5,000 hogs or more, which were unknown in the early 1990s—have increased their share of the national swine market. In 1994, some 37 percent had more than 2,000 hogs, whereas in 2000, 79 percent had more than 2,000 hogs.

Larry Ginter, a hog farmer in Rhodes, Iowa, since 1965 and active against the pork tax, explained that the successful fight by hog farmers that led to the federal court ruling "should give small hog farmers some justice as it is a strong ruling for our constitutional rights."

Ginter expected the USDA to appeal the ruling and added, "The fight is not over." He stressed that workers, who are the main consumers, and farmers who raise hogs should join together against the meatpacking bosses and agribusiness corporations.

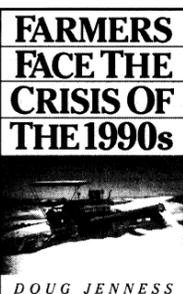
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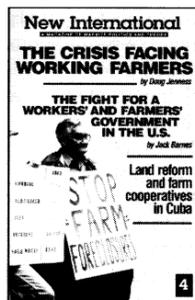


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# Cane farmers in Australia protest low prices

continued from front page  
for deregulation.

A third point backs the processing of ethanol from sugar and proposes that the government set an official target for its production, to be set as a proportion of the petrol currently used in Australia.

Menzel was one of a number of working farmers at the October 9 meeting who spoke tellingly of the untenable situation they face. Small farmers are threatened by the crisis in the industry by the government's moves, and by the greed of the millers. "They're squeezing us to death," he said. He noted that in the area around his farm "the mill is already pushing for people to work at night."

Before early state Labor Party governments enacted laws to stabilize prices and quotas, Menzel added, "The growers were at the mercy of the mills." Following the removal of a number of these protections in 1996, he said, all farmers "have left in the legislation" are binding production contracts "and the single desk [selling structure]. We have to fight for that, it is nonnegotiable."

Bernie O'Shea, who helped organize the meeting, reported a "bleak day" in the town of Mossman. The National Australia Bank had threatened to close the local sugar mill, he said, unless growers put up \$3.5 million.

## Cane growers face huge debts

Most cane growers in Queensland State are classified as being either small—with an annual cane crop of 5,000 to 6,000 metric tons—or medium, producing 6,000 to 20,000



Farmer Barrie Smith, right, talks about crisis facing cane growers in Australia as the slump in sugar prices, massive debts, and bad seasons threaten thousands of farms. At left is Militant reporter Ron Poulsen on fact-finding trip to Queensland.

tons. On average, small producers rely on off-farm jobs for half their income.

Queensland farmers in all agricultural sectors owe a total of A\$6.6 billion to the banks, which averages out to A\$370,000 per farmer. Some 70 percent of these debtors are reportedly having trouble paying the interest on these loans. Of these, indebted cane growers are the most vulnerable.

Since the government relaxed retail price

controls and carried out other "reforms" in 1996, the price received by the farmers has fallen by one-quarter. Meanwhile, the supermarket price of sugar has shot up 26 percent. Adding to farmers' woes has been a simultaneous 40 percent average drop in the value of their land. Farmers reported that at least six farms near this rural town have closed in the past 12 months.

Three exceptionally wet seasons between

1999 and 2001, followed this year by the worst drought in 50 years, have exacerbated farmers' problems.

"Growers can ride through one or two bad seasons, but four in a row has an impact," said Ian Ballantyne, the general manager of the Australian Cane Growers Council, in the September 9 *Sydney Morning Herald*. As many as 2,000 of Queensland's 7,000 sugarcane farms could be forced out of operation, he said.

Farmers also face the consequences of the sharp increase in international competition as more sugar has come onto world markets, frequently colliding with local protectionist barriers. They point out that the price for Australian export sugar has plunged from \$345 a ton in the early 1990s to about \$250 today. Such prices, they say, have been further undercut by the huge Brazilian crop, the price of which has plummeted in the wake of a 60 percent devaluation of the country's currency over the past year.

The organizers of the Ingham meeting distributed a pamphlet noting that the commercial value of raw sugar production in Australia has dropped from A\$1.94 billion in 1994-95 to an estimated A\$1.35 billion in 2002. The current world price for sugar is just under US 6 cents per pound, or 50 percent below the level needed for Australian cane growers to meet costs and survive, it stated.

Various protectionist ideas were presented at the meeting. O'Shea backed extending the proposed sugar levy to imported sugar products to "ensure that there was no discrimination against our local manufacturers." In addition, there were proposals for direct price subsidies to farmers.

Most sugar markets in the advanced capitalist countries are heavily protected, stated the pamphlet. It reported that growers in the countries of the European Union (EU) receive US 28 cents a pound for sugar, while their counterparts in the United States garner 17 cents. Nearer Australia, the EU pays Fiji about double the world price for half its sugar. Cane growers in Queensland are alone in receiving the bare world price, the "group of eight" pamphlet claimed.

The meeting organizers are now discussing calling a protest in Townsville. They have also organized pickets of meetings of the federal cabinet in Cairns and of the Queensland parliament in Townsville.

*Brendan Gleeson is a member of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union. Ron Poulsen is a member of the Maritime Union of Australia.*

# UNITE members press strike in Miami

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS  
AND ERIC SIMPSON

OAKLAND PARK, Florida—"We'll stay on the picket line either till we go back union or until this company shuts down," said Aurelia López, a sewing machine operator on strike against Point Blank Body Armor. Her comments expressed the determination of the 200 workers who struck this company August 9 to press their fight for union recognition.

López spoke to *Militant* reporters during an expanded picket line outside the garment manufacturing plant here October 21. About 70 workers and their supporters rallied that morning at the plant's main gate during the 7:00 a.m. shift change. In addition to the more than 50 Point Blank strikers, members of Jobs with Justice, United Transportation Union, and the Carpenters union took part.

"On your feet to struggle; Never on your knees!" and "So-so-solidarity!" chanted the strikers, as Point Blank employees who have crossed the line and replacements the company has hired since August 9 entered the plant.

Prudencio López explained that they walked off the job two and a half months ago after the company fired a third person in response to the workers' fight to win representation by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). Point Blank, located in the Miami area, employs 375 people and is one of the major garment shops in South Florida. It makes bulletproof vests and riot gear sold to the U.S. military and police forces.

In September, the NLRB announced its decision to file an unfair labor practices complaint against Point Blank. After a two-month probe of the plant, the board found

that the company illegally retaliated against union supporters by firing three workers and threatening low wages, a loss of benefits, and a plant shutdown. The agency dismissed company allegations that UNITE picketed illegally and threatened employee representatives.

"We've also stood up against the attempt by the company to take down our tents," said López. He was referring to the August 18 order by Oakland Park city officials that strikers must take down their tent outside the plant on the pretext their presence "impedes the flow of water." The workers refused to obey the order and the city has not made a move to enforce it since then.

The NLRB filed its complaint against Point Blank with an administrative law judge, and a hearing has been set for December 2.

A week later, the company sued UNITE officials, claiming they have defamed Point Blank by spreading false and misleading information about the safety of the bulletproof vests it has produced since the strike began. In addition to Bruce Raynor, UNITE's president, and Scott Cooper, who has been overseeing the union's organizing effort at Point Blank, the suit names as a defendant Sam Cabral, president of the International Union of Police Associations.

According to Mervilus Jean Baptiste, a UNITE organizer who now is part of the Point Blank fight, union officials have argued that the bulletproof vests the company has produced since August 9 are not safe. Ten members of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee signed a letter to the company in July expressing concern about the working conditions at Point Blank. The New York Police Department decided to return 5,000 vests to Point Blank, reaching a deal

with the company later to send back 1,000 of these for replacement.

Meanwhile, on the picket line the strikers have been discussing the issues that convinced them to seek union representation and later to organize the walkout.

Carlos Abriceño, who was a floor worker for seven months before going on strike, said that he is sticking with the union because of "the injustice inside there, what they pay, without water, without air conditioning. They treat workers like animals. It's like a prison, but prisoners at least have water."

Abriceño said he started work at \$5.75 per hour and received a raise to \$6 within a few months. He pointed to another worker who was "still making \$6.50 an hour after seven years with the company! It's against this injustice I am fighting, more than for myself!"

## Librarians and teachers in Canada increase orders of Pathfinder titles

BY MARY ELLEN MARUS

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—School librarians and teachers have ordered a number of Pathfinder titles in British Columbia since supporters of the revolutionary publisher have stepped up their sales calling and visiting.

The supporters undertook these increased efforts as part of the international campaign to boost the circulation of the revolutionary publisher's titles. Launched in September, the campaign has centered on promoting and selling Pathfinder's newest book, *October 1962: The 'Missile' Crisis as Seen from Cuba* by Tomás Díez Acosta. North American participants in this efforts aimed to reach a total of 250 visits—discussions with buyers at stores and libraries—by mid-October.

In Vancouver some 25 have been made so far, half of which involved discussions with high school librarians. Of the 50 books sold to bookstores and libraries, 20 have been to high schools.

Among the titles ordered by librarians are *To Speak the Truth: Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End* by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, *Palestine and the Arabs' Fight for Liberation* by Fred Feldman and Georges Sayad, *Fascism and Big Business* by Daniel Guerin, and the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Several librarians have also suggested that Pathfinder representatives take the books to curriculum conferences that are attended by many teachers. Taking advantage of this advice, volunteers set up a daylong litera-

ture table at the British Columbia Social Studies Teachers Conference in October. Among the several hundred people who attended the event, dozens of teachers were interested to see titles on 20th century history and politics. Several were interested in using *New International no. 7*, featuring "The Opening Guns of World War III" by Jack Barnes, and *Palestine and the Arabs' Fight for Liberation* in their courses.

Books by Malcolm X and Che Guevara speaking directly to young people were prominently displayed and proved attractive. Pathfinder's practice of presenting major revolutionary leaders in their own words was a strong selling point.

One teacher from the district of 100 Mile House in the interior of British Columbia was enthusiastic about *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* as a possible aid in classes on the emergence of the movements for women's suffrage and more recent struggles for women's liberation. A number signed up for Pathfinder catalogs and recommended future visits to their school librarians.

The volunteers have also notched up some successes in sales efforts at bookstores. Having sold 20 Pathfinder books over the past year, one grocery and video store owner asked the campaigners to provide a special book rack to display the publisher's titles. As they installed the rack and hung a promotional poster in the store's front window, a customer perused the catalog and decided to buy three titles.

*Steve Penner contributed to this article.*



Point Blank workers rally in October in Oakland Park, Florida, after 10 weeks on strike.

# From Queensland to Harlem, socialists drive for sub goals

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* are entering the final stretch of the international subscription and book sales drive in a good position to reach and surpass the goals.

The challenge now facing supporters of the socialist press is to bridge the substantial gap that exists between the goals adopted for sales to unionists in the garment, textile, meatpacking plants, and coal mines, and the results so far. Immediate attention is needed with a plan to talk to co-workers and other unionists about renewing their subscriptions, introducing others to the paper, and spending some time with co-workers off the job to dig into the political questions raised in the paper.

Kari Sachs, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Minnesota, has shown the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* to a number of her co-workers in the lunchroom of GFI American, the meatpacking plant where she works in Minneapolis.

One worker, who is originally from Guatemala, listened to Sachs's talk about the recent contract victory at Dakota Premium Foods, a slaughterhouse in neighboring South St. Paul, and asked, "Why can't we do the same thing here?" After showing the *Militant's* coverage of this union victory around the lunchroom two people decided to subscribe to *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Later she showed the same article to a fat trimmer. He too was convinced he needed the *Militant* in order to follow important union struggles, like the several year fight at Dakota Premium. A fourth co-worker signed up for a subscription after having a similar discussion with Sachs.

## Campaigning for communism

The Socialist Workers campaign in New York took to the streets November 3, two days before the elections. The regular Sunday campaigning was beefed up by young socialists from several areas of the country who were in New York. They had come to attend a public meeting the day before, on "Campaigning for communism, responding to political openings; the struggle against imperialism today."

A dozen young socialists set up two tables at a bustling intersection on 125th Street in Harlem. They took turns speaking through a bullhorn in English and Spanish while standing on a milk crate. As they spoke, others handed out campaign leaflets and sold the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. At times a half dozen people gathered around to look at books by revolutionary leaders.

"I don't agree with everything on your campaign flyer," said a woman who stopped to listen to the socialists. "But I'm sure glad you're here today." Others signed up for more information about the communist movement and the Con-

gress of Latin American and Caribbean Studentstaking place November 29-December 2 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Two people picked up subscriptions to the *Militant*, one to *Perspectiva Mundial*, and several bought books.

Unlike the Democratic and Republican Party candidates who end their campaigns on election day, socialists will continue street campaigning all year round, introducing workers to the socialist alternative to the parties of imperialism and war.

Half a world away supporters of the *Militant* joined a protest meeting in Queensland, Australia, October 9. It was attended by some 600 sugarcane farmers demanding government relief in face of a decline in sugar prices and government deregulation plans (see article on page 4).

Meeting chair Bill Micola, a salesperson for a cane harvesting manufacturer, publicly welcomed Brendan Gleeson and Ron Poulson, two socialist workers from Sydney, to the meeting.

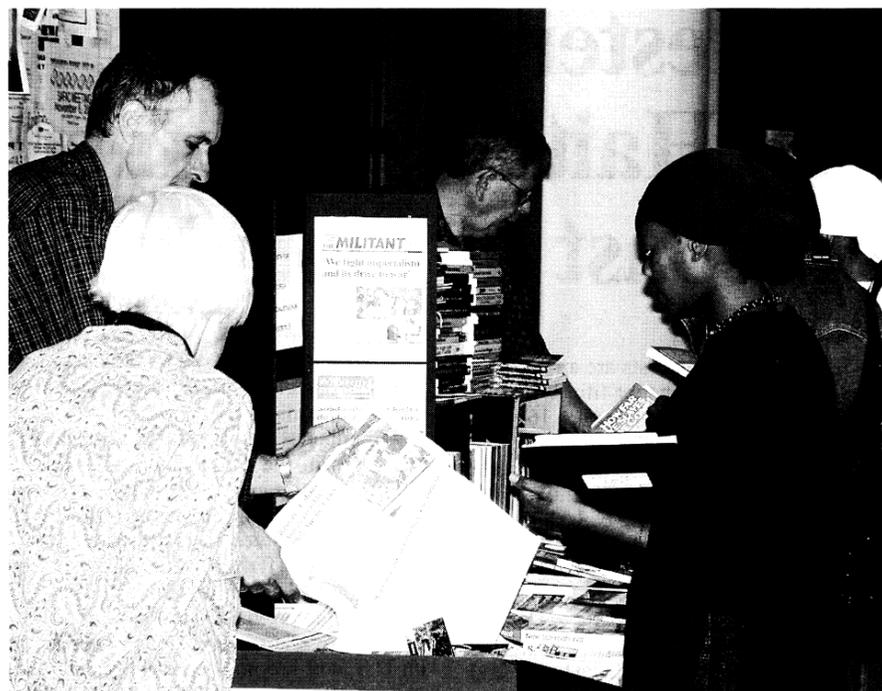
Before the protest meeting Gleeson and Poulson paid a visit to a sugar mill in Victoria. Brett, a locomotive driver at the mill, said that today he makes half of what he earned five years ago. Maurice Battoraro, the delegate of the Australian Workers Union at the mill, said it was time for sugar workers and cane farmers to get together. "We have shared interests in resisting this crisis," he said, as he signed up for a *Militant* subscription.

During their visit, the socialists sold five copies of *New International* no. 4, which includes the article titled "The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States." Five others bought the pamphlet, *Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s*, and two picked up subscriptions to the *Militant*.

## Cuba-Africa tour in Atlanta

At the halfway point in the speaking tour by Victor Dreke, a commander the Cuban Revolution, and Ana Morales, a doctor who helped lead Cuba's medical missions in Africa, supporters of the *Militant* continue to report brisk sales.

One of the organizers of the tour in Georgia, a student originally from Cape Verde, signed up for a subscription and bought \$80 worth of books. Eight other people picked



Militant/Maceo Dixon

Pathfinder literature table at Spelman College in Atlanta was a center of attraction at meeting of Victor Dreke and Ana Morales, who are touring several U.S. cities.

up subscriptions to the *Militant*, and two signed up for four months of *Perspectiva Mundial*. Seven copies of *New International* and *Capitalism's World Disorder* were sold, along with 54 copies of *From the Escambray to the Congo*, and many other titles. A whopping \$1,400 worth of Pathfinder books was purchased over the course of the visit by Dreke and Morales.

## Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Subscription Drive Sept. 7-Nov. 17: Week 8

Country	Militant			PM		Book	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold
Australia	28	18	64%	6	0	15	10
Canada							
Vancouver	30	27	90%	5	5	15	10
Toronto	30	23	77%	5	2	25	5
Montreal	15	7	47%	10	3	20	13
Canada total	75	57	76%	20	10	60	28
Iceland*	15	15	100%	1	1	25	12
New Zealand							
Christchurch	12	11	92%	1	0	7	6
Auckland	20	16	80%	1	0	7	7
N.Z. total	32	27	84%	2	0	14	13
Sweden							
Stockholm	12	14	117%	3	4	5	8
Gothenburg	15	9	60%	3	2	10	8
Sweden Total	27	23	85%	6	6	15	16
United Kingdom							
London	45	25	56%	15	9	60	50
Dundee	10	4	40%	0	0	8	13
UK total	55	29	53%	15	9	68	63
United States							
Washington	30	32	107%	12	12	25	22
San Francisco	30	32	107%	20	24	30	28
Seattle	40	38	95%	12	5	30	14
Des Moines*	30	28	93%	15	14	18	18
Twin Cities	55	48	87%	45	36	35	30
Omaha*	15	13	87%	23	24	20	22
Boston	28	24	86%	20	11	45	37
Atlanta	35	30	86%	15	5	25	14
Tucson	5	4	80%	1	3	5	0
Upper Manhattan	75	60	80%	45	26	50	37
NE Pennsylvania	30	23	77%	7	2	15	13
Western Colorado	30	22	73%	10	6	12	13
Los Angeles	45	33	73%	30	19	30	12
Detroit	43	31	72%	12	10	25	15
Houston	35	25	71%	15	3	30	18
Cleveland	28	20	71%	7	6	15	12
Philadelphia	25	17	68%	10	4	15	10
Chicago	45	30	67%	30	28	25	27
Charlotte	20	13	65%	8	9	20	18
Tampa	25	16	64%	8	1	12	4
Pittsburgh	40	25	63%	4	0	15	11
Newark	65	40	62%	40	21	40	36
NY Garment Dist.	80	49	61%	45	23	70	37
Miami	30	17	57%	10	6	25	17
Brownsville	8	4	50%	2	2	6	3
Birmingham	22	11	50%	10	8	12	5
U.S. total	914	685	75%	456	308	650	473
Int'l totals	1146	854	78%	506	334	847	615
Goal/Should be	1100	880	80%	400	350	725	580

### IN THE UNIONS

	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold
Australia							
AMIEU	4	2	50%			2	0
MUA	3	0	0%			3	0
Total	7	2	29%			5	0
Canada							
UFCW	9	0	0%	1	1	8	1
UNITE	6	1	17%	7	2	7	1
Total	15	1	7%	8	3	15	2
New Zealand							
MWU	3	1	33%			1	0
NDU	2	0	0%			1	0
Total	5	1	20%			2	0
United States							
UFCW	50	27	54%	65	59	60	25
UMWA	25	6	24%	4	0	13	2
UNITE	50	10	20%	40	14	60	18
Total	125	43	34%	109	73	133	45
raised goal*							

AMIEU-Australasian Meat Industry Employee's Union; MWU-Meat Workers Union; NDU-National Distribution Union; UFCW-United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA-United Mine Workers of America; UNITE-Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. MUA-Maritime Union of Australia

## Socialist candidate gets hearing in Vancouver

BY NATALIE STAKE-DOUCET

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—"Workers, farmers, and youth across Canada have a vital stake in opposing Canadian imperialism's stepped-up march to war in the Mideast," explained Beverly Bernardo, Communist League candidate for mayor of Vancouver.

Bernardo and her supporters have been presenting a working-class alternative to the capitalist parties of war and depression at picket lines of locked-out grain handlers, at a mass meeting of members of the Telephone Workers Union (TWU) conducting a strike vote against Telus, at street corners in working-class districts, and at university campuses.

## 1962 U.S. invasion plans

Continued from page 12

Normandy in France during World War II.

Schlesinger and others, in denying that Washington had plans to invade Cuba, have asked: If the Kennedy administration wanted to invade Cuba why didn't it do so?

The answer to that question is contained in a report submitted to Kennedy by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 26, at a decisive moment in the crisis. At Kennedy's request, the generals estimated the number of U.S. casualties that would be expected during the U.S. invasion they were weighing. Taking into account the resistance they anticipated from the Cuban people, the Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated almost 18,500 U.S. casualties in the first 10 days of fighting—with more than 4,460 on the first day alone. That was greater than the U.S. casualties in the first five years of the war in Vietnam.

From that moment on, Kennedy turned Washington's course away from their well-advanced invasion plans.

In other words, it was the unflinching response by hundreds of thousands of working men and women in Cuba—armed and ready to defend their revolution in face of imminent imperialist assault, that saved the world from nuclear holocaust in October 1962.

And that is what has kept Washington from attempting a military assault on revolutionary Cuba for the past 40 years.

# Protesters: Free the 200 Haitians detained on coast of Florida

BY ERIC SIMPSON

MIAMI—"These arrests are an outrage. These people want a better life. Where is the justice?" asked Yoline Joseph, a 16-year-old high school senior, who joined the protest at the causeway in Key Biscayne against the jailing of more than 200 Haitians who were arrested after reaching U.S. shores after being at sea for eight days.

As word spread of the October 29 landing of a boatload of Haitians and the police dragnet set up to capture them, protesters gathered at the causeway. "When I saw this on the news I came straight down here," said Kerry Ann Plunkett, an immigrant from Jamaica. "I saw on the news some Haitians jumping pickups and getting away. I wanted to help."

Others gathered that night outside the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) building in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood. Many of them rallied over the next several days to demand: "Free the Haitian Refugees."

"We need more people out here," said Frantz Cayo, a Haitian-American college student, on the third night of protests. "Our politicians are scared of people in the streets. They talk about human rights, but there are no human rights."

One of the slogans chanted often at picket lines here is "Remember, remember: remember Savannah," referring to the support Haiti provided to the United States during the Revolutionary War at Savannah, Georgia.

Many Haitian and immigrant rights organizations have participated in the protests, including Haitian Women of Miami, the

Haitian American Grass Roots Coalition, Veye Yo, and others. The sound system was provided by members of the Service Employees International Union.

A number of people pointed to the double standards in the treatment of Cuban and Haitian immigrants. "Why can't we come from Haiti," one protester asked, "when people are allowed to come from Cuba? Cuba is better off than Haiti. They have free education and health care."

Under the provisions of the "Cuban Adjustment Act," Cuban citizens who set foot on U.S. soil are not deported or detained, and are often given a hero's welcome. They are allowed to live in the community and are granted expedited naturalization. Many get legal residency within one year.

By contrast, under guidelines in place since last December, Haitians are deported unless they can prove a "well-founded fear of persecution." They are imprisoned until their asylum cases are resolved, rather than being allowed to live in the community while their cases are pending.

## Cop mobilization against Haitians

The 50-foot Haitian yacht that docked at Miami's Biscayne Bay on October 29 was tailed by armed Coast Guard patrol boats and helicopters from local television stations that broadcast live coverage of the chase.

When the boat reached shallow water near Hobie Beach, the more than 200 passengers jumped off, waded to shore, and walked onto the nearby Rickenbacker Causeway, which cuts across Biscayne Bay connecting Key Biscayne to the mainland. While some

help meet expenses that have already been incurred as well as financing the production of a number of books set to be released over the coming weeks.

These new titles include a new, expanded edition of *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* in English and Spanish, and *Marianas in Combat: Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War*. Another important political weapon due to be released is the 12th issue of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*.

Other new titles include *The Assault on Moncada* by Mario Mencia, and *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58*, by Armando Hart. Pathfinder is also reprinting dozens of titles from its arsenal of books on working-class struggles.

These books will be sought after at upcoming events, from the congress of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students, which opens November 29 in Guadalajara, Mexico, to the Havana International Book Fair in February 2003.

Supporters of the fund campaign can bring it to a successful conclusion by following up with those who have already made a pledge, and by approaching workers and youth who have just begun reading the revolutionary books published by Pathfinder. This includes the many new readers who have picked up Pathfinder books at meetings of the "Cuba and Africa—1959 to the present" speaking tour of Victor Dreke and Ana Morales, outside showings of the film *Fidel*, and a range of labor and political actions, such as the struggle by West Coast longshore workers who are fighting the shippers' concession demands and opposing the federal government's intervention in their struggle.

Contributions to the fund can be made out to Pathfinder and mailed to the *Militant*, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.



Militant/Eric Simpson

Demonstrators outside immigration police building in Miami October 30 protest arrest the day before of some 200 workers who arrived on U.S. shores from Haiti.

hailed down passing motorists and got a ride into the city, most of the refugees were apprehended by a cop mobilization involving local police departments, the INS, Coast Guard, and Border Patrol.

Most of the Haitians were arrested on the causeway, loaded onto INS buses, and taken to Krome Detention Center. Twenty were arrested in the bay and are being detained on a Coast Guard vessel. According to news reports, 235 Haitians and several Dominicans who made this voyage have been jailed. The U.S. government has also charged six of the voyagers as smugglers.

No interviews with the Haitian immigrants have been published in the local media. Some Haitian-American elected officials have been allowed to spend a short time with the prisoners at the Krome Detention Center.

The Ft. Lauderdale *Sun Sentinel* interviewed a number of people at Chouchou Beach, on the northern coast of Haiti near Cap-Haitien, a fishing village of 3,000 people, from where the boat departed. "People just reached the breaking point here, and we decided to build the boat—that's how this happened," said 24-year-old Deus Welby, who lives there. "We put together the money, and if people couldn't afford it, they donated whatever they could. Some

people gave wood, some gave nails. Others just gave their labor. We got enough money from others to buy the engine.

"It wasn't that hard to build this boat—we're sea people and everyone knows how to build a boat this simple," said Welby. "I put three of my best friends in all the world on that boat, so I know it was seaworthy."

Meanwhile on Chouchou Beach, planks are being cut for the next voyage.

Duchene Pierre, 48, the village's elected alderman, explained that the "reason we leave is economic, and that's also because of the politics. It's impossible to make anything work here if you cannot afford to live because of the political decisions. Over the last week the price of cement here has nearly doubled, and that affects construction, road work, and that means lost jobs."

More than 90 percent of the applications for asylum made by 187 Haitians who arrived by boat in Miami last December 3 have been denied, and many have been deported or are in the process of being deported, according to the National Coalition for Haitian Rights. Most had no lawyers.

Protests have also been held in Boston and are scheduled to continue in Miami. A protest at a campaign appearance by President George Bush was scheduled in Tampa.

## Big push on fund drive needed

Continued from front page  
are taken now in every city," both to collect outstanding pledges and to raise any additional amount needed to make each local quota.

The fund drive is essential for Pathfinder to fulfill its ambitious publishing commitments. Contributions are needed now, to

### \$105,000 Pathfinder Fund Sept. 1–Nov. 17. Week 9

	Goal	Paid	%
Twin Cities MN	5,000	5,057	101%
NY Garment District	6,000	5,850	98%
Tucson AZ	150	134	89%
Des Moines IA	1,200	1,020	85%
Newark NJ	3,600	2,944	82%
Charlotte NC	3,500	2,835	81%
Philadelphia PA	5,000	3,923	78%
San Francisco CA	8,500	6,320	74%
NY Upper Manhattan	5,000	3,635	73%
Western CO	2,600	1,870	72%
Chicago IL	5,500	3,954	72%
Cleveland OH	1,700	1,210	71%
Birmingham AL	3,100	2,161	70%
Detroit MI	3,000	2,024	67%
Seattle WA	7,500	5,020	67%
Atlanta GA	4,250	2,590	61%
Pittsburgh PA	4,200	2,450	58%
Omaha NE	900	520	58%
Northeast PA	1,200	650	54%
Miami FL	2,100	1,125	54%
Boston MA	3,500	1,495	43%
Los Angeles CA	9,500	4,005	42%
Houston TX	4,500	1,830	41%
Washington DC	3,000	1,175	39%
Tampa FL	2,000	520	26%
Other		1,021	
<b>U.S. total</b>	<b>96,500</b>	<b>65,337</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,426</b>	<b>95%</b>
Australia	1,500	1,060	71%
France	400	265	66%
Canada	4,500	1,837	41%
Sweden	1,400	100	7%
Iceland	150	0	0%
United Kingdom	1,200	0	0%
<b>International total</b>	<b>107,150</b>	<b>70,025</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Int'l goal/should be</b>	<b>105,000</b>	<b>86,100</b>	<b>82%</b>

## Boston janitors win tentative contract

BY SARAH ULLMAN

BOSTON—After a month on strike janitors in the Boston area returned to work after a tentative agreement was reached October 23. "It was a victory," commented one striking worker. "We got more money, medical insurance, and a lot of confidence. Together, anything is possible."

The contract, which is being submitted to the membership for a vote, includes a 30 percent raise over five years for those working within 15 miles of downtown Boston and, for the first time, medical insurance paid for by the employers for 1,000 of the part-timers employed in the largest buildings. Also new will be two paid sick days per year.

"The important thing isn't the settlement," commented a striking janitor, "the struggle as a whole was important. What we need is a strong union. This strengthened the base. We'll be stronger next time."

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 254 had targeted the largest of the companies, Unico Service Co. Starting September 30 the union began calling out their workforce, adding more and more of the buildings they clean as the strike went on. In all, about 2,000 of the 10,700 in the bargaining unit walked out. Some 500-700 janitors picketed daily, with a number of them often marching, chanting and beating on bucket-bottoms, through the streets of Boston. The strikers won wide sympathy among working people and youth in the area. The Teamsters union, for example,

refused to haul dumpsters from, or to deliver packages to, the struck skyscrapers.

The cleaners—80 percent of whom are part-timers and almost all of whom are immigrant workers—came under tremendous pressure from the employers. At some targeted buildings, the strike was solid, at others some workers crossed the picket lines in fear of losing their jobs or of being deported. Another source of pressure was from Boston mayor Thomas Menino, who presented himself as a "friend" of the janitors, but convinced the leadership of SEIU Local 254 to postpone the strike several times. When they did begin the walkout, he enjoined them from marching through the city streets, and finally insisted on a settlement within 24 hours to head off further union-planned protest actions.

Some janitors say the resulting agreement is weaker than it could have been. Most disappointed are those who work outside the metropolitan Boston area whose wages are already substantially lower. This contract would widen the gap, as their raises are smaller in both dollar and percentage terms. Others point to the fact that the medical insurance being provided to those part-timers who are eligible will not start for two years, and that the \$3.00 raise for those working in Boston starts out with only 25 cents an hour in the first year.

This fight, however, has forced the employers "to take into account our dignity," commented one of the workers. "Before the strike, janitors were ignored."

# Bloomberg cries 'budget crisis,' targets workers

BY JACK WILLEY

New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg ordered a hiring freeze on all city jobs October 28 in his administration's latest move to slash city services, and public employees' wages, pensions, and jobs, under the pretext of a "budget" crisis. The directive also ordered most city agencies to squeeze 2 percent from their budgets this fiscal year and next. This is on top of a 7.5 percent cut in city services earlier in the year.

Mark Page, head of the Office of Management and Budget, issued a memo casting the hiring ban as an effort to hold back layoffs. "Recognizing that the permanent reductions in spending that the city must achieve will require a reduction in work force—and that layoffs must be avoided to the extent possible—a freeze on all new hires is... imposed effective immediately," he wrote.

Three days earlier, the ax came down on sanitation workers, with an initial round of 103 workers laid off, the first substantial municipal job cutback in a decade.

Bloomberg announced he will present a more sweeping package of budget cuts in November.

"Everything is on the table," the mayor has said many times. Nobody expects him to call for a moratorium on debt payments to wealthy bondholders, however.

Those facing cuts are the more than 365,000 workers—roughly one in every 22 New York residents—who are either municipal employees or whose wages are subsidized by the city.

City Hall says that New York faces the worst budget "crisis" since 1975. The mayor reports that municipal expenses extend beyond income by \$1 billion this fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2003. The mayor's office projects budget gaps as high as \$4 billion to \$6 billion in following years.

New York, like many cities in the United States, operates on a deficit basis: it does not raise enough funds through taxes and state and federal revenue to cover its expenses. That shortfall is made up through issuing bonds—similar to taking out a loan—that is paid with interest over a set period of time. When a municipal government decides to reduce the deficit, bondholders are always guaranteed their payments above anyone else, while city employees and social services are put on the chopping block to meet the "crisis" and balance the books.

New York City owes \$42 billion in outstanding bonds—largely in the hands of the billionaire families—which would translate into \$5,000 "owed" by each resident. In 2002 the city will spend one out of every five tax dollars on debt service—principal and interest on bonds.

## Mayor projects sweeping cuts

The quality of social services, which has been deteriorating, is expected to worsen further, while taxes, fees, fines, tolls, tickets, and nuisance charges—all of which fall disproportionately onto the backs of workers—are projected to increase in order to guarantee that bondholders continue to receive their payments.

The mayor is seeking to eliminate \$225 million in pension and health benefits owed to city workers and calls for scaling back the building of new schools by 20 percent. In February Bloomberg announced a budget plan proposing to slash funds to the Administration for Children's Service by nearly 18 percent and services for workers who are homeless by 17 percent.

On the state level, pensions invested in the stock market during the 1990s boom have plummeted 13 percent, losing \$7 billion and affecting close to 1 million active and retired government employees.

In face of a 25 percent rise in the number of homeless families in the city and a spike in the number of children going to soup kitchens for their meals, Bloomberg announced plans to step up Operation Clean Sweep, launched in February, to drive a record 37,000 homeless people off the streets. "We want to make sure that the public can go about their business and not be hassled," he told reporters. "We are not going to lose the quality of life that we have all come rightly to expect."

Bloomberg projects setting up toll booths on East River bridges, charging \$6 to enter Manhattan from Brooklyn and Queens.

José Rodríguez, a construction worker from Brooklyn, told the *New York Daily News*, "If I pay \$6 a day, that's over \$100 a month. With that money, I should be buy-

ing food for my kids."

These moves are coupled with a proposal by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to jack up subway and bus fares from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per ride, a de facto tax of more than 30 percent on public transportation. The reason, once again, is to make up for a proclaimed deficit.

Last year the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey raised tolls at bridges and tolls between the states from \$4 to \$6 and fares on the PATH commuter train from \$1 to \$1.50. Port Authority Chief Operating Officer Ernesto Butcher has said, "The new toll and fare structure is a well-reasoned plan that will address traffic congestion by providing travelers with an incentive to change their commuting habits...and by encouraging the use of mass transit."

## 'Worst budget crisis since mid-1970s'

City Hall and the big-business media call the budget deficit the greatest fiscal crisis since the mid-1970s. The *Daily News* points at job losses, enduring economic stagnation, and a plunge in tax revenue from Wall Street financial firms from their peak of \$21 billion in 2000 to \$12.8 billion this year.

Official joblessness in the city stands at 7.9 percent, well above the national average. The city's economy shrank 1.3 percent in the second quarter of 2002, the sixth consecutive recessionary quarter.

In the 1970s the state set up an agency staffed by bankers and other big-business figures—the Municipal Assistance Corporation, known as "Big Mac"—to drive through steep austerity measures. Over a 30-month period, more than 63,000 municipal employees lost their jobs, including 20,000 teachers and 4,000 hospital workers. Transit fares jumped. The City University of New York system—which had free tuition dating back 129 years as well as open admissions to anyone with a high school diploma or equivalency since 1969—began charging fees. Now tuition costs compare to that of other community colleges around the country.

Once again, big business is warning of a major assault on public employees and services. "We will have to become accustomed to lower levels of service," declared Paul Dickstein, who was budget director in the Koch administration in the 1970s.

City officials project slashing library

# N.Y. transit workers confront the real 'rats'

## Continued from front page

does not cover the cost of contraceptives as had been the case in previous years.

The MTA is pleading poverty, blaming the September 11 attacks and the declining economy for an alleged lack of funds.

A worker from the paint shop, Mike Matthews, however, pointed out that the MTA has 9,000 bosses and supervisory personnel, all with better health coverage than the workers.

Workers also expressed outrage at the extremely severe disciplinary system. "We call it the 'guilty system,'" said Darryl Harrison, a conductor. Asked if this meant "guilty until proven innocent," he said, "No, it means you're guilty, period."

Sheila Jack, also a conductor, said supervisors often take workers off the train arbitrarily to discipline them, and try to do so without the union rep being present.

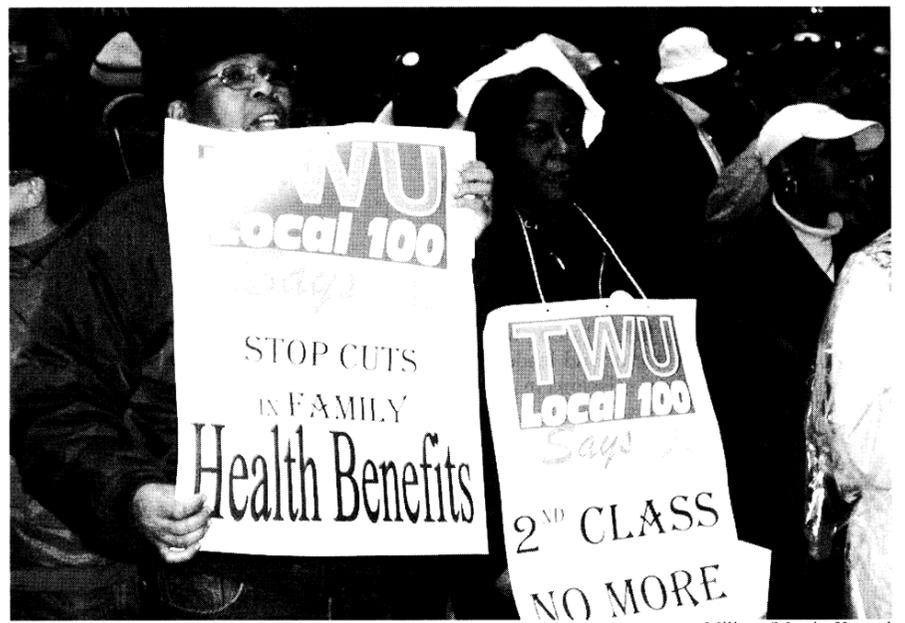
In 2000, more than 16,000 disciplinary warnings were issued to this workforce of 34,000 people.

Speakers at the rally called on the MTA to provide child-care for union members. "I need child care now" was a popular sign.

The union is also fighting for improved wages. Several unionists at the rally pointed out that their wages and benefits are inferior to those of workers employed by the Metro North and Long Island Rail Road commuter lines.

For example, train operators for the city transit authority earn \$24.35 an hour, while Metro North operators make \$31.89. Workers in skilled trades such as sheet-metal workers, structural ironworkers and electricians earn \$8 to \$19 less per hour than the officially prevailing wage scale.

The Transit Authority has increasingly turned to contracting out work. It hires non-union workers in many divisions, creating new job titles for similar work. These "non-represented" employees receive better pay



Militant/Martin Koppel

Thousands of members of Transport Workers Union Local 100 rallied in New York October 30, opposing attacks on health benefits and other concession demands. Transit Authority is using "budget" crisis to claim it can't meet its obligations on health fund.

hours, scaling back the number of garbage pickup days, chopping the Parks Department payroll, closing or merging 15 senior centers, raising express bus fares from \$3 to \$4, cutting aid to asthma sufferers, and eliminating neighborhood youth programs, among other things.

At the time of the last "crisis" the trade union officialdom collaborated with City Hall, accepting the claim that there was "no money," and negotiated takeback contracts.

## Teachers union officials offer cutbacks

In face of the current ruling class offensive, Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, has already jumped on board the concessions train, asking only that Bloomberg first "make his case."

On October 31 Weingarten offered Bloomberg a \$200 million cutback, calling for the early retirement of 20,000 teachers over 55, to be replaced by teachers who are paid less.

"This is not an ideal education policy," she said, "but if this budget crisis is as bad as they predict, it's the best of the bad effects." She argued it would be a way to avoid

layoffs of teachers.

Bloomberg gave Weingarten the back of his hand, rejecting her concession less than two hours after it was proposed.

One item in the "education" budget that isn't being cut is the policing of schools. City officials plan to hire 285 additional security guards in the schools over the next two months. They will join 3,850 guards—trained by the New York Police Department—who currently roam the halls and staff metal detectors. At schools such as John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx, students sometimes wait in line for nearly an hour to go through metal detectors and scanners before they can enter the building.

Working people in nearby Nassau County face a similar situation as those in New York. County legislators adopted a budget October 28 that raises property taxes by 20 percent and cuts the workforce by 1,400 jobs. They announced it as the first chapter in a four-year plan to rescue the county from defaulting on its bond payments.

and benefits than TWU members.

## Show of force by cops

The New York City Police Department mobilized hundreds of cops to the rally, many in full riot gear and some on horseback or on motorcycles. They fenced in the transit workers and acted aggressively. The union had previously received a permit to march over to the offices of Gov. George Pataki for a second rally. But, as TWU Local 100 president Roger Toussaint reported to the assembled workers, the police revoked their march permit at the last minute, so they had to walk along the sidewalk to the second rally. Toussaint accused the cops of "intimidation."

The transit workers' contract fight comes at a time when Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration is calling for "fiscal discipline"—that is, slashing public employees' jobs and wages as well as city services in order to pay off the city's debt to wealthy bondholders.

The MTA has announced a \$663 million budget deficit for next year, and has suggested that it may seek to jack up subway and bus fares by 50 cents to \$2.00.

TWU Local 100 has joined other organizations in a "Save the Fare" campaign to oppose the fare hike, rejecting attempts to pit transit workers against transit riders.

Paul Martin, whose job is fixing MTA stations, noted that the MTA had received \$2 billion in government aid "because of 9-11. Where has all that money gone?" he asked. "It's there."

Contract negotiations between the union and the Transit Authority began September 20. Since then, the union has been organizing a series of actions leading up to the December 15 expiration date. More than 5,000 transit workers rallied September 25 at the Brooklyn headquarters of New York City Transit, which is part of the MTA. On April 24 some 5,000 workers rallied to defend

their health-care benefits.

The union was strengthened by a two-month-long strike last summer by 1,500 TWU members who operate buses in the borough of Queens for three private bus companies. The workers pushed back the city administration's attempt to cut their medical benefits.

## Threat of antilabor Taylor Law

The antilabor Taylor Law bars strikes by public employees in New York State. Nonetheless, dozens of workers at the October 30 rally carried signs reading, "First-class contract or strike," and several workers interviewed said they were prepared to strike if necessary to press their demands. Toussaint stated in September that "we will do everything possible to arrive at a contract on December 15, but we will not surrender our right to strike."

The big-business media has been cranking up its antiunion propaganda in response to the transit workers' fight. The *New York Post* ran an editorial September 30 that sought to portray the transit workers as selfishly holding New York City commuters hostage for unreasonable demands. Citing the Taylor Law, the editorial claimed that "no such right [to strike] exists" and that if Toussaint "precipitates a strike he could—and certainly should—find himself in jail...and his members could—and certainly should—find themselves fined two days' pay for every day on the picket lines."

MTA chairman Peter Kalikow, a real estate tycoon, also happens to be the former owner and publisher of the *Post*.

John Giambalvo, an emergency response road car inspector and 20-year member of the union, compared the threat of the Taylor Law with the federal government's intervention against the West Coast longshore workers. In face of such threats, he emphasized the need for "solidarity among all the locals."

# Víctor Dreke: 'We were ready to die in fight'

Reprinted below is an excerpt from Pathfinder's *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution* by Cuban revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke. Over the next few weeks the *Militant* will publish excerpts from the book. Dreke, a longtime combatant and leading cadre of the Cuban Revolution, is currently speaking in a number of U.S. cities on "Cuba and Africa: 1959 to Today," along with Ana Morales, a Cuban doctor and leader of internationalist medical missions in Africa.

*From the Escambray to the Congo* is based on interviews with Dreke conducted in 1999 and 2001 by Mary-Alice Waters, the president of Pathfinder Press; Luis Madrid, a staff editor of Pathfinder; and Martín Koppel, editor of the *Militant*. The excerpt is from the chapter titled "Joining the revolutionary movement. Copyright © 2002 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings and introductory notes are by the *Militant*.



As Víctor Dreke explains in the pages that follow, his political activity began in response to Fulgencio Batista's March 10, 1952, military coup against the elected government of President Carlos Prío Socarrás.

Batista was already well known to the Cuban people. He had headed a repressive regime from 1934 to 1944 that had been marked by brutality, corruption, and subservience to the interests of U.S. imperialism and Cuba's own landlords and capitalists. Following the 1952 coup, the Batista gang quickly moved to consolidate power and establish one of the bloodiest dictatorships in Latin America, and it did so with the full backing of Washington.<sup>1</sup>

The coup aroused widespread opposition throughout Cuba. From one end of the island to the other, working people and youth wanted to fight. But the major bourgeois opposition groups and politicians opposed any revolutionary action. They steered the deepening anti-Batista energy into ineffective channels such as boycotting stores and movie theaters, refusing to pay taxes, and withdrawing money from bank accounts. They aimed to convince Washington that they, not Batista, could best defend imperialist interests in Cuba. Above all, they feared a struggle against the Batista dictatorship by the workers and peasants on the plantations, in the factories, and throughout countryside and city that could grow over into a struggle against the entire capitalist system.

Among the young people determined to organize a fight against the tyrannical regime was Fidel Castro. A member of the Orthodox Party and one of its most popular candidates in the 1952 elections aborted by the coup, Castro initially sought to convince the party leaders to fight Batista. Having exhausted this effort, he and a handful of other young people set about creating a new revolutionary movement to do the job. By early 1953 they had organized some 1,200 workers and students, overwhelmingly young. The organization came to be known as the Centennial Generation—named in honor of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of José Martí, Cuba's national hero.

On July 26, 1953, some 160 combatants, under the command of Fidel Castro, launched an insurrectionary attack on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba, together with a simultaneous assault on the Carlos



Courtesy Víctor Dreke

Members of Youth Movement of the Third Regional Workers Federation in Sagua la Grande on May 8, 1956, mark 21st anniversary of assassination of revolutionary Antonio Guiteras. Víctor Dreke is squatting at left. Action was broken up by Batista's cops.

Manuel de Céspedes garrison in Bayamo. This assault announced the revolutionary war against the Batista dictatorship.

The attempt to seize the garrisons and liberate the weapons inside them failed. Batista's forces massacred more than fifty of the captured revolutionaries. Fidel Castro and twenty-seven others, including Raúl Castro and Juan Almeida, were tried and sentenced to up to fifteen years in prison. In the face of a massive public campaign for amnesty, those imprisoned were released on May 15, 1955.

As the rebels returned to Havana, where they received a tumultuous welcome, they were already discussing the name of the organization under which the struggle would continue.

In June 1955 the freed combatants, together with young cadres from the left wing of the Orthodox Party and other revolutionary forces, formed the July 26 Revolutionary Movement. The principal leaders of the new movement were soon forced into exile, meeting up in Mexico, where they set about organizing and training their forces to return to Cuba. Among the revolutionaries who joined them was the young Argentine doctor Ernesto Che Guevara.

In November 1956, eighty-two of these revolutionary combatants set sail aboard the yacht *Granma* from Tuxpan, Mexico. The expeditionaries landed in southeast Cuba on December 2, 1956, marking the beginning of the Cuban revolutionary war based in the Sierra Maestra mountains.



*Mary-Alice Waters:* More than forty years after the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship, Cuba's course continues to point a way forward. That's why so many rebels and fighters around the world want to study the revolution and learn its lessons.

But revolutionary-minded young people in the United States and other countries find it hard to envision that it was people very much like themselves who joined in the fight to bring down the Batista regime, and went on to establish the first free territory in the Americas on the very doorstep of the most powerful and brutal—and the final—empire the world has known.

You were one of those individuals. How did you come to join the revolutionary movement?

*Victor Emilio Dreke Cruz:* As it happens, the very day Batista staged the coup, March 10, 1952, was my fifteenth birthday. I was born in 1937, in the town of Sagua la Grande in Las Villas province. I come from a poor, working-class family, from a neighborhood in Sagua called Pueblo Nuevo. I was born and lived in a small house with a palm-thatch roof and a dirt floor.

My father was a vendor. He sold fish from a stand in the marketplace, but he had trouble paying for the space. I found a letter written to my father in 1934, saying they'd taken the stand away from him because he'd failed to pay the fee. I still have that letter. He was told he could never again open up a stand to sell fish. I can imagine what a crisis that must have been for him.

#### Advice from father

When I was young, I remember my father used to tell me, "Don't get involved in anything." My father wasn't for Batista, he was against Batista. But he didn't believe in anyone. "Don't join anything," he'd say. "Things will always stay the same. One side wins now, the other side wins later, and the ones with money will always be in power. Study and get an education and don't mess with strikes or any of that; it won't get you anywhere. Besides, that stuff's not for blacks."

That was my father's way of looking at things. And I think this was how many blacks in Cuba looked at things. Until the victory of the revolution. Fortunately, I didn't listen.

I'm a revolutionary because I didn't pay attention to my dad. But I'm sorry he didn't live to see he was wrong about this.

I was in school at the time of the coup. The first news we received was that Batista had seized power, and that Prío Socarrás was going to put up resistance. We heard that the students had gone off to the hill by the university steps and were asking for weapons from the Prío government to defend the 1940 constitution.<sup>2</sup>

Prío's government was one of those puppet regimes that existed in Latin America. In reality it answered to the United States, to Washington.

All of us at school took to the streets against Batista's coup, since it was general knowledge that Batista was bad, and we joined a political strike organized to oppose the coup. The central leader of the strike in the area was a man named Conrado Rodríguez Sánchez. He had been a peasant, a poor man, from the Santa Teresa Sugar Mill, as it was called then, in the town of

Sitiecito on the outskirts of Sagua. Today it's called the Héctor Rodríguez Sugar Mill.

Conrado Rodríguez Sánchez demagogically presented himself as a proletarian leader. He wore a guayabera shirt with the sleeves rolled up and was an enemy of the suit and tie. But at his side were genuine fighters for the sugar workers and young anti-Batista rebels who thought he was a real fighter for the workers, even if not of the same stature as Jesús Menéndez or Lázaro Peña. Mr. Rodríguez showed his true colors when he ended his career together with the bourgeois and terrorist elements of Alpha 66.

The strike lasted only a few hours. Because Prío did not resist; he fled. The students were not given weapons, and Batista's coup was successful.

That same day, the army and police—which until then had been the army and police of Prío Socarrás, of Prío's Authentic Party—immediately became Batista's army and police. They backed Batista. They attacked the demonstrations we were staging and arrested a group of compañeros and put us in jail. But they released us, because the 1940 constitution said that minors—anyone under age 18—could not be put on trial.

#### Ready to die in the fight against Batista

We were a rebellious bunch, but we didn't know the first thing about revolution. We protested because we believed Batista was bad. We didn't have a clear idea of what we hoped to accomplish. I honestly think that if the Prío government had given us weapons, we would have fought against the army. We were ready



Bohemia

Sugar workers in Las Villas demonstrate during December 1955 nationwide strike by 200,000 workers. Dreke helped organize support for the strike, which was called to protest government moves to lower wages.

to die in the fight against Batista.

So this was my initiation. From that point on we were branded as revolutionaries by the police. Every year, when March 10 rolled around, the police would come arrest us and throw us in jail.

I continued my studies and went on to high school in downtown Sagua. Then, on July 26, 1953, the Moncada and the Carlos

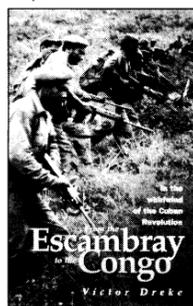
<sup>1</sup> In September 1933, in the wake of the revolutionary upsurge that overthrew the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado the previous month, a coup by junior officers led by Fulgencio Batista established a coalition government led by Ramón Grau San Martín. The new government included revolutionary forces, among them Antonio Guiteras, who became minister of the interior. During this period, some of the demands long fought for by working people were realized, such as annulment of the U.S.-imposed Platt Amendment, the eight-hour day, and women's suffrage. In January 1934 Batista carried out a second coup with U.S. backing and put an end to the Hundred Days Government, installing a regime compliant to capitalist interests in the United States and Cuba. Batista, who had been appointed head of the army and dominated the new government, sought to buy off former opponents of the Machado dictatorship, while carrying out murderous repression against those who refused to buckle, such as Guiteras.

<sup>2</sup> The constitution of 1940 reflected the anti-imperialist sentiment that remained deeply rooted among the Cuban people in the years following the revolutionary upsurge of 1933 that toppled the U.S.-sponsored dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. It provided for land reform and other democratic measures, but these provisions remained a dead letter under the successive pro-imperialist regimes. The 1940 constitution was abrogated entirely when Fulgencio Batista seized power in 1952. Its restitution was a demand of the revolutionary forces who were fighting against Batista.

## From the Escambray to the Congo In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution

By Víctor Dreke

"We were a rebellious bunch, but we didn't know the first thing about revolution," says Víctor Dreke. "We were ready to die in the fight against Batista." In this book, the revolutionary leader talks about his participation in key events of Cuba's modern revolutionary history, including the anti-Batista struggle, the fight to defend the victorious revolution against imperialist threats and counterrevolutionary bandits in the Escambray Mountains, and Cuba's internationalist missions in Africa. Also in Spanish. \$17



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# to bring down Batista'

continued from facing page

Manuel de Céspedes garrisons were attacked.

July 26 was a Sunday. We didn't know anything about the events that day. But at dawn the following day, the police came and arrested us and took us to the police station. We didn't know why we'd been locked up. At the station we heard that "a group of outlaws" had attacked the Moncada garrison and that all the outlaws had been wiped out. That was the word used in the Batista government's official communiqué: Fidel and the group of revolutionaries were "outlaws."

Speaking for myself, I was filled with admiration to learn that a group of young people had tried to take the garrisons. Because throughout Cuba's history, a lot of people had talked about revolution. During this period in 1953—when Fidel attempted to take the Moncada garrison and, as he says, "set in motion the little engine that would start the big engine of the revolution"—there were a lot of movements that talked about armed struggle to get rid of Batista. But what they were actually doing was stealing money. They would collect money from people and buy weapons, and then they themselves would turn the weapons in to the authorities to justify not carrying out the action.

But this courageous deed by Fidel inspired optimism and led Cuban youth to admire and respect him. A path was opened up.

As for me, I was willing to give my life to defeat Batista—I had no doubt about that—but I did have doubts that anyone was really going to go up against Batista and do what they said they would do. Aureliano Sánchez Arango of the Authentic Party, for example, had talked about landing some people in Cuba to fight Batista. The same with Tony Varona, another leader of that party. But it was all a lie. It was all fake.

But Fidel Castro did come through. People now trusted him. We were confident Fidel was going to take up arms against Batista, because he'd actually done so. It was one of the events that made us more confident of taking the road of revolutionary struggle.

## Formation of July 26 movement

In 1955 the July 26 Movement was formed. That was a historic leap forward. I immediately joined a cell of the July 26 Movement in Sagua la Grande, becoming



Courtesy Victor Dreke

Dreke, right, and other revolutionary combatants in town square of Güinía de Miranda in Las Villas province after town was liberated by Che Guevara's column in October 1958.

head of sabotage actions.

At the same time we continued to be part of the workers movement led by Conrado Rodríguez. This movement was affiliated to the Third Regional Workers Federation in Sagua, which encompassed the sugar workers in that area. There were nine sugar mills in the Sagua la Grande region at the time. So it was one of the most powerful sugar-producing areas in the country. The workers there were also among the most combative. The sugar workers' fight led by Jesús Menéndez had been based, in part, in this area.

Within this workers movement there were both right-wing and left-wing currents.

There was one group within the Youth Movement of the Regional Federation—which is what the youth section of this workers movement was called—that favored the electoral road. One of the principal figures they looked to was José Pardo Llada, a member of the Orthodox Party who had presidential aspirations. This group wanted to get

rid of Batista, but they thought they could do so through elections.

Then there was our group within this workers youth movement, which was against the electoral road and for armed struggle. We thus belonged both to what could be called the sugar workers movement and to the July 26 Movement. In other words, we had a link between the July 26 Movement—the student struggles—and this workers movement. So I came out of this combination, this symbiosis.

The struggle was very difficult, because as soon as you planned something, the government, the dictatorship, would come after you. You had to be in hiding part of the time, fleeing, persecuted.

We organized various revolutionary activities. On May Day, for example, we would organize different actions in opposition to Batista and in favor of the working class. These were lightning events. You hardly ever got a chance to speak. The moment you assembled, the police and the army would immediately arrive, with the snitches fingering people. Events had to be planned clandestinely.

We also waged a fight to honor Antonio Guiteras, holding activities on May 8, the anniversary of his assassination. I have photos somewhere of the activities we held in 1953, 1955, 1956, where I participated in activities by the student movement in tribute to Guiteras.<sup>3</sup>

Antonio Guiteras was the central leader of the revolutionary movement of 1933. For me personally, until Fidel Castro came on the scene, Guiteras was the figure I most respected and whose ideals I was a follower of. I still feel that way. I hadn't yet been born when he was assassinated in 1935, but growing up I learned the whole history of Guiteras, his activities, what he had fought for in the Hundred Days Government, and I considered myself a Guiterista. All these things were still a jumble in my mind. But the important thing was that I was in favor of the struggle, the armed struggle.

As a result of our revolutionary activities—the strikes, the torching of sugarcane fields, the sabotage, and all that—we were "burned," as we say in Cuba. That is, our identities became known, and we were being hunted by the police. It simply became impossible to function at a certain point.

## Revolutionary offensive

In November or December 1957 a big revolutionary offensive was taking place, with sugarcane fields set on fire and other actions, in order to prevent the fake elections scheduled for the following year. Two compañeros in the cell I was the leader of were arrested.

One of the compañeros talked under torture. The other compañero held firm and didn't talk.

One of my friends, a young man who worked with me, came immediately to my home, which was a small room my mother and I lived in. He

warned me that so-and-so had been arrested, and that afterwards the police had come searching for other compañeros and arrested some.

We realized the man must have talked. I decided not to let myself get caught. By then, Batista's government was murdering people. I said good-bye to my mother and left the house.

I headed toward the neighborhood where I'd been born. Like the story about elephants always going back to die in the place they were born. I did so because I knew my neighborhood, I knew how I could get out. "If I can get to Pueblo Nuevo," I said to myself, "no one will ever catch me." First, because my family would protect me. And second, because I knew the area.

I took off on a bicycle for Pueblo Nuevo, for my aunt's house. I got there and told my aunt that the army was searching for me, that I had to hide, that I wasn't going to go out.

My poor aunt had been through a lot with



Granma

The Freedom Caravan: The main columns of the Rebel Army enter Havana, Jan. 8, 1959. Standing in jeep, wearing hat, is revolutionary leader Camilo Cienfuegos.

me. Every time she heard I was in jail, she and Cuca Acevedo, the mother of one of our compañeros, would go get me at the police station. I had the poor woman all tired out by then.

"You're in trouble again, what's going on?"

"Well, what can I do?" I said.

And I sat there in the house, thinking about that. Because by then I already knew I had to join the rebels in the mountains.

Suddenly, I spotted two army jeeps coming up the street. Inside the first jeep was this compañero who'd talked. He was sitting in the middle, between two soldiers. I'd forgotten I had brought this guy to the house once. I'd had no connection with Pueblo Nuevo for years.

"They're coming to get me," I said to my aunt. "Tell them I was never here."

I went out the back, jumped over the fence, and headed for the house of a cousin. I came in through the backyard. Everyone panicked, thinking a thief had broken in. But then they saw it was me.

"All right, come in, sit down. What happened?" I explained, and my cousin told me to stay in the house, not to go out.

## Escaping Batista's police

I immediately made contact with the July 26 Movement, because my cousin, Marcelo Castillo, belonged to the July 26 Movement, although his father Florencio was a councilman for the Liberals, one of Batista's parties. That was common during the revolutionary struggle in Cuba: that within the same family, some were for Batista and others against Batista. That happened a lot in our country.

My revolutionary cousin went and told the compañeros that the army was looking for me and that I was in hiding. That night they moved me to the home of another cousin, where I hid out for two days in one of the rooms, barely able to breathe.

On the morning of the second day the owner of the house came home. He came in and started talking to his wife in a loud voice: "I'm going to buy you furniture. I'm going to bring you some furniture. You'll like it." And he kept talking about the furniture. They couldn't afford furniture; they were practically destitute. But that's the news all the neighbors heard. Because those houses are all right next to each other, they're made of wood, and everything you say in one house can be heard in the next.

The two of them went out. Later that afternoon he showed up with the furniture. A living room set, a bedroom set, an easy chair, a dresser, a cabinet, and I don't know what else. They brought the furniture into the house.

But there was a

plan afoot, which I didn't know about until the furniture arrived. I hadn't been told anything. The July 26 Movement cell had devised a plan to get me out of that house and out of Sagua, because all the exits had been closed off and the army was looking for me.

What was the plan?

The first part was to arrive with the furniture and make a lot of noise, so everyone in the neighborhood would know about it. "Look, he bought furniture. He's giving her furniture," they'd say.

Later that afternoon, after my cousin had already gone back out, his wife came home. When he returned, she created a scene. Everyone in the neighborhood heard it, because that was the plan. "I don't want the furniture! Take it away! I don't want it! Besides, we can't afford it; you know we can't." She kept on and on like this, so he went and got a truck to take the furniture back.

Driving the truck was Arnaldo Arias Echenique, who owned the furniture store I worked in and who later left Cuba. He had been lined up through his brother Mario, who was a member of the July 26 Movement.

As they were preparing to take the furniture out, they put me inside the cabinet, a tiny two-door cabinet I was able to fit into because of my small size. Then they loaded the cabinet, with me in it, onto the truck, and put the living room set in front of it. That's how they got me out.

I was taken to Santa Clara, where I was picked up by a compañero named Morejón, one of the July 26 Movement's leaders in Sagua, who later betrayed the revolution.

It's a story the old people in town still talk about. "The guy escaped in a cabinet."

"I helped. I helped," everyone claims.

There are about a thousand people in Sagua who claim to have helped me escape.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Guiteras (1906–1935)—Student leader of struggles against the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado in 1920s and 1930s. A leader of anti-imperialist forces during the 1933 revolutionary upsurge that overthrew the Machado regime, he became interior minister in the Hundred Days Government brought to power by that upsurge in September 1933 and overthrown in January 1934 in a coup by Batista. Guiteras was murdered in January 1935, as he was leading the clandestine struggle against the regime.

## FROM PATHFINDER

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# Cuban revolutionaries meet with farmers in southern Georgia

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN,  
CHESSIE MOLANO,  
AND CHRIS HOEPPNER

VALDOSTA, Georgia—"The U.S. government has attacked the Cuban Revolution from the beginning," said Víctor Dreke. "They have tried to assassinate Fidel Castro and other leaders, invade our shores, and carry out economic warfare. But none of this has stopped us."

Addressing a public meeting October 27 in this town in southern Georgia, Dreke said, "The revolution that triumphed in Cuba on Jan. 1, 1959, was carried out to give land to those who work it. We made health care free for all. We carried out a literacy campaign so all would be able to read and write. We ended discrimination against blacks.

"Cuba sent combatants to take part in liberation struggles throughout Africa—in the Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, Angola, Ethiopia, and Congo-Brazzaville," he said. "In all those countries Cuba came at the request of the people fighting for their liberation." The Cubans asked for nothing in return, he said, "leaving only our blood."

That internationalist solidarity has been a central theme of the monthlong speaking tour in several U.S. cities by Cuban revolutionary Víctor Dreke on "Cuba and Africa: 1959 to Today." Accompanying him was Ana Morales, a doctor and leader of Cuba's medical missions to Africa. The meeting in Valdosta was sponsored by the People's Tribunal, a civil rights organization in southern Georgia founded in 1999 in response to the police killing of Willie James Williams in Lowndes County.

"Here are two people who are history makers," said People's Tribunal leader Willie Head in introducing the invited speakers to the meeting, which drew 50 people. "Victor Dreke," he noted, "has been a leader of the Cuban Revolution for half a century."

Dreke joined the revolutionary movement against the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship as a teenager in the mid-1950s. After the revolutionary victory in 1959, he was one of the commanders of the fight against counterrevolutionary bands in the Escambray mountains of central Cuba. In 1965 he served as second in command to Ernesto Che Guevara of a column of Cuban internationalist combatants in the Congo. He headed Cuba's internationalist mission in Guinea-Bissau, fighting alongside Amílcar Cabral in the war for in-

dependence from Portugal. Since then he has helped lead Cuba's internationalist work in Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of Guinea, and other African countries. He is also a leader of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution.

Head introduced Ana Morales, a doctor and professor at the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana. She led the Cuban medical mission in Guinea-Bissau in 1985 and helped found the Cuban-donated medical school there.

"I myself am a product of the Cuban revolution," said Morales, whose father was a dockworker in Havana. "Only because of the Cuban Revolution could I become a doctor and participate in bringing medical aid provided by Cuba to the African people."

In the discussion session, one person remarked that the big-business media hopes "that after Fidel Castro is gone the revolution will be over. What can you tell us about the ability of the younger generation in Cuba to carry on the revolution?"

"I have complete confidence in the younger generation," said Dreke. "After Fidel's generation and my generation are gone, our children and grandchildren will fight to defend the land, and the imperialists will not be able to bring back discrimination and oppression—just as the children and grandchildren of farmers here continue the fight to keep the land on the farms we visited today."

## Visits to two farms

Dreke was referring to visits to two farms earlier that day. In the morning, Willie Head welcomed more than 30 people to his vegetable and hog farm. They included students and workers from Miami, Tampa, and Atlanta, as well as members of the Atlanta Africa-Cuba Speakers Committee. Among them was Dr. Kwame-Osagyefo Kalimara, a member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

Gladys Williams, a representative of the People's Tribunal, assured Dreke and Morales that they would meet a warm welcome among working people in Valdosta. However, she said, "you may not find the U.S. government as friendly as we found Cuba's."

Williams was referring to her visit to Cuba in February 2000 with Head and four other farmers from the United States. The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) organized the fact-finding trip. In May of



Militant/Arline Rubinstein  
Above, farmer Willie Head, left, gives tour on October 27 of his farm near Pavo, Georgia, to Ana Morales, center, Víctor Dreke, and others. Right, Dreke and Morales visit longtime local farmer Rosa Lee Murphy.

that year Head returned to Cuba along with other U.S. farmers to participate in ANAP's national convention.

"As you drive around in the countryside you will notice that some farms look a lot nicer than others," Head observed. That is one sign, he said, "of the U.S. government's discriminatory practices against Black farmers. There has been a long struggle in this area by Black farmers to hold onto the land.

"It's a struggle to own land here and be Black," he said.

Head is active in the fight by farmers to retain their land and in opposition to the discriminatory practices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"My name is written on the land," he said. "This farm belonged to my grandfather, my father, me, and hopefully my children."

Government officials, by their practices, "deliberately do not allow us the opportunities to farm," he said. Becoming indebted, "we lose the land to them and become peasants without land. What we do plant is out of our own sheer will. This has been our fight for the last 20 years."

Over the past century, the debt squeeze and government-sanctioned discrimination, along with racist lynchings and other terror campaigns, drove many farmers off their land. In 1920, Black farmers owned 15 million acres of land; today they own 2 million.

Some working farmers in the South have formed cooperatives to pool resources to organize the sale of their produce as well as to try to control the cost of farm inputs. Head

noted the contrast between cooperatives in the United States and those in Cuba, which are formed voluntarily by small farmers under the agrarian reform laws.

Cooperatives in the United States are "driven by capitalism," he said. "The system will allow a cooperative of Blacks limited access to markets and funds. But the large white land owners dominate the markets and funding to pay for labor, packaging, machinery. We can create a cooperative but the pace of improvement is slow."

Pointing to 40 acres of unplanted land on his farm, Head explained, "In Cuba, as long as you work the land you are able to stay on the farm. Here you may own the land but often you can't plant it because you don't have the funds."

He added, "We need a revolution in this country. We know you made one in Cuba and that we need to learn how you did it."

Cuban revolutionaries, said Dreke, "don't consider ourselves to be the teachers of the world. But some of us come from the time when peasants were mistreated, when Batista's army burned their houses to force them off the land, when peasant women were not able to give birth in hospitals, when both black and white peasants suffered."

## Land for those who work it

"Cuba broke from that past in 1959 with the triumph of the revolution," Dreke said. "The agrarian reform stated, 'The land is for those who work it' and gave land to the peasants. In this fight skin color didn't matter—they all united to defend the land."

The Cuban agrarian reform law of May 1959 set a limit of 1,000 acres on individual holdings, and resulted in the confiscation of vast estates, a large percentage of which were owned by U.S. families and corporations. Some 100,000 peasant families received title to the land they tilled. The second agrarian reform law, passed in October 1963, confiscated landholding above 165 acres from the remaining 10,000 capitalist farmers in Cuba, bringing property relations on the land in line with those already established through the expropriation of capitalist-owned industry in the latter half of 1960.

After a tour of Willie Head's farm, the Cuban visitors and their entourage traveled in a 10-car caravan to the farm of Rosa Lee Murphy, 88. She gave Dreke and Morales a brief history of the Dry Lake farm community where her land is located. At one time, she said, "They wouldn't sell cars to Blacks, so the children couldn't go anywhere. We couldn't do anything but buy land next to our relatives. Then the county government realized Blacks might own all of Brooks County, and they started to sell us cars so we would leave—this was to help the plantations and the wealthy people. This is our history."

Several of the youth who took part in the two events of the day commented on how much they had learned from being part of this exchange between Cuban revolutionaries and U.S. farmers. Nils Arrington, a music student at the University of Miami, and others had found out about the trip the previous day at a demonstration protesting the U.S. war moves against Iraq. "I've had more education in the last couple of hours," Arrington said, "than in the last two years of college."

## Atlanta daily interviews Víctor Dreke

The following article appeared in the October 30 issue of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. It was titled, "Che's work in Africa given new scrutiny: Author who aided him there hopes to demystify his hero." Víctor Dreke was interviewed while in Atlanta as part of a six-city U.S. speaking tour.

BY MONI BASU

The worldwide interest in Ernesto "Che" Guevara, whether as stylish revolutionary or a historical figure, endures more than four decades after he was slain by U.S.-assisted Bolivian troops. But to Cuba's faithful Fidelistas, Che's legacy remains even more vivid.

"Some people have tried to mystify Che, but for us, he was flesh and bones," said Víctor Dreke, who was Guevara's second in command in Cuba's failed military ventures into the Congo.

Much of Guevara's character was revealed in his African diaries, published last year, and in Dreke's book, published earlier this year, called "From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution."

Dreke, 64, visiting the United States for the first time, is in Atlanta this week to talk about Cuba's relationship with African nations.

Now the vice president of the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association, Dreke is meeting with black Georgia farmers, speaking at Clark Atlanta University and Spelman College, touring the Auburn Avenue historic

district and the Martin Luther King Jr. site and talking to civil rights veterans Tyrone Brooks, the Rev. Tim McDonald and the Rev. C.T. Vivian.

In an interview this week, Dreke talked about race relations and why Castro sent his beloved friend Che to fight in post-colonial wars in Africa.

Dreke and more than 100 other Cuban volunteers—all black except Che—followed their commandante into the Congo after the assassination of socialist leader Patrice Lumumba shortly after independence. There they fought alongside the remnants of Lumumba's nationalist movement.

As Dreke recalled, Che brimmed with courage and zeal in his quest to help Laurent Kabila's Simba rebels oust the U.S.-supported government. But Dreke said Che faced faulty intelligence and deeply divided, ill-trained Congolese fighters.

"We had other misconceptions, too," Dreke wrote in his book. "Speaking truthfully, almost nobody here knew anything about Africa. Our image was from Tarzan movies—Tarzan and Cheeta the monkey." Dreke blamed textbooks written by capitalists in pre-revolutionary days for Cubans' ignorance about their black brethren across the Atlantic.

The Congo experience led to Cuban troops in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and other African nations freshly freed from colonial rule. The United States accused Castro of exporting revolution; the Cubans claimed affinity with black Africans struggling against racism.

"The brutal policy of apartheid is being

# 'We go to Africa to pay our debt to humanity'

Continued from front page

teachers, technicians, and other volunteers carry out internationalist missions in a number of African countries.

"The only thing that Cuba has brought back from Africa is our 2,000 combatants who fell in battle," Dreke said. Unlike the imperialist powers that come to plunder the continent, "We don't own any property or companies in Africa. The only thing we have in Africa is our sweat—and the hearts of the African people."

"As Fidel has said, Cuba has gone to Africa to pay part of our debt to humanity, which in truth is unpayable," Dreke stated, referring to Cuban president Fidel Castro. "We are indebted to the African continent and to other peoples of the world."

Dreke replied to questions on a range of subjects, from the part played by women in African liberation struggles, to the Cuban Revolution today, to the role of the International Monetary Fund and other imperialist lending institutions in the Third World.

## Cuba will not go back to capitalism

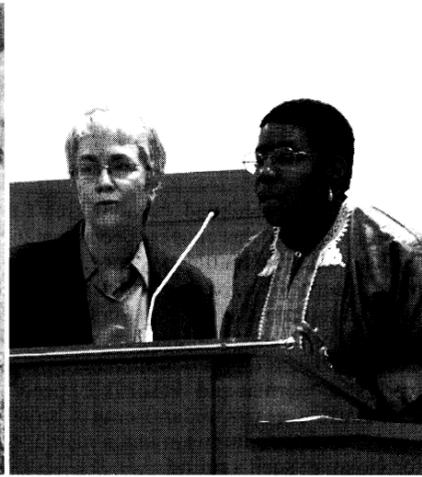
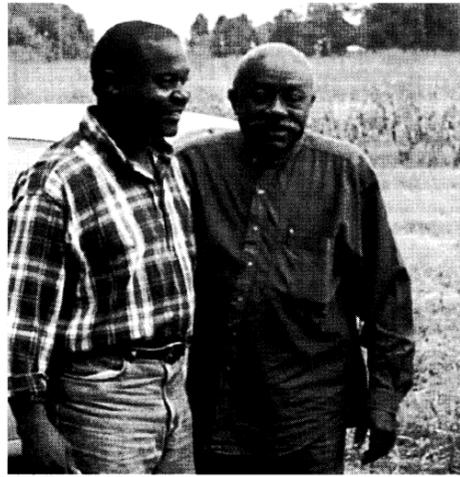
When a student asked whether capitalism is being reintroduced in Cuba today, Dreke replied that while Cuba has had to develop tourism and other sources of hard currency, capitalist rule was overthrown four decades ago. "Capitalism doesn't exist in Cuba. It died on January 1, 1959—forever. And when the present generations pass away, capitalism will continue to be dead."

"Do you know what capitalism in Cuba was?" he said. "Women did not have rights. There was racial discrimination—whites went to one park and Blacks had to go to another. The land belonged to the rich. The poor did not have land. The poor did not have houses. They couldn't study—half a million people or more were illiterate. The army would beat people in the streets."

"When you want to think about capitalism, think about what's happening in the United States," he concluded. "You are our brothers and sisters, but capitalism is not."

Altogether, more than 700 people attended meetings in Georgia for Dreke and for Ana Morales, who has helped lead Cuba's medical missions in Africa. The Atlanta Africa-Cuba Speakers Committee organized their speaking engagements in both Atlanta and Valdosta. The committee involved faculty members and students at Clark Atlanta University (CAU), Spelman College, and Morehouse College. It received broad support from student groups, including the Dark Tower Project, Meeting of the Minds, SASSAFRAS, Spark O.N.E., and the Ujamaa Society.

Dr. Marvin Haire, the president of the National Association of Black Political Scientists and professor of political science at Clark Atlanta, convened weekly meetings of the local tour committee. Other members of the body included Kwaku Danso, chair of the International Affairs and Development at CAU; Sobukwe Shukura of the All-



Militant/Maceo Dixon  
Top left, farmer Willie Head (left) and Victor Dreke during farm visit. Above, Ana Morales (right) speaking at the Interdenominational Theological Center. More than 700 people attended meetings in Georgia for the two Cuban revolutionaries. Left, Patricia Rodney, director of the Master of Public Health Program at the Morehouse School of Medicine, and wife of slain Guyanese anti-imperialist leader Walter Rodney, speaking at the meeting held at Spelman College in Atlanta.

African People's Revolutionary Party; and Dr. Kwame-Osagyefo Kalimara, a professor at Spelman College and founding member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. Danso, formerly Ghana's ambassador to Central America and the Caribbean, already knew Dreke and Morales from their work in Guinea-Bissau.

The committee organized an airport welcome by 25 people to greet Dreke and Morales on their October 26 arrival, followed by a well-attended reception. One activist in the committee who works as a printer at the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* secured a feature interview with Dreke by that paper (see page 10.)

## Cuba's medical missions in Africa

A high point of the tour was a presentation by Ana Morales on Cuba's medical missions in Africa before a packed auditorium of 300 enthusiastic young people at Spelman College. Morales was introduced by Kathleen Phillips-Lewis, chair of the school's African Diaspora and the World program.

"In Africa 28 million people are infected with HIV," said Morales. "Cuba is ready to help Africa. The main thing we have to offer is our human resources. If other countries also help, Cuba is offering to send 4,000 doctors, medical staff, and teachers to create 20 medical schools on the African continent that can train 1,000 doctors a year. We have also offered to send specialists to direct a campaign for AIDS prevention, diagnostic equipment, and anti-retroviral treatment for 30,000 patients."

"How is it possible for Cuba to offer all of this solidarity? The key is the human capital: the cultural level Cuba has reached through our revolution, the high level of consciousness and confidence of the population."

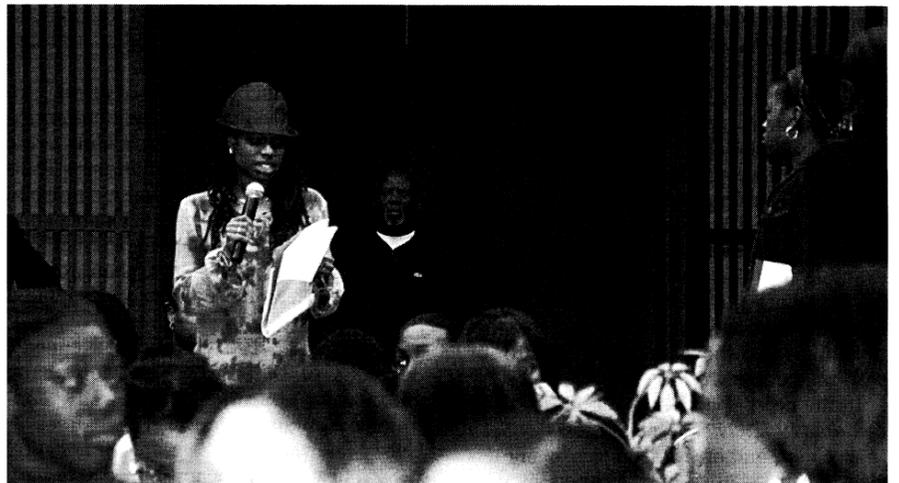
Before the Cuban Revolution, Morales said, "our national health system had the same kind of problems other countries have. But there was a social transformation. In a discussion with medical students in the early years of the revolution Ernesto Che Guevara explained that to be a revolutionary doctor, first you have to make a revolution."

Before the meeting 60 people attended a reception at the Women's Research and Resource Center hosted by Dr. M. Bahati Kuumba, associate director of the center, to welcome Dreke and Morales to Spelman College. Patricia Rodney, director of the Master of Public Health Program in the Community Health and Preventive Medicine Department of Morehouse School of Medicine, and wife of Guyanese anti-imperialist leader Walter Rodney, brought her class to the reception.

During the seven-day visit local Cuba solidarity activists also hosted a dinner and meeting, which discussed the next stage in the defense campaign for five Cuban revolutionaries who have been locked up in federal prisons on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage. Atlanta will be the location of the next round of legal proceedings

in the case of the five patriots, whose "crime" consisted of gathering information on Florida-based counterrevolutionary groups that have a history of assaults on Cuba.

Attending the meeting were a student leader from Spelman College, activists from the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, Atlanta Network on Cuba, Green Party, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, National Center for Human Rights Education, Project South Institute to Eliminate Poverty and Genocide, and Socialist Workers Party. A planning meeting for defense of the Cuban Five is scheduled for November 6.



Militant/Maceo Dixon  
Student at Spelman College asking question at meeting attended by some 300 students.

## Struggle against racism

At the dinner one of the questions concerned the struggle against racism in Cuba.

Before the revolution, Dreke said, "Blacks and whites in Cuba were segregated." Poor whites were also segregated from rich whites, he noted.

"There were schools that were practically for whites only. Our beaches were private beaches, our hospitals were private hospitals, our high schools were mostly private and it was almost impossible for many poor people to go to the public schools."

"The revolution did away with all that—and not just with laws" but in practice, Dreke said.

Dreke pointed out that his book, *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*, describes how after the victory of the revolution "we did away with the ropes that had been set up in parks to keep Blacks and whites apart." But from the beginning, he said, Fidel Castro had explained that "you could not wipe out racism simply with laws, because it was something that was in the minds of people. It was going to take hard work."

In a report to the Third Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1986, Dreke said, Castro explained that "there was something that could still be seen as a racial problem. Everybody had the same rights, but

Fidel was not satisfied with that," arguing that further steps were needed to bring both Blacks and women into "leadership positions at all levels." (The speech is printed in *New Internationalist* no. 6 under the title "Renewal or Death.")

Accompanied by students and workers the two Cuban revolutionaries visited the "Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America" exhibit at the Martin Luther King historical site. Several of the students were originally from Haiti, Cuba, Cape Verde Islands, and Monserrat.

Tyronne Brooks, a civil rights veteran and president of the Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials, sponsored a luncheon for the two Cuban guests at Paschal's restaurant in Atlanta's historic West End community—a restaurant in which Martin Luther King had an office in the early days of the civil rights movement. Others at the luncheon included Connie Tucker of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice and Atlanta attorney Don Edwards.

Dreke and Morales also participated in a November 1 ribbon-cutting ceremony at the grand opening of the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine. Later they were given a tour of the Southwest Hospital.

Ninety people attended the last meeting of the tour at the Interdenominational Theological Center. Mack Jones, the recent department chair of political science at CAU, introduced the two guests. "Let me start with two of my assumptions," he said. "First, that the most important and the most outstanding international action in the last half century was the triumph and consolidation of the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Revolution demonstrated to the world and especially to the poor countries of the world that there is an alternate path of development. And then, that the most egregious affront to humanity in the last 50 years has been the unrelenting assault of the American government on the Cuban Revolution."

At the meeting, three student members of the Atlanta Africa-Cuba Speakers Committee—Martha Ramirez, Pearl Dorga and

Claressa Dubbery—urged young people to attend the congress of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students (OCLAE) that will be held in Guadalajara, Mexico, November 29–December 2.

## Cuba and Africa: 1959 to Today Speaking engagements for Víctor Dreke and Ana Morales

### Tampa, Florida

**November 11**

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**November 12**

University of South Florida 6:00 p.m.  
Education Building, TECO Room

### Boston, Massachusetts

**November 14–15**

For more information contact the Africa-Cuba Speakers Committee; c/o Howard University NAACP, 2400 6th St. NW, Suite 118, Washington, D.C. 20059.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

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**The Struggle for a United Ireland** Fri. November 15, 7:30 p.m. Both events at 168 Bloomfield., 2nd Floor. Donation: \$5. Tel: (973) 481-0077.

### NEW YORK

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**The Crisis of Imperialism and the Fight for a United Ireland.** Speaker: Mark Gilsdorf, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Nov. 8, 7:30 p.m. 545 8th Avenue, 14th Floor. Donation: \$5. Tel: (212) 695-7358.

Upper Manhattan

**Oppose U.S. Threats against north Korea!** Speaker: Naomi Craine, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Nov. 8, 7:30 p.m.

**The OCLAE Conference in Guadalajara and the Fight against Imperialism in Latin America Today.** Speaker: Amy Roberts, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Nov. 15, 6:30 p.m. dinner; 7:30 p.m. program. Both events at 599 W. 187 St., 2nd Floor. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. Tel: (212) 740-4611.

# West Coast longshore unionists work safe in face of bosses' pressure

BY WANDA LYTTLE

LOS ANGELES—"We're not slowing down, we're just working safe. We're talking about tons of steel moving around out there. The lanes are completely congested," said Roosevelt Taylor, who has worked on the Oakland docks for 14 years.

Taylor is one of 10,500 dockworkers organized by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) who are fighting for a new contract in the West Coast ports and against the bosses' drive to lay off union workers and speed up the pace of work.

He spoke in rejection of attempts by the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), which represents the shipping bosses, to win a legal ruling that the ILWU is conducting a slowdown on the docks. The PMA is attempting to use the Taft-Hartley Act in this effort.

On October 8 U.S. president Bush imposed an injunction under this antiunion law to end the PMA's 10-day lockout of dockworkers. The document imposes the terms of the previous contract and requires the ILWU and PMA to hold talks with federal mediators over a 60-day period. The

union is also prohibited from striking for an 80-day period that ends on December 26.

Confirming this antilabor stance, government attorneys have demanded that the union show proof that dockworkers are abiding by the October 8 injunction, which includes a clause that union members must work at a "normal and reasonable speed." Taft-Hartley grants federal courts broad powers to fine or imprison union members for violating such a ruling.

Speaking to *Militant* reporters at the Matson terminal, Taylor said the port bosses' are to blame for the slow progress in clearing the backlog of freight that piled up during the lockout. "Tonight I'm filling a clerk's job," he said. "They have so much work that we're taking on jobs we don't normally do, and we're not as fast as the clerks."

On October 29 the union filed a document in answer to the PMA accusations of a slowdown. The effects of the bosses' lockout, and not any union action, is the reason the ports are congested, it said. It noted problems such as a shortage of yard space, increased traffic on the docks, labor shortages,



Hundreds of longshore workers rally in San Francisco in July. The more than 10,000 West Coast dockworkers are resisting shipping bosses' drive against jobs and safety.

equipment breakdowns, and unsafe working conditions.

Taylor emphasized that safety is a key question for the union fighters. Before the contract expired, he said, workers "were going above and beyond, trying to be 'team players' and comply with the company to

exceed productivity goals. But they turned this on us. We had guys leaping from container to container without safety vests to get the work out. We were shooting ourselves in the foot. Now we're working under the guidelines" laid out in the Pacific Marine Safety Code, he said.

Commenting on the government's partisan stance in the October 21 *Dispatcher*, the union journal, Tom Price observed, "From the very beginning the employers knew they had allies in Washington." The article was entitled "Locked out and Shaft-Hartley'ed."

Before the lockout, wrote Price, "Director of Homeland Security Tom Ridge told the union any strike action would be a national security issue.... All PMA had to do was present its concessions and hold out until President Bush did its dirty work for it."

"PMA's initial proposal slashed jobs, cut medical benefits, and undercut the hiring hall longshore workers struck coastwise to establish in 1934."

Union members are organizing to defend safety conditions, noted Price. "After five fatalities on the docks in six months, the union was simply observing safety rules as established in the contract." Nine workers have been killed over the life of the 1999-2002 contract.

Meanwhile, echoing the arguments for "national security" used by Bush in wielding the act, a bipartisan task force set up by the Council on Foreign Relations to study terrorism recently recommended "immediate action to better secure the nation's ports, roads, and railways," according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Bill Kalman in San Francisco contributed to this article.

## 1962: How Kennedy planned invasion of Cuba

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Forty years after Washington pushed the world to the edge of nuclear war in what is widely known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, U.S. capitalist politicians and the media continue to cover up the truth about those events. They portray the conflict as simply a Cold War confrontation between two superpowers over Soviet missiles, virtually leaving Cuba out of the picture. According to this myth, it was President John F. Kennedy's coolheadedness that pulled the world from the brink of a holocaust. Apologists for the Kennedy administration, such as former Kennedy adviser Arthur Schlesinger, have long insisted that the U.S. government had no intentions of launching an invasion of Cuba at that time or before.

In fact, however, the crisis was not about Soviet missiles but about the Cuban Revolution and the determination of the U.S. billionaire families to crush the "dangerous" example that Cuba's workers and farmers set by taking political power, overturning capitalist rule, and embarking on a socialist revolution that shows the road forward for working people worldwide.

In the newly published Pathfinder book *October 1962: The 'Missile' Crisis as Seen from Cuba*, author Tomás Diez, using declassified U.S. government papers as well as a range of Cuban sources, documents Washington's plans for a large-scale military assault on Cuba in 1962.

In April 1961, after 72 hours of hard-fought combat, Cuba's revolutionary armed forces and popular militias crushed a U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs. From that day on, as Diez's book demonstrates in detail, "U.S. policy makers at the highest levels acted on the conclusion that the revolutionary government of Cuba

could be overthrown only by direct U.S. military action," notes Mary-Alice Waters, one of the book's editors, in her preface.

Within days of the U.S. defeat at the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy created a working committee made up of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, CIA director Allen Dulles, Admiral Arleigh Burke, and Gen. Maxwell Taylor, head of the committee, to draw up plans for a series of covert military actions aimed at creating conditions that could allow direct U.S. armed intervention and the overthrow of the revolutionary government. Their plan assigned the Pentagon a leading role in these actions.

The CIA launched a plan of terror, Operation Patty, designed to carry out armed actions throughout the island leading to the assassination of Cuban revolutionary leaders Fidel and Raúl Castro and a simulated attack on the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo that could provide a pretext for a direct U.S. military intervention. The Cuban government uncovered these plans and captured the plotters.

On April 29, 1961, President Kennedy, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and other top U.S. officials reviewed a "contingency" plan to deploy U.S. forces in Cuba. The initial plans called for 60,000 U.S. troops, the number estimated necessary to gain "complete control of the island... within 8 days," according to the document. McNamara ordered the Pentagon to begin inducting Cuban counterrevolutionaries into the U.S. armed forces to be able to mask a direct U.S. invasion.

### Operation Mongoose

In November 1961 the Kennedy administration launched "Operation Mongoose," under the personal guidance of the president's brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy—a multifaceted campaign of sabotage, subversion, and assassinations. The guidelines for this program, drafted in March 1962, stated: "In undertaking to cause the overthrow of the target government, the U.S. will make maximum use of indigenous [Cuban] resources, internal and external, but recognizes that final success will require decisive U.S. military intervention. b. Such indigenous resources as are developed will be used to prepare for and justify this intervention and thereafter to facilitate and support it."

Between January and August 1962, U.S.-organized forces carried out

5,780 actions—sabotage against industrial targets, burning of canefields, assassination attempts against Cuban leaders, acts of piracy, and infiltration of commando groups on Cuban territory.

Throughout 1962 the U.S. government also began organizing several rounds of military maneuvers to train soldiers for an invasion and justify internationally the presence of large U.S. military forces near Cuba.

In April 1962 the U.S. military conducted an exercise called Landphibex, involving four aircraft carriers and more than 50 warships. In this exercise, carried out on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, 40,000 marines landed on an "enemy island" and established a beachhead.

In August the U.S. Air Force took part in Swift Strike 2 in North and South Carolina to train units in air support for troops. The operation included four army divisions, six squadrons of tactical fighter planes, and two squadrons of tactical reconnaissance aircraft, totaling 70,000 soldiers and 500 aircraft.

In September, another large exercise—Jupiter Spring—was conducted with airdrops of three divisions of the 18th Airborne Corps. Additional air, land, and sea troops, including ships from the Mediterranean and Pacific fleets, reinforced the Atlantic Command.

### 'Track D: Full-scale invasion'

These aggressive moves culminated during the October 1962 crisis. Kennedy established a special group of top government officials, later known as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm), to supervise Washington's moves. On October 17, ExComm discussed a series of military options, including a naval blockade that could lead step by step to air strikes and what they called "Track D—Full-scale invasion, to 'take Cuba away from Castro.'"

Washington went ahead with a naval blockade of Cuba, an act of war disguised under the name "quarantine."

On October 24, the U.S. armed forces went to the highest level of combat readiness. Several overlapping military exercises involving tens of thousands of U.S. troops, including a mock naval landing on Vieques supposedly to overthrow an imaginary tyrant named Ortsac—Castro spelled backward.

The troop deployment was as follows: Navy: 85,000 men and 183 warships, including 40,000 combat marines ready for an invasion.

Air Force: 148,000 troops, including 15,000 troops and 1,000 aircraft sent to Florida. A quarter of Washington's B-52 bombers, with their nuclear payloads, were kept in the air at all times.

Army: 100,000 troops were mobilized, including 14,500 paratroopers—larger than the force that landed on the beaches of

Continued on Page 5

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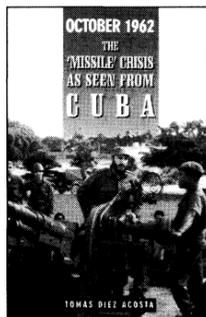
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By Tomás Diez Acosta

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Fidel Castro, November 1, 1962

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## LETTERS

### Congratulate socialists

I am writing in regards to Connie Allen's attempt to run for Senate in place of Strom Thurmond. I would like to congratulate Ms. Allen for her platform. I think she has a very good perspective on life in America and what the true reasons are behind our "war" with Iraq.

I live in a state completely devoid of any labor movement, the Republicans control 97 percent of elected positions. It is time for a change, a social change that will only come at the hands of the working class. It is time to end two-party domination of our government! The current parties exist only to maintain the existing power structure. This structure was designed with the purpose of keeping the rich, rich and the poor, poor. As long as Americans continue to work to consume we will be left in a position of continually begging for handouts from the rich.

Trickledown handouts are not a solution, they only serve to widen the existing chasm between laborers and management, laborers and CEO's, laborers and true happiness. Please Ms. Allen, do not give up, this may not be your year. But soon more will follow you and we will have socially-minded labor reformists running in every major election.

You are lighting the way for the next generation of this nation's leaders, and I thank you.

Jamie C. Bailey  
Pocatello, Idaho

**A fast shuffle**—“A U.S.-led ouster of President Saddam Hussein could open a bonanza for



Harry Ring

American oil companies, long banished from Iraq, scuttling oil deals between Baghdad and Russia, France and other countries and reshuffling world petroleum markets, according to industry officials and Iraqi opposition leaders.”—*Washington Post*

**And a cold deck**—“France and

Russia have oil companies and interests in Iraq. They should be told that if they are of assistance in moving Iraq toward a decent government we’ll do the best we can to ensure that the new government and American companies work closely with them.”—James Woolsey ex-chief CIA.

**Also wind-free?**—Pentagon officials now admit that in the 1960s they secretly released, for test purposes, highly lethal nerve agents in five states. In agreement with their government, the tests were also conducted in the United Kingdom and Canada. Assured the Pentagon’s top health brass, “They were not inhabited areas. They were open areas.”

**The ‘justice’ system**—Apparently going at a rapid clip, a Den-

ver patrol cop killed Bruce Rice, a homeless man, on a highway. Rice was catapulted 294 feet in the air and tumbled another 120 feet. The cop, Christian Deviny, was convicted of careless driving and fined \$100, plus four points added to his driving record.

**How sensitive**—“You would think the human species would do everything it could to get rid of smallpox. But in the end we can’t let it go, because it’s a weapon of power. There you have the flaw in the human heart.”—Richard Preston author of *The Demon in the Freezer*.

**How immoral can they get**—In a major new corporate scandal, a survey disclosed that workers are more likely to take sick time to attend to family needs rather than actual ill-

ness.—News item

**Yo, Adolf**—“Exams are not there to record how well the nation’s children are improving over the years. They are there to separate the bright from the dim.”—The October 5 issue of the prestigious London magazine, *The Economist*.

**Shut down and make a real bundle**—“Honeywell International Inc., had a third-quarter profit of \$412 million because of cost cuts, and said it plans to fire as many as 5,000 more workers as sales to factories and plane makers drop.”—News item.

**More than a fender bender**—On the past two years, the Ford company market has fallen from \$19 billion to \$7.8 billion. Its debts load is \$170 billion and company execs expect to

borrow another \$22 billion to \$32 billion next year. “The company has barely been making enough money to cover its interest expenses over the last year,” said a *New York Times* analyst. “There’s also the issue of unfunded pension liabilities. Ford is right on the edge of the precipice.”—*New York Times*, October 10

**P.S.**—The preceding item came from a veteran contributor. But we were a bit skeptical. Was the Ford crisis that deep? The following week Ford reported that in the third quarter of last year, it took a loss of \$326 million. The *Los Angeles Times* commented, “The major automakers [Ford and General Motor] have seen their share prices battered in recent weeks on concerns about industry growth, and the overall economic picture.”—*Los Angeles Times*, October 17.

# Nebraska meat packers win first union contract

BY LISA ROTTACH

OMAHA, Nebraska—Production workers at the Swift slaughterhouse here approved their first union contract October 23. The bosses, after dragging out negotiations for nearly six months, announced a tentative agreement covering 500 workers at Swift, previously ConAgra Beef.

In the days following the contract vote, workers belonging to the negotiating committee organized a table in both plant cafeterias to sign up fellow workers for membership in United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 271. Nebraska is a “right-to-work” state, so each worker must individually join the union.

As each new member signed up, they received a “union yes” sticker for their hard hat in either Spanish or English. “There was a lot of spirit on the shop floor,” said a 21-year veteran of the kill floor. “All those union stickers on hard hats everywhere all of a sudden—that was the result of many, many months of work. People are proud, and are walking with more authority.”

He added, “The company doesn’t like it, but too bad. This helps them see that now, when they want to go after one of us, they will have a bigger problem.”

The contract provides for modest wage increases of 35 cents an hour beginning immediately, with an additional 30 cents next year. Seniority rights, medical benefits, and job bidding stipulations are spelled out in the agreement. Probation is reduced from three months to a maximum of two months.

Other provisions give some protection to immigrant workers, who comprise roughly 90 percent of the workforce. Workers will maintain their seniority when they change their names or social security numbers, and are entitled to unpaid leaves of up to 30 days to take care of immigration matters.

“I’m glad we got the contract and our raise,” said a kill floor worker who helped lead the organizing drive. “This was another step for us in getting the company to respect us and to win some dignity. But the company is going to seek revenge, because now their level of exploitation is going to have a limit.”

“The fact we have a contract is a big step,” said Yolanda Cruz, a trimmer with 15 months in the plant. “Before, they could just fire you, just show you the door. Now the company must officially recognize us as workers with rights.”

The 20-month contract will expire in June 2004, which coincides with the contract

cycle of the plant’s unionized mechanics.

“This is an important victory for everybody because now the company sees that the majority of the workers in the plant have the union, not just us mechanics,” said a 38-year-old union mechanic. “Now when we come to our next contract vote we’ll be fighting at the same time.”

## First union victory at local cut-and-kill

In May workers voted in the union by a 2-1 margin. This was the first union victory at one of the cut-and-kill operations in this area since the UFCW and a community group called Omaha Together/One Community (OTUC) launched an organizing drive in June 2000. Since then, workers at a smaller sausage plant voted for the UFCW, while the union election was lost at Nebraska Beef, a slaughterhouse with close to 1,000 workers.

The union negotiating committee, consisting of seven workers together with union officials, had been bargaining since mid-June.

Maria Pinto, an eight-year veteran of the kill floor and a member of the workers committee, explained the tactics used by the bosses during these months. “They dragged out negotiations to see if we would lose our drive,” she said. “The longer it goes, the more they thought they could break our union, and later count on less people signing up for membership. They sped up the line, created a lot of pressure and problems. But we kept up the fight, kept on our feet, maintained our unity.”

This working-class unity had been built through an organizing fight that drew on workers’ collective strength as they defended themselves against company attacks.

Workers responded to one such attack on a worker who was scheduled for surgery and had been granted a leave for such purpose. On his last work day before surgery, the company told him he would lose his job if he didn’t return in three days.

“Management thought we wouldn’t defend him because he wasn’t out in front during the organizing drive,” said one of the workers who was active in the union drive. “But the company got a taste of the real union forged in this plant when word spread of this violation. A group of workers visited him in the hospital, and later made some noise in the plant about this outrage. Our union officials won a guarantee of his job upon recovery.” Workers then made up a collection box with his photo, soliciting donations that would help defray his medical insurance costs.

On the week before the contract vote, three union officials walked throughout the shop floor talking with workers about job conditions for the good part of a day, including during the lunch break. Olga Espinoza encouraged co-workers to “come over and talk to our union representatives about any problems or questions we have.”

At a certain point, when it became clear that the bosses were stalling on the negotiations, members of the workers committee who work on the kill floor organized a petition. It asked that during the contract negotiation period the company slow down the line speed and guarantee eight hours of work each day. Nearly all of the workers in the kill department signed the petition in one morning.

“After signing the petition, the company



Militant/ Joe Swanson

Workers at ConAgra (now Swift) meatpacking plant in Omaha, Nebraska, rally for union recognition, September 2000. The UFCW was voted in last May. After six months of stalling, company signed first contract with production workers on October 23.

slowed the line down, and we didn’t even have our contract yet,” said Cruz. After a week, the company pushed the line speed up again.

Commenting on the next steps to build the union in the plant, Espinoza said, “We need to stay united as always. The company will test us, but they also know we’re ca-

pable of defending ourselves as we’ve done before. We have stewards now, which is good, but we must also keep doing what we did before, with workers acting together to defend ourselves.”

Lisa Rottach is a kill floor worker at the Swift plant in Omaha.

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



November 18, 1977

The U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld federal Judge Thomas Griesa’s decision to make files about FBI informers available to attorneys for the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance.

As Griesa explained, the informers’ work has been “the most important activity undertaken by the FBI against the YSA” and SWP. It is a major issue in the socialists’ \$40 million lawsuit against government harassment and disruption.

The spies must be kept secret, says the government, because “anonymity provides a free flow of information.”

Files released in lawsuits and congressional hearings have shown that the FBI does not use informers simply to snoop and collect information for government blacklists (repellent as that work is).

Rather, the informers have also been carrying out disruption plots, burglaries, and other criminal work.

But the socialists intend to press for disclosure. “We intend to fight this issue through to the end,” said Syd Stapleton of the Political Rights Defense Fund, the group organizing support for the lawsuit. “The so-called informer privilege, which is being defended so vigorously by Carter’s Justice Department, is nothing but another ‘national security’ trick to hide government crimes from the American people.”



November 17, 1952

CHICAGO—“Operation Scab,” International Harvester’s big push to smash the strike of farm equipment workers, has been stopped short by the spirited picketing and organized action of the strikers.

The company offensive shifted from the McCormick works over to the Tractor plant after failing to dent the strike in the former plant. The Tractor plant strike-busting moves began with the usual mounting company claims of “workers returning to work,” and this was followed by a barrage of letters to strikers in which an attempt was made to sugar-coat the yellow-dog agreement the company wants to force on the union.

An army of scab-herding foremen began personal calls at the homes of strikers, where they coaxed, pleaded, and finally threatened the workers in an effort to start a back-to-work move. Proposals were adorned with offers of free chauffeur service to and from work, with cigars and whiskey thrown in. The company has also sought to get landlords to evict strikers from their homes.

In spite of all this the Tractor workers have held solidly. Their wives have told foremen off and shown them the door. Despite 13 weeks on the picket line, determination is strong. As one worker put it, “It’s bad enough working at Harvester with a contract to think of going back without one.”

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# The 1930s battles that built the Teamsters union

Printed below is an excerpt from *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for November. It is the story of the 1934 Teamster organizing drive in Minneapolis. Through hard-fought strikes, rank-and-file workers defeated the trucking bosses and the strikebreaking efforts of the employers' "Citizens Alliance," who were aided by the city, state, and federal gov-

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

ernments. Farrell Dobbs, who emerged from the ranks as part of the class-struggle leadership of the strikes, describes how a fighting industrial union movement was built in Minnesota, helping to pave the way for the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Copyright © 1972 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY FARRELL DOBBS

General Drivers Local 574, through which the Communist League launched its trade-union campaign, bore the stamp of business unionism. The concepts involved had been imprinted upon the American Federation of Labor by Samuel Gompers, the founding leader. When Gompers died in 1924 he was succeeded in the AFL presidency by William Green who continued the founder's policies. Business unionism was designed to win acceptance in ruling-class circles by practicing class collaboration. Toward that end AFL officials sought to conduct themselves as "labor statesmen."

Ignoring the great bulk of the nation's workers, who were left to shift for themselves as best they could, the AFL moguls focused on the organization of narrow, privileged craft unions. These were based on various strata of skilled workers. As the better paid component of the working class, their outlook could most readily be warped to the concepts of business unionism. This objective was implemented by setting up little job trusts, through closed-shop contracts with employers, under which only members of the given craft union were hired. AFL officials anxious to get ahead in the movement were taught to accredit complete sanctity to these contracts. Strict control over strikes was maintained and one craft often scabbed on another.

Thus oriented, with their faces turned firmly to the past, the AFL officials presided over a steady decline in national membership strength as the social crisis of the 1930s gathered momentum.

### Workers drawn toward existing unions

On balance, there was little more in Local 574 than an IBT [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] charter with which to begin an organizing campaign. However, this in itself was of paramount importance. Workers becoming newly unionized tend to gravitate toward the official labor movement, no matter what its condition may be at the time. In Minneapolis the AFL was the dominant labor organization and Local 574 was affiliated with it. Any attempt to bypass the AFL and set up an independent union would have been self-defeating. The AFL officialdom would automatically oppose such a step by taking counter measures to draw workers into the existing union structure. Confusion and division would result from which only the bosses could benefit.

By putting a reverse twist on the "general" jurisdiction, it would be possible to derive some advantage from the nature of Local 574's charter. A successful organizing drive could flood the local with new members from all parts of the industry. Before [Teamsters International president Daniel] Tobin could get around to cutting them up into subcrafts, a situation could develop that was beyond his power to control. Such potential was inherent in the trucking industry because it was strategic to the whole economic complex in a commercial city like Minneapolis. This factor made the truck drivers the most powerful body of



Striking workers defend themselves from cop assault in 1934. Communist workers were part of class-struggle leadership forged in Teamsters battles in Midwest.

workers in the town. Their power was further enhanced by the fact that it was difficult to use strikebreakers, since the trucks had to operate on the streets.

To get started in this promising situation two steps were necessary: first, Local 574 had to be induced to accept new members beyond its existing job-trust circle; then a drive could be launched to organize the mass of unorganized workers in the industry and open a struggle for union recognition.

### Communist League in Minneapolis

The leaders of the Communist League in Minneapolis approached these tasks with a well-thought-out conception of the dynamics of the class struggle based on a study of the interrelationship between the situation's positive and negative features. Workers were radicalizing under the goad of economic depression. To mobilize them for action it was necessary to start from their existing level of understanding. In the course of battle a majority could be convinced of the correctness of the Communist League's trade-union policy. They would come to understand that misleadership within the AFL was largely responsible for the fact that not a single strike had been won by any union in the city during the previous decade. To drive the point home it was imperative to show in the opening clash with the bosses that a strike could be won.

The key to all this was the infusion of politically class-conscious leadership into the

union through the cadres of the Communist League. Of course, they could not assume immediate leadership of the union. Their role as leaders would have to develop and be certified through the forthcoming struggles against the employers. To facilitate that objective it was necessary that all party members in the city understand and support the projected Teamster campaign. Toward that end the whole concept was thoroughly discussed in the party branch and firm agreement was reached on the steps to be taken.

Wisecracks of the day spoke pontifically about the "passivity" of the working class, never understanding that the seeming docility of the workers at a given time is a relative thing. If workers are more or less holding their own in daily life and expecting that they can get ahead slowly, they won't tend to radicalize. Things are different when they are losing ground and the future looks precarious to them. Then a change begins to occur in their attitude, which is not always immediately apparent. The tinder of discontent begins to pile up. Any spark can light it, and once lit, the fire can spread rapidly.

In Minneapolis the flames were bound to become widespread because it was not only the coal workers who were being driven toward action to correct an increasingly intolerable situation. Conditions were bad throughout the entire trucking industry. Wages were as low as ten dollars and rarely above eighteen dollars for a workweek ranging from fifty-four to ninety hours.

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## The 'budget crisis' scam

The New York City administration has launched a stepped-up offensive against public employees and needed city services. Mayor Michael Bloomberg has implemented a hiring freeze and cuts in city funding for social services; he projects layoffs and cuts in wages and health-care benefits. And the city fathers are just warming up. Local and state governments across the country are preparing similar assaults.

The big-business politicians use the argument of a "budget deficit" to convince working people to accept these attacks on our living standards. We are supposed to worry about how the government is going to "reduce the deficit."

Bloomberg declares that "everything is on the table" for potential budget cuts—an argument for going after the transit workers, teachers, and other public employees with a meat cleaver. But of course he never even considers putting on the table the billions in interest payments to wealthy bondholders. Just the opposite—the rich coupon-clippers are first in line to get paid.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is pleading poverty too. But transit workers, thousands of whom have turned out for several union rallies, are not buying the propaganda. They are setting an example by fighting to defend advances won in previous struggles. Their fight points to the need for workers to start from the needs of our class, not the profit demands of our exploiters.

Capitalist politicians try to convince us there is a fixed pool of money called a city budget and that when this budget runs into the red they must cut. But there are plenty of resources available. Workers and farmers produce all the immense wealth of society, which is pocketed directly by the billionaire families.

The capitalist economic crisis is fueled by a built-in problem in capitalism—the tendency for the bosses' rates

of profits to decline, which breeds sharper competition between the employers, domestic and international. They try to shore up their profit rates by going after the jobs and social wage of working people at home as they launch wars for greater control of natural resources abroad.

The interests of working people and those of the ruling families are completely counterposed. What is good for them—expanding profits—is at our expense as workers. And when working people fight for and win better work conditions, wages, or medical care, it just means the ruling rich take in slightly less profits. That's *their* problem. It's *their* government and *their* budget.

One of the demands of the New York transit workers is to defend their medical benefits. This issue points to a broader social question for all working people: the need for universal, free health care, nationwide.

In face of layoff threats, the labor movement needs to organize a fight to guarantee jobs for all by shortening the workweek with no cut in pay. A massive public works program funded by the government will also create jobs by building housing, schools, gyms, parks and other social needs of working people.

Rather than the regressive tax system that falls hardest on workers, labor should call for a steeply graduated income tax on the income from profits, dividends, interest, and rents of the capitalists and other wealthy layers.

Instead of having to constantly resist the employers' government and its cops, courts, and armed forces, we need a government of our own—a workers and farmers government. To bring that about will require forging a revolutionary movement by millions that can replace the rule of the billionaire class with the rule of working people and join with other toilers in the worldwide struggle for socialism.

## Build int'l youth conference

The upcoming congress of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students (OCLAE) to be held in Guadalajara, Mexico, provides students and young workers with an opportunity to meet and exchange views with youth from around the Americas who are engaged in struggles against the consequences of imperialist domination.

The conference will bring together young people from a range of countries, political backgrounds, and experiences. They will discuss different aspects of the fight against imperialism's plunder of the wealth and labor of Latin America and the Caribbean.

One central campaign is the demand to cancel the Third World debt, a mechanism through which massive amounts of wealth are transferred into the coffers of the billionaire families in the United States, Canada, and other imperialist countries, while working people are subjected to layoffs and cutbacks in wages, pensions, and other social gains.

A related topic is Washington's use of trade pacts such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas, designed to further pry open the markets of Latin America to imperialist penetration and expand the superexploitation of workers and farmers. Delegates will also take up Plan Colombia, part of an increasing U.S. military presence in the Andean region that is aimed at defending Washington's imperial interests and cracking down on working-class and peasant resistance in the region. Other questions that will be discussed range from the imperialist war drive in the Middle East to protection of the environment.

## Military planes over D.C.

The use of military surveillance aircraft during the criminal investigation into the string of murders in the Washington, D.C., area further encroaches on constitutional protections and broader rights won by working people.

The big-business press reported almost casually that the Montgomery County police and the FBI made the request for assistance to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who quickly agreed to provide RC-7 Airborne Reconnaissance Low aircraft. The planes were flown by military crews with FBI agents on board to send images they took to cops on the ground.

Over the past year, the U.S. rulers have sought to get working people to accept a military presence on U.S. territory, including military planes patrolling cities, National Guard troops searching vehicles at bridges and tunnels in New York and other cities, and armed federal cops on commercial passenger flights. Under the cover of the coming assault on Iraq, U.S. officials recently announced that in the coming months, thousands of National Guard and Army Reserve troops will be deployed at factories, power plants, hospitals, and other facilities in the United States.

These moves build on the steps taken by Washington to establish a North American Command—set up by the Clinton administration and activated last month—in charge of military operations on U.S. territory for the first time since the post-Civil War period. From the passage of the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act, the U.S. armed forces have in

many of the groups and individuals that will attend the OCLAE congress identify with the Cuban Revolution. Among those present will be students and workers seeking to build a worldwide movement against imperialism.

The Algiers world youth festival last summer was an important indication of some of the historic changes in the world, in which the obstacle of Stalinism has been greatly weakened, breaking down barriers that for decades kept revolutionary-minded workers and youth separated from each other. Today, the capitalist economic catastrophe and imperialist drive toward war are pushing more young people into politics, including many who are becoming open to a revolutionary perspective.

The international student congress coincides with the largest book festival in Latin America—the Guadalajara International Book Fair—in which Cuba is this year's featured country. Organizers of the OCLAE meeting have scheduled time for everyone to attend the fair.

Students and young workers are organizing in a number of cities to make plans for the trip. This includes efforts to raise funds for the trip and finding the cheapest way to travel.

Reading and studying some of the main political issues that will be joined at the OCLAE congress is one of the main ways to prepare for the event. A good place to start is Pathfinder books such as *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* and *Capitalism's World Disorder*, as well as *New International* issues on "Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War," "The Opening Guns of World War III," and "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War."

most cases been barred from domestic operations.

The "war on terrorism" has generally been the rationale used to justify the domestic use of the military and infringements on workers' rights. In the case of the Washington area murders, however, this pretext was largely not used. The military joined a regular, albeit sensationalized, police operation—one in which the cops also unleashed gratuitous brutality through widespread roadblocks, arbitrary vehicle searches, and detentions. In this way, the U.S. government is broadening the definition of "homeland security" to include the argument of maintaining a "safe," stable "homeland."

In taking such steps, the capitalist rulers are acting not only to defend their interests today, but in anticipation of the social explosions and labor battles, and other forms of resistance by working people that the long-term crisis of their system will spawn.

The steps toward increased domestic militarization go hand in hand with other attacks on constitutional rights, such as the U.S. government's insistence that by branding individuals "enemy combatants" it can deny due process and legal counsel, not only to workers born abroad but also to U.S. citizens such as Yaser Esam Hamdi and José Padilla, also known as Abdullah al-Muhajir. These attacks are a threat to the ability by working people to organize and fight for our interests against the employers and their government, and should be vigorously opposed.

# Russian government cracks down on Chechens

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as the linchpin for transportation of oil and gas from the rich fields in the Caspian Sea, and has already deployed 200 Green Berets in the territory—along with communications equipment, light weaponry, and vehicles, in a \$64 million package signed with the Georgian government. The special forces will train some 1,200 Georgian soldiers in operations in the Pankisi Gorge, which borders Russia.

Moscow, which still has military bases in Georgia, charges that Pankisi is a base for "international terrorism" and a supply channel for Chechen insurgents. Russian ground troops and warplanes have conducted repeated military search and destroy operations in Georgian territory, including five bombing raids in August. Putin has announced that the Russian military is considering strikes along Georgia's border with Chechnya.

The Russian government is also nervous about the impending U.S.-led imperialist war against Iraq, in which it stands to lose about \$7 billion owed by Baghdad, as well as access to Iraqi oil wealth, if the regime of Saddam Hussein is toppled.

### Conflicts with European Union

Moscow has also come under pressure from the European Union (EU). As a condition for agreeing to Russia's membership in the World Trade Organization, EU officials have been pressing the Russian workers state to open up its vast energy reserves to capitalist competition. Natural gas and crude oil, the country's top export items, are state-owned.

EU representatives have demanded a reduction in Russia's domestic fuel subsidies. "The low price of gas in Russia contributes \$5 billion a year in subsidies to industry a year," complained Herve Jouanjan, the European Commission's director of WTO affairs. Gazprom, the state energy company, sells gas on the domestic market for about \$15 per 1,000 cubic meters, while the export price is about \$95 for the same quantity.

"We accept that gas prices in Russia cannot reach international prices overnight, but we cannot accept that a market economy can be on the basis of subsidies to its industrial sector," said Jouanjan.

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## Putin launches crackdown on Chechens

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Far from expressing regret or offering compensation for its handling of the October 23–26 takeover of a Moscow theater, in which the actions of Russian forces resulted in more than 150 deaths, the government of Russian president Vladimir Putin has stepped up its military and police operations in both Moscow and Chechnya.

Shortly after Russian troops effected their “rescue,” blowing a hole in the wall of the Moscow theater in which some 50 Chechen guerrillas had held 750 city residents, Putin declared the raid to be an “almost impossible” victory, while regretting that “we failed to save everyone.” As the news came out that 118 hostages had been killed by the effects of anesthetic gas pumped into the building under the orders of Russian officers, he moderated his tone only slightly, describing the events as “tragic.”

“Russia will never make any deal with terrorists nor will it give in to any blackmail,” Putin said on October 28 as he announced a military campaign to wage war on “terrorists... whatever their whereabouts.”

Washington, which is pressing for the acquiescence of the government of the workers state in its preparations for war on Iraq and deepening intervention in the Middle East, at first declared support for the Russian action. “The president feels very strongly that the people to blame here are the terrorists... who took hostages and endangered the lives of others,” said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer October 28.

As the facts of the raid were revealed over the following hours, officials changed their tune. According to the *New York Times*, the



Russian helicopter gunship shot down by Chechen guerrillas near Chechnya. Some 85,000 Russian soldiers continue to operate in the region, while Putin unleashes an “antiterrorist” campaign of repression in Moscow and other cities.

U.S. ambassador said the next day that “secrecy about the use of a powerful anesthetic gas may have needlessly raised the toll in Saturday’s raid.”

The Chechen guerrillas had taken over the theater October 23, threatening to kill the hostages and demanding that Moscow withdraw its forces from Chechnya. As the guerrillas’ deadline expired three days later, Russian special forces soldiers pumped the gas into the building. Many of those who

escaped death suffered liver, heart, and kidney damage. As the fumes dissipated the soldiers entered the building. They shot most of the 50 rebels in the head.

Many afflicted hostages were rushed to hospitals, only to die when medical staff, kept in the dark about the nature of the gas, were unable to provide treatment for the poisoning. “Almost everyone would have survived,” said a Russian doctor on October 30, if people had been “helped to breathe with

artificial ventilation while still in the vehicles being brought to the hospitals.”

Another doctor reported that physicians were instructed to describe their patients as “victims of terrorism and violence” rather than gas poisoning.

“They poisoned us like cockroaches,” one woman told the daily newspaper *Kommersant*. A journalist who had helped in negotiations with the hostage-takers told reporters that the “operation was staged to destroy the [Chechen rebels] as a show of strength...but not to free the hostages.”

“Russia will respond with measures that are adequate to the threat to the Russian federation,” said Putin, “striking all the places where the terrorists themselves, the organizers of these crimes and their ideological and financial inspirers are.” He pledged to grant the military wider powers and directed the army brass to draft new guidelines for conducting Moscow’s antiterror operations.

Russia’s lower house of parliament, the Duma, is considering a sweeping bill that, among other measures, would restrict news coverage of “antiterror operations” and bar the media from carrying statements by rebel spokespeople.

On October 31 Russian interior minister Boris Gryzlov announced that several dozen people had been arrested in connection with the hostage crisis as part of a security clampdown. Chechens living in Moscow were a particular target of these operations.

### ‘War is over, but there is no peace’

Moscow has launched two wars over the past decade to crush the independence movement of the largely Muslim people of Chechnya in the northern Caucasus mountains. In 1994–96 the Chechen fighters defeated an invasion army of 30,000 Russian troops. In 1999 Putin launched another war that demolished most of the territory and placed occupying troops in the capital of Grozny, which was in virtual ruins, and other key points.

Today, 85,000 Russian soldiers remain in the region, where up to 80,000 Chechens have died and 35,000 have disappeared over the past three years. Tens of thousands of Chechen refugees have moved into the neighboring republics of Georgia and Ingushetia.

Engaging chiefly in hit-and-run guerrilla actions, the Chechen forces are still capable of inflicting damage. The Russian government admits that at least 4,000 soldiers have been killed in the last three years.

Following the hostage crisis, Russian military forces killed 30 Chechen independence fighters on October 28 near Tsentoroy, a village east of Grozny. The next day a military helicopter was shot down as it prepared to land at the main military base in Chechnya—the fourth Russian helicopter downed in Chechnya in less than three months.

“The war is over, but there is no peace,” remarked Akhmad Kadyrov, the Moscow-appointed administrative head in Chechnya.

The stance of the U.S. government toward these developments has shifted several times as it vacillates between emphasizing its historical hostility to the workers state and seeking to draw Moscow into short-term alliances. While Washington supported the 1994 Russian offensive, it opposed the operations launched in 1999. President William Clinton’s secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, described Moscow’s offensive at the time as “self-isolating.”

More recently, the Bush government has taken advantage of Putin’s eagerness to contribute to the imperialist assault on Afghanistan and cooperate with the placing of U.S. military forces in surrounding countries that are part of the former Soviet Union.

The governments of the imperialist superpower and the workers state face many conflicts of interest. One example is the strategically placed republic of Georgia, right on Russia’s doorstep and a neighbor of Chechnya. Washington views the territory

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## Brazil elections: workers’ expectations rise

BY RÓGER CALERO

With a landslide victory, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Workers Party candidate, was elected president of Brazil October 27. As expected, he defeated his opponent José Serra of the ruling Social Democratic Party by the widest margin ever in Brazil’s presidential elections—61 per cent of the votes. The two candidates faced each other in a runoff after the Workers Party (PT) candidate fell short of an absolute majority vote by 3 percent in the first round of voting October 6.

At a victory rally, da Silva said he would run an administration to “govern with all of Brazilian society, to build a more fair, more brotherly and more united country.” He declared that the new government represented an “alternative project,” and repeated his campaign promise to create millions of new jobs, end hunger in Brazil, and carry out social spending. At the same time, he vowed to honor the country’s foreign debt obligations to imperialist banks as well as the conditions demanded by them.

Da Silva’s election registered a radicalization among many in Brazil—workers, farmers, and middle-class layers that have been devastated by the effects of the worldwide depression and the outgoing regime’s austerity policies.

“A majority voted for a new economic model of growth and development,” said da Silva. “But they know this cannot be done with magic.” Describing what lies ahead for working people, he said that “the difficult course that Brazil will be confronting is going to demand austerity in the use of public monies and implacable combat against corruption.”

The president-elect announced the creation of a new government agency to run a food program. He said that if by the end of his term each Brazilian is able to eat three times a day, he will have realized his “life mission.”

Maintaining the conciliatory stance he adopted during the election campaign, he stressed that the new administration’s main priority will be to set up a “social pact” in which all society can participate in a “government of unity and national accord” to confront the crisis.

Despite reassurances by da Silva that he

will stick to the terms demanded by the International Monetary Fund for a scheduled \$30 billion emergency loan, imperialist investors have responded with skepticism to the new government. Foreign banks and investors have pulled billions of dollars out of the country, driving down the national currency and bond values. Capitalist commentators continue to warn about a possible default in payments toward Brazil’s ballooning debt of \$260 billion.

Investors will be watching Lula closely for “reassurance that he’s not a crazy person and he’s going to follow good policies that will create stability for the Brazilian currency,” said U.S. treasury secretary Paul O’Neill. The U.S. official said that he thought Lula “will follow the policies that [current president Fernando Henrique] Cardoso has been following and they will be okay.”

Leading up to the elections, the PT candidate won the support of sections of Brazil’s capitalist class and disillusioned middle class that blame the policies of the current administration for the four-year-long depression. These layers criticized the Cardoso government for embracing the “Washington consensus” for economic policy—that is, the sell-off of state-owned companies, the opening of markets to foreign capital and goods, and harsh “anti-inflation” measures.

They gave support to da Silva’s calls for modest reforms in Brazil’s banking system to limit their profits and redirect capital to productive investment, and his opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas as it’s currently proposed by Washington. Pushed by the U.S. rulers the trade bloc is aimed at eliminating trade barriers for their exports, and reinforces unequal terms of trade with Latin American countries.

Lula also won support among middle-class layers and business owners squeezed by high interest rates on personal accounts and loans to medium-sized companies. Brazil’s interest rates are among the highest in the world, starting at 21 percent.

“It’s an affront,” said Cláudio Miquelin from the São Paulo State Federation of Industry. “The country is practically dead in the water and banks are making returns of

25 percent on equity.”

Lending his support to the new president, Horácio Lafer, president of the Federation of Industry, asked for the “generosity of the political opposition.” Lafer asserted that “if used correctly,” the social pact offered by da Silva is an instrument that will have extraordinary results.

### Increased expectations

The election of Lula is seen as a victory by millions of workers and peasants in the country who see this as an opportunity to push forward their demands for better living conditions.

“I always voted for him,” said Perpetua Nogueira, referring to Cardoso. “But life is too expensive now, and the salaries here are poor. This is what’s most important—to increase wages. And this is something we can do.”

Tens of thousands turned out for a victory celebration in the streets of São Paulo and other cities across the country. “He was once poor, he belongs to the people, said Ivanete Santos Coasta, a street vendor in São Paulo.

The Movement of Landless Rural Workers of Brazil (MST), an organization of peasants and farm workers that fights for a deep-going land reform, gave critical support to da Silva’s candidacy. MST leader João Pedro Stedile stated in a September interview that while there was very little difference in the candidates’ proposals to deal with the problems facing millions of landless peasants, “Lula is the only candidate that brings together social forces that can make changes in this country.”

At the same time, capitalist commentators have expressed concern about da Silva’s ability to keep the lid on social stability in the country. “If you look throughout history at any leftist government that takes power, there is always a huge upsurge in social demands, because people have a lot of pent-up expectations and you have to deal with them,” John Hopkins University professor Margaret Keck warned. “He’s going to have to control those who expect miracles, because he can’t deliver them,” the big-business pundit said.