

# THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

**INSIDE****Cuba, Africa, and the fight against racism, 1959–today**

—PAGES 8–10

VOL. 72/NO. 9 MARCH 3, 2008

## Donate tax rebate ‘blood money’ to the ‘Militant’!

Dear Reader,

The tax rebate many workers will receive later this year as part of the government’s stimulus package is nothing more than “blood money.” It’s a paltry bribe to make it look as if something is being done to avert the economic crisis, and a way to try to buy the silence of working people.

We urge readers of this paper to contribute your 2008 tax rebate to the tribune of workers’ struggles—the *Militant*.

It has been a long and proud tradition of many readers of the *Militant* to contribute company “production” and “safety” bonuses to the socialist movement. When a boss gives out a production bonus in exchange for intensifying the speed of labor, or a safety bonus for not reporting accidents, these are truly paid for in blood. The best use of the money, whether it be a company bonus or a tax rebate, is to turn it over to the fight against the

**Continued on page 6**

## *Washington lauds Pakistan elections, pushes ahead on ‘terror’ war*

BY CINDY JAQUITH

February 19—Washington welcomed the results of yesterday’s parliamentary elections in Pakistan, hoping they will lead to a stable capitalist government with popular backing. Such stabilization could make the escalation of the imperialist war in northwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan easier.

President Pervez Musharraf was resoundingly defeated. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) won 80 seats; the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), 66; and Musharraf’s party, only 38. Musharraf conceded. Shares rose 3 percent on Pakistan’s main stock market.

In the northwestern part of the country near the Afghanistan border, where Taliban and al-Qaeda forces are active, secular, anti-Taliban parties had won about two-thirds of the vote with half the tally in. The results were an upset

**Continued on page 11**

Alma Ledezma. “They put him in the detention center in this building. But he is back to protest and his family is here to support him. He is wearing the bracelet they put on his foot.” The majority of workers arrested have been released pending immigration hearings. But many are forced to wear electronic tracking devices.

“They try to intimidate you,” said Manuel Ledezma, who worked at Micro Solutions. “They told us, ‘If you

**Continued on page 4**

## Workers rally against raids in California factory, homes

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

LOS ANGELES, February 14—A busload of workers from the Micro Solutions plant in Van Nuys, California, was greeted by cheers when they joined a protest against immigration raids at the Federal Building here today. One week before, 100 Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents raided the printer supply plant at the afternoon shift change.

“My brother was arrested,” said



Workers from Micro Solutions Enterprises and others rally outside the Federal Building in Los Angeles February 14 to protest February 7 raids by the immigration police. Some 150 workers were arrested in raids at the plant and workers’ homes.

## ‘If elected, we will stop raids, deportations’

SWP vice presidential candidate protests arrest of 150 workers near Los Angeles



Militant/Mike Ortega

Socialist Workers Party vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy (left) campaigns at shift change at the American Apparel garment factory in Los Angeles February 18.

BY NAOMI CRAINE AND ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

LOS ANGELES—“If my running mate Roger Calero and I are elected, we will enact legislation to immediately end immigration raids and deportations,” Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for vice president, told workers at a February 14 protest here.

The action was a response to a February 7 raid at the Micro Solutions Enterprises printer cartridge plant in nearby Van Nuys, California. A busload of the workers from the plant, including some who were arrested during the raid, participated.

“What you are doing is very important,” Kennedy said. **Continued on page 6**

## *Havana fair features books on Cuba’s revolutionary battles*

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

HAVANA, February 18—Among the dozens of books being introduced at this year’s Havana International Book Fair are several firsthand accounts of Cuba’s revolutionary battles—from the struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship in the 1950s to Cu-

ba’s internationalist missions of aid to anti-imperialist struggles across Latin America and Africa.

Three of these titles, presented during the opening days of the February 14–24 fair, were *Pombo: A man of Che’s guerrilla* by Harry Villegas; *Controlling the Air: Memoirs of a Combat Pilot, 1943–1988* by Enrique Carreras; and *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*, by Víctor Dreke.

Editora Política, the publishing house of the Cuban government, presented the books. **Continued on page 7**

## *Pentagon seeks military trials for six ‘enemy combatants’*

BY DOUG NELSON

The Defense Department announced February 11 that it has charged and is seeking the death penalty for six prisoners held at the prison camp at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo, Cuba. After holding the men for five years without charges, the government is pressing to try them by military commission.

The Pentagon-appointed convening authority for military commissions, Susan Crawford, will now decide whether

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# N.Y. cop ‘terror’ squads, dogs to patrol subways

BY MAURA DELUCA

NEW YORK—Beginning in March, the New York City subways will be patrolled by cops with automatic weapons and dogs. The Department of Homeland Security is giving the New York state transit system \$153 million this year, \$30 million of which will go directly to the New York City police department.

The heavily armed cops and dogs are part of “Operation Torch.” The cops will board trains and patrol platforms focusing on heavy-traffic subway stops like Pennsylvania Station, Columbus Circle, Rockefeller Center, and Times Square in Manhattan, and Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn.

Each team will include a bomb-sniffing dog and six cops: a dog handler, a sergeant, and four officers from the Emergency Service Unit. The police officers will be outfitted in heavy bullet-proof vests and Kevlar helmets and will carry either M4 automatic rifles or MP5 submachine guns.

Homeland Security secretary Mi-

chael Chertoff, and New York governor Elliot Spitzer announced the funding at a February 1 news conference where Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly announced plans for “Operation Torch.”

“This is great news for New York,” said New York Senator Hillary Clinton, a leading contender for the Democratic Party nomination for U.S. president, in a February 1 statement.

Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in New York’s 10th Congressional District, denounced the plan in a February 8 speech. “This is a further militarization of society,” he said. “The ruling class wants us to get used to the presence of the armed forces and heavily armed cops on the streets and subways. This is an attack on the rights and political space of the working class.”

In 2005, the NYC cops began random searches of subway riders’ backpacks and bags, a practice that continues to this day.

## N.Y. picket demands Puerto Rican’s release



Militant/Emily Paul

NEW YORK, February 11—About 25 people picketed at Federal Plaza here today to protest the arrest of Puerto Rican independence fighter Avelino González Claudio by the FBI. The FBI claims that González is a member of the proindependence group Popular Boricua Army-Macheteros. He was arrested in Puerto Rico February 7 on charges of involvement in a 1983 bank robbery. Protesters called for the release of González and all Puerto Rican political prisoners, and for independence for Puerto Rico.

—EMILY PAUL

## Grand jury hearings against Puerto Rican independence fighters postponed indefinitely

BY MAURA DELUCA

NEW YORK—Federal grand jury hearings for Puerto Rican independence activists Tania Frontera, Christopher Torres, and Julio Pabón have been postponed indefinitely.

The three were issued subpoenas last December to testify in front of a grand jury on January 11. Protests

took place in New York and other U.S. cities, and in San Juan, Puerto Rico, around that date. Defense lawyers were granted a postponement of the grand juries until February 1, giving them time to challenge the subpoenas.

A few days before February 1, the grand jury hearing was postponed again. Still, 100 people demonstrated in different parts of Puerto Rico against the attack on democratic rights February 1. Protests took place in Mayagüez, at the University of Puerto Rico, and in shopping areas.

Ema Beatriz Rosado, widow of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, a longtime *independentista* and leader of the Popular Boricua Army-Macheteros (PBA-Macheteros) who was fatally shot by FBI agents in 2005, addressed one of the rallies in Puerto Rico. She said she does not believe anything the FBI says regarding allegations that

independence activist groups commit criminal acts in Puerto Rico.

Many Puerto Rican independence supporters say there has been an ongoing investigation into the PBA-Macheteros by the FBI. A reflection of this is the February 7 arrest of Avelino González Claudio, an independence fighter, for his alleged participation in a 1983 Wells Fargo bank robbery in Hartford, Connecticut. If convicted, he can face up to 275 years in prison.

A February 11 action in New York City protested the arrest (see photo story above).

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Militant/Angel Lariscy  
Róger Calero speaks at February 7 rally against closing of hospitals in New Jersey.

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# Exxon wins Venezuelan asset freeze

BY CINDY JAQUITH

U.S. oil giant Exxon Mobil has won court rulings freezing more than \$12 billion in assets belonging to Venezuela's state-run oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA), in retaliation for last year's takeover of foreign-owned oil facilities by the government of President Hugo Chávez. The freeze prompted the Venezuelan government to announce February 12 that it would cut oil shipments to Exxon.

On May 1, 2007, the Venezuelan government took over majority control of oil companies operating in the Orinoco Oil Strip. Most of the foreign-owned companies affected accepted the takeover, but two, Exxon and Phillips-Conoco, did not. Negotiations over compensation with Exxon broke down, while talks with Conoco are proceeding. Exxon won a British court ruling in January that froze \$12 billion in PDVSA assets in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Netherlands Antilles. The company claimed the assets freeze was necessary to guarantee Venezuela would pay compensation should Exxon prevail in arbitration over the Orinoco Strip. On February 14, a U.S. District Court extended a freeze that the oil giant had already won on \$315 million in PDVSA funds in the United States.

Venezuela's oil minister, Rafael Ramírez, said Exxon was demanding 10 times what its losses were from the takeover. PDVSA lawyer Joseph Pizzurro said Exxon demanded only \$5 billion during negotiations over compensation, not the \$12 billion it has now frozen in the oil company's bank accounts.

The U.S. government stood firmly on the side of Exxon. "We fully support the efforts of Exxon Mobil to get a just and fair compensation package for their assets according to the standards of international law," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack. Sen. Richard Lugar, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also attacked the Venezuelan government, demanding it resolve the dispute with Exxon "within the legal framework" and not disrupt oil markets.

The day after announcing the cut in sales to Exxon, Rafael Ramírez said PDVSA would complete its current contractual agreements with Exxon. The government also explained that shipments would continue to a refinery in Chalmette, Louisiana, that PDVSA and Exxon jointly own. PDVSA sells 78,000 barrels a day to the Chalmette facility and another 50,000 a day directly to Exxon.

Venezuelan oil amounted to 5 percent of Exxon's imports in November. Nobuo Tanaka, the head of the Interna-

tional Energy Agency, told reporters he thought the effect of Venezuelan cuts to Exxon's supplies would be "very limited" and not require drawing on other oil stockpiles.

Following Exxon's initial victory in getting courts to freeze PDVSA assets, Venezuelan president Chávez announced in a February 10 televised speech that Venezuela would end oil shipments to the United States if Exxon won its legal case. But in a statement broadcast on television February 17 Chávez said, "We don't have plans to stop sending oil to the U.S. All I've said is that if the U.S. attacks us, we'll have to decide not to send one drop of oil to the U.S."

The *Economist* noted that 75 percent of Venezuela's export earnings comes from U.S. oil sales. PDVSA earnings are 50 percent of the government's revenue. Loss of that revenue would seriously impact social programs initiated by the Chávez government that have been funded in large part by PDVSA. Recently, the president ordered PDVSA to set up a subsidiary to distribute food due to

the widespread shortages in the country.

The big-business intelligence news agency Stratfor noted that Venezuela produces heavy crude oil and is dependent on the United States to refine it. "Approximately 90 percent of Venezuela's 2 million barrels per day (bpd) in crude exports either goes to U.S. refineries that are explicitly designed to process Venezuela's poorer grade of crude or is refined into products subsequently sold to the United States," the agency said. "Only U.S. refineries are specifically geared toward Venezuelan crude, and configuring specialized refineries in countries capable of refining Venezuelan crude would be costly."



Rueters  
February 12 rally in Maracaibo, Venezuela, outside Mobil gas station protests Exxon Mobil's moves against nationalization.

## Kenya: imperialists push power-sharing

BY WILLIE COTTON

At the start of a six-day visit to five African countries President George Bush dispatched Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Nairobi to press Kenya's president and the main opposition leader to agree to a power-sharing government. Washington seeks to resolve a crisis that sparked widespread violence beginning last December following a disputed presidential election.

"Mediators" led by former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan met with rivals President Mwai Kibaki and challenger Raila Odinga.

Kibaki and Odinga have come under pressure from imperialist powers to solve the nearly two-month old conflict that has left more than 1,000 dead and displaced at least 600,000. Riots broke out after Odinga narrowly lost to Kibaki in December 27 elections. Odinga's supporters charged Kibaki with stealing the election.

A preliminary deal signed February 14 calls for an independent investigation of the election and a report within three to six months. Both sides would work to draw up a new constitution within a year that could also provide for a prime minister post or another way to share power.

Kibaki's Party of National Unity is based on Kenya's largest and dominant ethnic group, Kikuyu, which makes up about 22 percent of the population. They were favored by the British during colonial rule and ran many shops, restaurants, banks, and factories. They have dominated the government since independence in 1963.

Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement gets its support primarily among the Luo, who make up about 13 percent of the population.

Kenya's transportation system, including its Mombasa port, a vital transport hub for East Africa, has been paralyzed by the crisis.

Washington sees Kenya's stability as important to its "global war on terrorism" in the region and has given millions to Kenya's military.

Bush arrived in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, from Benin February 16. He will meet with Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete—the new chairman

of the African Union. Bush will also visit Rwanda, Ghana, and Liberia. He will not visit Kenya.

Before departing for Africa Bush said that Rice would "deliver a message directly to Kenya's leaders and people: there must be an immediate halt to violence, there must be justice for the victims of abuse, and there must be a full return to democracy."

The day Bush departed for Africa Jendayi Frazer, the top State Department official for Africa, said that the Bush administration is considering targeted sanctions against anyone who stands in the way of a power-sharing deal.

The European Union has also threatened sanctions against Kenya if the con-

flict is not resolved soon. Nairobi's *East African Standard* quoted Harvey Rouse, the EU's head of political and trade section in Kenya, saying, "Until there is a willingness in the two opposing factions to work things out together, it will not be business as usual as regards EU member countries." UK high commissioner to Kenya, Adam Wood, said London did not recognize the current government.

Kenya's foreign minister, Moses Wetangula, took issue with the imperialist pressure. "We encourage our friends to support us and not make any mistake of putting a gun to anybody's head and saying 'either/or,' because that cannot work," he said, according to the *New York Times*.

## U.S. Senate approves spy bill

BY VED DOOKHUN

A bill broadening the government's surveillance and eavesdropping powers was approved by the U.S. Senate February 12. The 68-29 vote reflects the bipartisan support for government spying. President George Bush called on the Democratic-led House to also approve the bill before wiretapping powers temporarily granted the government last year expired February 15.

House Democratic leaders tried to obtain a 21-day reprieve to negotiate before the deadline but were defeated. Democrats insisted that the lapse would have no impact on eavesdropping. Currently intelligence officials can spy on communications of "terrorist" groups for a year after winning initial permission. Until the new legislation is passed the government will have to get a warrant through the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to spy on any additional groups.

The Senate bill increases many of the surveillance powers granted under the FISA amendment act passed by Congress last August. It gives the government broader power to eavesdrop on foreign communications without a warrant as long as American citizens are not targets.

Under last year's law, the govern-

ments' foreign spying program was placed under the supervision of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. This secret court was set up in the Justice Department under the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance act sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy. In 26 years, the court has rejected only five of 19,000 government requests for wiretaps or searches.

For months the White House had been pushing for legal immunity for phone companies that aided government spying on U.S. citizens without warrants after Sept. 11, 2001. This provision is contained in the Senate bill. Some 40 lawsuits have been filed by customers against AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint Nextel for violating the law and privacy obligations.

"This, I believe is the right way to go for the security of the nation," said Senator John D. Rockefeller, the West Virginia Democrat who leads the intelligence committee and supports the immunity provision.

In the Senate Republican presidential contender John McCain voted in favor of the final measure, while the two leading Democratic candidates, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, did not vote. The Clinton campaign issued a statement that she would have voted against the final measure.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

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Union Victory at Minnesota Packinghouse: A Boost to Efforts to Organize Other Workers. Sat., March 1. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 3557 S Archer Ave. Tel: (773) 890-1190.

### TEXAS

#### Houston

Current Crisis in Kenya: Record of British, U.S. Imperialist Domination. Speaker: Jacquie Henderson, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate. Fri., Feb. 29. 7:30 p.m. 4800 W 34th St., Suite C-51A. Tel: (713) 688-4919.

# Minnesota: YS joins meat packers' struggle

This column is written and edited by members of the Young Socialists, a revolutionary socialist youth organization. For more information contact the YS at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018; tel. (212) 629-6649; e-mail: youngsocialists@mac.com.

## YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN ACTION

BY ROBERT SILVER

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota—The air inside the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 789 hall was thick with excitement January 25. Workers there had just defeated a drive by the bosses at Dakota Premium Foods, a beef slaughterhouse here, to decertify the union at their plant.

Dozens of Dakota workers, union officials, and their supporters, including members of the Young Socialists, went to the hall for an impromptu celebration. Since a company-backed effort to decertify the union began, members of the Young Socialists have been active in the fight both as workers in the plant and as supporters outside.

For the past several weeks, Young Socialists have been selling the *Militant* at Dakota Premium Foods as workers finish their shift. YS members have learned first-hand about the conditions on the job and the latest skirmishes with bosses. Workers also stop to discuss recent articles in the paper, the importance of keeping the union, and world politics in general. Workers pick up the *Militant* for its coverage of their fight for a contract, and many relate their struggle to struggles by workers elsewhere covered in the paper.

The Young Socialists have also gotten word out about the Dakota victory on college campuses, and through campaigning for Socialist Workers candidates, led by a national ticket of Róger Calero for president and Alyson Kennedy for vice president. When Calero, who was part of the initial fight that won the union at Dakota, was in Minnesota, the Young Socialists sponsored a meeting for him at the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus. The presidential candidate explained that workers, through their own struggles, can fight against their declining standard of living in the face of unending attacks by the bosses and their government.

Speaking with Calero at a January 26 Militant Labor Forum in Minneapolis, Rebecca Williamson, SWP candidate for Congress in the 5th Congressional District and a worker in the boning department at Dakota, invited those present to campaign with the Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy. "In the next 10 months we will continue talking with working people, youth, farmers, and anyone else who is interested in revolutionary politics. This includes going door to door in the working-class neighborhoods and setting up campaign tables on campuses and elsewhere," she said.

Williamson said the Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy will continue to support and join fights like those at Dakota Premium Foods and continue to reach out to youth and others interested in the working-class alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. Get involved! E-mail us at ys4calerokennedy@mac.com or contact the nearest *Militant* distributor, listed on page 10.

## Workers protest California raid

Continued from front page

don't talk it's going to be worse for you.' I think they think we don't have any rights.

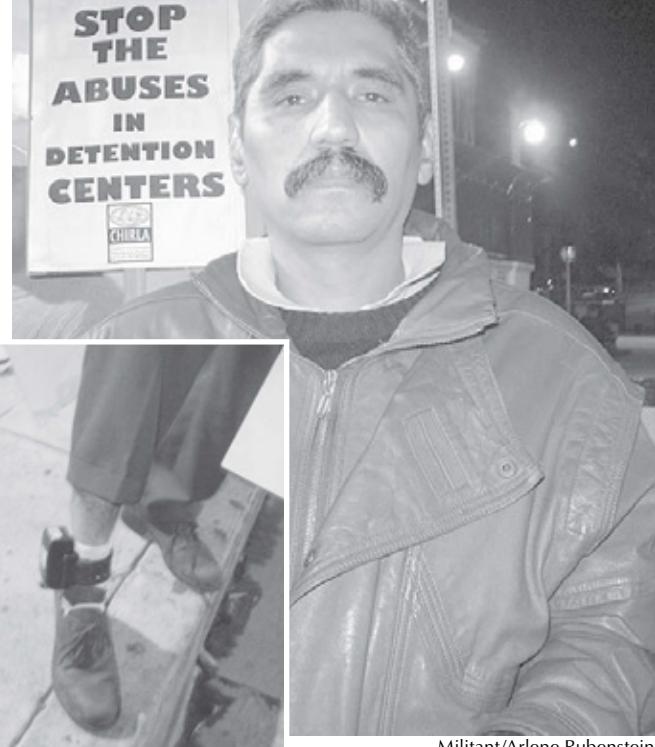
"The company has graciously offered me my job back—until my deportation," he added.

Although ICE alleges it had warrants for eight workers accused of providing

false information to get hired, more than 150 have been arrested. These include 130 workers at the plant, a woman who sells tamales who was in the building at the time of the raid, and workers grabbed in raids at the homes of Micro Solutions workers who missed work the day of the raid. The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit charging that the raid was illegal.

Workers at the plant, family members, and supporters have been holding weekly meetings at the Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Church in nearby Sun Valley. The defense fight is being organized by a coalition of groups, including the garment and hotel workers union UNITE HERE and the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

"They are very lucky" in contrast to many workers arrested by *la migra*, said Alex DeLeon, a truck driver whose cousin works at Micro Solutions. "They have an opportunity for a fight."



José Luis was one of more than 100 workers at Micro Solutions Enterprises in Van Nuys, California, arrested in a February 7 raid. He attended a February 14 protest wearing the electronic tracking bracelet immigration cops put on him (inset).

## Immigrant workers rally in Minnesota



Militant/Robert Silver

MINNEAPOLIS, February 16—Many drivers honked in support as 200 people marched along East Lake Street here today protesting recent attacks against undocumented immigrant workers. Last month Minnesota governor Timothy Pawlenty issued an executive order allowing law enforcement officers to work with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and ordering the review of driver's licenses to look for duplicates. Pawlenty also reintroduced bills proposing the prohibition of local sanctuary ordinances and increasing penalties for those who used false IDs.

—ROLLANDE GIRARD

## Volunteer joins 'Militant' staff

BY PAUL PEDERSON

With this issue, Ved Dookhun, 37, is joining the *Militant*'s team of editorial volunteers.

Over the past decade, Dookhun has been a leader of Socialist Workers Party branches in New York, Birmingham, Alabama; Newark, New Jersey; Price, Utah; and most recently, Pittsburgh, where he worked in a pillow factory.

Dookhun joined the Young Socialists in 1993, a year after moving to the United States from South Africa, where he had participated in a mass struggle to overthrow the system of apartheid, or white minority rule. In South Africa, Dookhun was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League.

In 1996 and 1997, Dookhun helped organize large delegations of youth to go to Cuba for a U.S./Cuba Youth Exchange and for the World Festival of Youth and Students.

Dookhun ran for U.S. Senate on the Socialist Workers Party ticket in New Jersey in 2002 and Pennsylvania in 2006. As a candidate for U.S. Congress in 2004, he helped lead efforts nationally to get the socialist presidential ticket on the ballot in a number of states.

Dookhun worked as a coal miner in Utah and Pennsylvania. After a mine collapse killed six miners at



Militant/Sam Manuel  
Ved Dookhun, 37, is joining the *Militant*'s team of editorial volunteers.

the Crandall Canyon mine near Huntington, Utah, last August, Dookhun was part of the team of *Militant* reporters providing on-the-scene coverage. He also helped get the paper out broadly to miners in the region, exchanging experiences with fellow workers on how to organize to use union power to defend life and limb on the job.

Dookhun has also written on international developments for the paper, including the national elections in India in 2004 and struggles among miners in South Africa.

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### Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

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## —ON THE PICKET LINE—

**Movie and TV writers end strike, will vote on contract**

After more than three months on strike, movie and television writers represented by the Writers Guild of America voted February 12 to return to work. The union negotiated a tentative three-year contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers.

Union members are set to vote on the contract February 25. According to the *New York Times*, the proposed pact includes compensation for work that is shown on the Internet and through cell phones and other devices, a key demand of the Writers Guild.

—Paul Pederson

**Two million workers strike in Greece against pension cuts**

More than 2 million workers across Greece participated in a February 14 24-hour strike to protest a government plan to cut pensions and raise the retirement age. The strike was called by the country's two largest unions.

Some 8,000 workers demonstrated in Athens in front of the parliament building, Reuters reported, while dozens of rallies took place in other cities. The strike shut down the coun-

try's airports and public services, and crippled rail transport.

The *Financial Times* described the details of the plan, which the government had not yet made public at the time of the strike. "About 170 state pension funds are to be merged into five or six large units that would be handed over to professional managers," the London paper reported. "Benefits for current workers are likely to be reduced." According to BBC News, the retirement age, which is currently 65 for men and 60 for women, may be increased for some jobs, and the plan would include incentives for workers to continue working past retirement.

—Paul Pederson



Striking writers picket February 8 in New York. They voted February 12 to return to work.

## Minnesota meat packers fight harassment

**BY JULIAN SANTANA**

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota, February 18—Bosses at the Dakota Premium Foods slaughterhouse here are stepping up harassment after workers defeated a company-backed effort to decertify their union, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789. The workers are organizing to stand up to company attacks and to win a new contract.

Stepped-up firings are accompanied by speed-up and worsening safety conditions on the job. This reporter had direct experience with unsafe

work conditions, as reported in the February 18 edition of the *Workers' Voice*, a newsletter put out by workers in the plant.

"The harassment and pressures we face contribute to the high injury rate on the job," says the newsletter. "Last Wednesday Julian Santana, another kill worker, was made to work the jobs of two people. His finger got caught in the shackle around the cow's leg and he was pulled off the platform where he works. A coworker hit the button to stop the line and reversed the shackle to pull Julian back

on to the platform. Besides Julian at least four other workers on the kill are on work restrictions due to on the job injuries, 3 hurt just last week alone!"

In response to these conditions workers are explaining the need to use the strength of the union. "To stand up to these every day conditions on the job we need to defend each other and use our union stewards to back us up," says the *Workers' Voice*. "Whenever we are injured, harassed or called to the office we need to call on our union stewards."

Since their January 25 union election victory, Dakota workers have been meeting at least once a week to discuss how to take on the company attacks and contract demands they will be raising in upcoming negotiations. At their next meetings they will choose shop stewards and members of the negotiating committee.

Workers at Dakota have been working under an old contract since it expired in June. According to Local 789 representatives, contract talks are tentatively scheduled to begin February 29. Among the demands workers are discussing are wage raises, open access to the plant for union representatives, control of the line speed, and more.

Julian Santana is a kill floor worker at Dakota Premium Foods and a member of UFCW Local 789.

## Gov't retries Liberty City 7 on 'terror' charges

**BY BERNIE SENTER**

MIAMI—Seven men accused of terrorism charges based on the testimony of agent provocateurs are back in federal court, facing new trials on the same charges a jury was unable to convict them on last December.

The men, known as the Liberty City Seven, are accused of conspiring to blow up the Chicago Sears Tower and bomb Federal Bureau of Investigation headquarters in several cities. The charges are based on the testimony of FBI agents who posed as representatives of al-Qaeda.

The seven are members of a religious group, Seas of David, that held meetings in Liberty City, a large Black community in Miami.

One of the seven, Lyglenson Lemorin, was found innocent of all charges in the previous trial. After the trial, the government rearrested him, locked him up in prison, and leveled the very same charges against him in an Atlanta immigration court. The government is trying to deport him to Haiti even though he has no prior criminal record and is a legal U.S. resident.

"I feel I'm being treated unjustly," Lemorin said in an interview after a gag order against him and his attorney was finally lifted. "I was not involved in the claim they made against me. I am no threat to the United States of America."

His attorney, Charles Kuck, noted, "You have the government getting a second bite at the apple with a lower burden of proof."

Lemorin's case is similar to other immigration cases where the government attempts to deport people after they have been found innocent. Last October, Washington finally dropped a 20-year attempt to deport two Pales-

tinians who lived in Los Angeles. They were among six others, dubbed the Los Angeles 8, who the government was trying to deport solely for distributing pro-Palestinian material and allegedly being supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Marc Van Der Hout, an attorney with the National Lawyers Guild, pointed out, "You have a situation in the L.A. 8 case where the government admitted they did nothing criminal and wanted to use the immigration laws to get rid of them because they didn't like what they were doing politically." He said that Lemorin's situation is similar. "It's a much tougher row to hoe for the defendant because you have no jury,

an immigration judge appointed by the government, and lax rules of evidence."

The other six defendants, on whom the jury was deadlocked in the original trial, are being retried in Miami. They face up to 70 years in prison based on the actions of FBI informers who tried to coax them into going along with fabricated plans to commit sabotage. The case is constructed exclusively around incriminating statements that were secretly taped by the government agents. FBI deputy director John Pistole called the alleged plan "more aspirational than operational" since no weapons, ammunition or bombs were involved.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS  
**THE MILITANT**  
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

**March 4, 1983**

PUERTO CABEZAS—if the week-long U.S.-Honduran show of military forces just north of here was intended to spread fear and demoralization, this correspondent can personally testify that Pentagon planners were handed a big disappointment.

On Nicaragua's northern Atlantic Coast, the area closest to the site of the maneuvers, the reaction among the population demonstrated how deep opposition runs to U.S. intervention. This includes among the Miskito Indians whom Reagan is so fond of portraying as "victims" of the revolution.

Several thousand Miskitos, English-speaking Afro-Nicaraguans, and native Spanish speakers marched together through the streets here February 1 to protest the opening of the maneuvers.

**March 3, 1958**

Indignation was spreading in the local labor movement this week with the shocking story of physical beating of Eric Reinthaler, a defendant in the Taft-Hartley conspiracy case.

Reinthaler, a machinist, was sentenced together with six other defendants to 18 months in prison and \$2,500 fine. The conviction was on a charge of conspiracy to file and to cause others to file false non-Communist affidavits with the National Labor Relations Board.

Delay in making bail for Reinthaler resulted in his detention in County Jail for two nights. Seven or eight [thugs] rushed into the small cell and attacked Reinthaler. Four grabbed him and held him while others punched him and tried to ram his head against the wall.

## THE MILITANT

Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

**March 3, 1933**

Every day brings the report of a new blow dealt the German working class movement by the Hitler regime. No half-sane person above the age of six has put the slightest credence in the Fascist charge that the Communists set fire to the Reichstag building. But while nobody takes the charge seriously, it has sufficed the Nazis to launch their reign of terror and to extend it more widely with the passage of every day. The *Times* reports that "Communist arrests included the entire executive committee of the party in Berlin and Reichstag deputies and party executives elsewhere." In Berlin alone there are more than 300 Communists held. The Communist leaders must be forced out of their criminal passivity. There is no retreat: All that is left is mortal combat—or annihilation!

# Socialist campaign

Continued from front page

"tant," Kennedy told them. "I will be talking about your fight as I visit other cities in the coming weeks."

Micro Solutions Enterprises workers told Kennedy that the company, which is nonunion, takes advantage of immigrant workers to pay low wages. Kennedy described the fight she was part of with fellow coal miners, most of them immigrants, to organize a union at the Co-Op mine near Huntington, Utah, about three years ago.

"We struck for 10 months, won our jobs back, and got a date set for a union representation election," she said. "But seven days before the vote, the company fired nearly everyone saying they didn't have proper papers. That's why the fight to legalize everyone, without conditions, is so important for the entire working class."

The next day Kennedy joined several Micro Solutions Enterprises workers who had been summoned to have their electronic monitoring bracelets checked. She was impressed by their attitude in face of the authorities.

"They are not intimidated," she said. "The agents kept asking them for phone numbers, but they knew they didn't have to answer the questions, and kept insisting they didn't have any numbers."

During her tour stop in Los Angeles, Kennedy also campaigned outside the American Apparel garment factory and the Farmer John slaughterhouse. She was interviewed by the Pacifica radio station KPFK.

## House meeting

Pedro Albarran, a meat packer who is supporting the campaign, organized a meeting with Kennedy at his home. "My friend, my cousin, and my brother and their kids came over," he said. "We raised money and had hours of discussion."

"They want workers to believe that this is a choice," Kennedy said at the meeting in response to a question about the media coverage of the Democratic and Republican candidates. "The capitalists organize their rule through a two-party system. But working people need our own party."

## Give 'blood money' to 'Militant'

Continued from front page

capitalist system that makes workers sacrifice life and limb for the profits of the employers.

On February 7, as the government's answer to the deepening economic downturn, Congress passed the Economic Stimulus Act. While granting billions in corporate tax breaks, workers—who face declining real wages, inflation, and unemployment—will receive only a \$300 to \$600 one-time tax rebate!

A significant section of our class—undocumented workers—are totally excluded from receiving even this pittance. In the face of rising unemployment, the politicians made sure that no extension of unemployment insurance found its way into the bill.

Real wages declined last year for the fifth straight year, while speed-up of production intensifies at the expense of workers' lives and limbs.

Week after week, the *Militant* explains the reality for working people of capitalism's growing financial crisis, unfolding recession, and

We need to organize independently in the political arena. We need a labor party based on a fighting union movement."

"This campaign is defending workers," Osmin Escobar, 22, said. He came to hear Kennedy speak at a February 16 rally at the Los Angeles campaign headquarters. "It is on the side of the workers when there's a raid. The women and men who are in the U.S. are not criminals, because they are trying to maintain their families."

Escobar said he agrees with the campaign platform's demand for a halt to immigration raids and deportations, and immediate legalization for all undocumented workers. "I think it's very amazing to find a campaign that is saying this," he said.

The campaign rally was also the grand opening of the new Los Angeles Militant Labor Forum hall, located on a lively commercial street in a working-class neighborhood.

Also attending the rally was Milton Ortiz, a hotel worker who is active in a fight for a new union contract at his workplace. "I was impressed with how the candidate spoke about different workers' struggles," he said. Earlier that week, Socialist Workers campaigners accepted an invitation from Ortiz to join a rally supporting workers at another hotel where the employer slashed wages and benefits a year ago.

## SWP presidential candidate tours Texas



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

HOUSTON, February 15—"As president and commander in chief, I would immediately withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and everywhere else around the world," Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero told students at the University of Houston today. "My opponents, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain, all support the escalation of the imperialist war in Afghanistan," he added.

Calero was joined on campus by SWP congressional candidates Amanda Ulman, who is running in the 9th District, and Steven Warshell, running in the 18th. On his two-day tour stop here Calero also attended campaign events with garment, meatpacking, and other workers.

One student came out to meet the candidates after his teacher told the class that "a worker who is running for president is outside right now."

"Do you have that paper he showed us, the *Militant*?" the student asked Calero.

—JACQUIE HENDERSON

## Pentagon charges six 'enemy combatants'

Continued from front page

the case against the six will be heard by a military commission and whether the death penalty can be sought. If the case goes to trial, it will take place in Guantánamo.

The six are accused of involvement in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The most well-known, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, is accused of planning and organizing the attacks. The second, Walid bin Attash, is accused of running an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan where two of the September 11 hijackers were

trained. Ramzi Binalshibh is accused of helping find flight schools for the hijackers. Two others, Mustafa al-Hawsawi and Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, are accused of providing financial assistance to the hijackers. Mohamed al-Kahtani is said to have been denied entry into the United States in 2001 with \$2,800 in cash on his person and a phone number associated with al-Hawsawi on his flight itinerary.

### Military commission

Under a 2006 law, the members of a military commission are appointed military officers. The judge is selected by the secretary of defense. The prosecution can use hearsay and secret evidence.

The defense lawyers are appointed military attorneys. If defendants can afford it, they are entitled to hire a civilian lawyer, but that lawyer must be eligible for a government security clearance at the "secret" or higher level. All discussion between defendants and their lawyers is monitored by the government, and all the lawyers' mail and notes are given to the military.

In 2001, president George Bush announced the formation of military tribunals to try those labeled "enemy combatants." The tribunals denied the accused constitutional protections of the U.S. judicial system. The executive decree received criticism and opposition from a range of capitalist politicians, news media, and law professionals. No tribunals happened.

Instead, hundreds of people remained jailed without charges at Guantánamo. In March, Australian-born David Hicks was convicted after plea-bargaining to serve nine months in an Australian prison for "supporting terrorism" after more than five years in Guantánamo.

The Supreme Court ruled the executive order establishing military tribunals unconstitutional in 2006. That same

year Congress passed the Military Commissions Act, a modified version of the Bush administration's original design.

### Use of torture

This act removes the constitutional right of due process for persons the president deems to be enemy combatants, allowing the government to imprison people indefinitely without charges. It also allows the use of statements by defendants that were, in the words of the American Civil Liberties Union, "literally beaten out of a witness," as long as that happened before Dec. 30, 2005. Under the act, the president decides what does and doesn't constitute torture in interrogations.

Guantánamo base commander Rear Adm. Mark Buzby recently admitted in a court filing that several years' worth of video recordings of interrogations there had been overwritten. "We'll simply never know whether these videotapes recorded torture," said David Remes, a lawyer who represents Guantánamo detainees. The military was issued a court order in 2005 to preserve such evidence.

The inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners at the Guantánamo camp has generated criticism from defenders of democratic rights, human rights organizations, and others since the jail opened in 2002. Prisoners have engaged in hunger strikes and been subject to force feeding. Three prisoners hung themselves in June 2006. At that time, the military acknowledged 41 suicide attempts. In 2003 alone, the military acknowledged 350 "self-harm" incidents, including 120 "hanging gestures."

Of the 778 prisoners kept at Guantánamo, fewer than 300 remain. Most have been sent back to their country of origin without ever being charged. The Defense Department plans to try about 80 by military commission.

# Books on Cuba's battles

Continued from front page

of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, released these books as part of the Cuban Book Institute's Special Plan, funded by the Ministry of Culture to make books broadly available to the Cuban people at heavily subsidized prices. The books by Villegas and Carreras, previously available in only very limited quantities, have now been printed in runs of 20,000 and 10,000 copies, respectively. Dreke's book, published six years ago in the United States by Pathfinder Press, has been published in Cuba for the first time, printed in a run of 15,000.

The book presentations are part of the broad range of cultural activities that make up the Havana book fair, which has already drawn hundreds of thousands of people to poetry readings, concerts, displays of handicrafts, film showings, and panel discussions on a variety of subjects.

Villegas spoke at the February 14 presentation of *Pombo: A man of Che's guerrilla*. Introducing him, Iraida Aguirrechu, a senior editor at Editora Política, noted that "he didn't write this book sitting behind a desk. He wrote it in action."

The book, Aguirrechu said, is based on the field diary kept by Villegas, known by his nom de guerre of Pombo, during the 1966–67 revolutionary campaign in Bolivia by a guerrilla column led by Argentine-born Ernesto Che Guevara, one of the central leaders of the Cuban Revolution. After Guevara was killed in combat in October 1967, Pombo led a small group of remaining combatants in breaking through the Bolivian army's encirclement.

Today Brigadier General Villegas is a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and vice president of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, which organizes several generations of Cubans who have taken part in revolutionary struggles.

Aguirrechu pointed out that this second edition of the book, first published a decade ago, includes attractive new photos, maps, and facsimile pages from Pombo's original diary. An English-lan-

guage edition was published by New York-based Pathfinder Press in 1997. The new edition also contains a section taken from Guevara's own Bolivian diary, containing his detailed evaluations of each of the guerrilla combatants. Villegas is described by Guevara as "a pillar" of the revolutionary column, she noted.

"A guerrilla fighter is a revolutionary, a man who fights to change society," Villegas said, explaining why Guevara maintained high standards of conduct among the combatants. For Guevara, two key measures of conduct were the fighters' reactions in combat and how they handled the question of food—or, better, lack of food under the harsh conditions of guerrilla warfare. "Since we did not have food to eat every day, Che gave exceptional attention to this question. He did not allow anyone to offer him the slightest courtesy of giving him even a tiny extra spoonful of food" beyond what each member of the unit received.

### 'Cannot give imperialism an inch'

It was through his own experiences that Guevara became convinced that to transform society it was necessary to lead a revolutionary struggle to take power and overthrow capitalist rule, Villegas said. As a young man traveling through Latin America in the early 1950s, Che had spent time in Bolivia in the wake of the revolutionary struggles of 1952 in which tin miners and other urban and rural toilers had battled the army. The new government that arose from these struggles initiated a land reform and other important social measures but failed to carry these changes to the end, leading to "the decline of the revolution," he said.

A few years later, in Mexico, Guevara was recruited to the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army, which under the leadership of Fidel Castro had launched a revolutionary struggle in Cuba. Workers and farmers there succeeded in overthrowing the Batista dictatorship in January 1959, opening the way to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

Throughout the 1960s, Villegas said, the Cuban leadership "backed armed struggles in many countries in Latin America," from Guatemala to Argentina. Like Castro and his other fellow revolutionaries, Guevara concluded that "with an oligarchy in power, there was no other road to take power," Villegas said. The revolutionary campaign in Bolivia "was not viewed as only for Bolivia. It was launched in Bolivia, but it was a movement aimed at the liberation of countries throughout the Southern Cone" of South America.

Guevara's revolutionary perspective is relevant in today's world, Villegas said. "Can we say that this road to power is completely ruled out at the present time? No."

"Can we say that Che's approach of not conceding imperialism a single inch is unfounded today? No."

Citing the case of Venezuela as well as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, the Cuban leader said that in recent years "there has been a period when armed struggle was not required for progressive forces" to take control of the government, having done so through elections. In those countries "there are possibilities for transforming society."

"But we are also seeing the truth of what Che said: you cannot give imperialism even an inch. Because today we



Militant/Ben O'Shaughnessy

Gen. Arnaldo Tamayo signs books for young officers in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces.

are seeing a reaction by the ruling classes," Villegas said. "These movements are being subjected to aggression led by imperialism in order to block progress."

He asked, "Can we guarantee that the Venezuelan revolution can be maintained under all circumstances through the peaceful road? We'll see."

The revolutionary transformations in Cuba were a response to the attacks by the U.S. and Cuban capitalists, Villegas said. The Cuban experience shows that the reaction by the ruling classes at home and abroad "will not allow a peaceful change, a peaceful revolution to resolve society's problems. We always have to keep this in mind."

### Birth of revolutionary air force

The book by Villegas was presented together with *Por el dominio del aire: Memorias de un piloto de combate, 1943–1988* (Controlling the Air: Memoirs of a Combat Pilot, 1943–1988) by Enrique Carreras, widely regarded here as "the father of Cuba's revolutionary air force." Introduced by Sergio Ravelo of Editora Política, Brig. Gen. Arnaldo Tamayo spoke about the book. First published in 1995, it was reprinted last year and quickly sold out. The new, second edition came out as part of the Special Plan.

Addressing an audience that included members of Carreras's family and a couple of dozen young officers of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), Tamayo spoke with admiration and affection for Carreras, who had been his teacher when he first joined Cuba's revolutionary air force and trained as a fighter pilot. In 1980 Tamayo became the first Cuban cosmonaut—and, as Cubans proudly point out, the first Latin American and first of African descent to travel in space.

Carreras, now a division general of the FAR, had been an officer in the Cuban air force before the revolution. He was one of the young military officers who opposed the Batista dictatorship, which came to power in a 1952 coup.

Tamayo explained that in September

1957 Carreras took part in a military plot against the regime, which had ordered its air force to bomb the city of Cienfuegos to put down an insurrection organized by the July 26 Movement there. Carreras and other rebel pilots "decided to drop their bombs in the sea. That is when he began his history as a revolutionary and collaborator of the July 26 Movement. He and others in the group of conspirators were court-martialed and jailed on the Island of Pines," now the Isle of Youth.

Behind bars, Carreras collaborated with militants of the July 26 Movement. On their release from prison with the January 1959 revolutionary victory, Carreras was named head of the revolutionary air force, which at that time had only a handful of fighter planes and even fewer experienced combat pilots. He began training classes for new pilots at the military base of San Antonio de los Baños in Havana province.

Tamayo recalled that Carreras set an example of personal integrity and of respect for fellow aviators, in contrast to the abusive conduct of the military brass under the capitalist regime. "I never experienced any offensive remark by Carreras against me or any other pilot," he noted. "If he had to tell you about errors you had made, he would tell you in a modest, calm tone and with a tremendous revolutionary spirit."

Carreras fought prejudices and arbitrary practice. In medical evaluations of new recruits, for example, there was a category, dating from prerevolutionary days, called "repulsive ugliness." During the early years of the revolution, some doctors "would check off 'repulsive ugliness' if someone had acne, for example, but most often it was used to bar blacks, or anyone they didn't like. Carreras fought those notions. He would argue with doctors to oppose that."

Carreras and other Cuban aviators played an outstanding role in the April 1961 battle at the Bay of Pigs, when Cuba's revolutionary militias, armed forces, and revolutionary police crushed

Continued on page 9

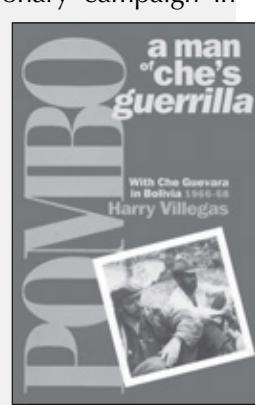
## Pombo: A man of Che's guerrilla

With Che Guevara in Bolivia, 1966–68

By Harry Villegas

\$23

A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT of the 1966–68 revolutionary campaign in



Bolivia led by Ernesto Che Guevara. This is the story of Pombo—the nom de guerre of Harry Villegas, a young fighter still in his 20s, who was a member of Guevara's general staff. Villegas led the small group of combatants who survived the Bolivian army's encirclement and lived to recount this epic chapter in the history of the Americas.

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## Cuba's National Assembly to elect president

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

In a statement released February 19 Fidel Castro announced he will not stand for re-election to the positions of president of Cuba's Council of State or commander in chief of the armed forces.

Due to hospitalization for serious illness, Castro delegated his responsibilities on July 31, 2006. First Vice President Raúl Castro assumed the duties of president, commander in chief, and first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. Other leaders of the Cuban government took over responsibilities for the country's health, energy, and educational programs.

Cuba's newly elected National Assembly, chosen every five years, will convene February 24 to elect a Council of State and its president, who is the president of Cuba.

# Cuba, Africa, the fight against racism

Mary-Alice Waters speaks at meeting to celebrate publication in Cuba of

The following remarks by Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, were given at the February 16 presentation of *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution* by Victor Dreke, as part of the Havana International Book Fair. The event was chaired by Iraida Aguirrechu of Editora Política, the publishing house of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

The book, originally published by Pathfinder Press in 2002, was recently issued in Cuba for the first time as part of the Cuban Book Institute's Special Plan, a program to make books broadly available to the Cuban people at heavily subsidized prices.

Dreke was a combatant in Cuba's 1956-58 revolutionary war that overthrew a U.S.-backed dictatorship there. He helped lead the Cuban armed forces and popular militias in crushing U.S.-organized counter-revolutionary units in the Escambray mountains in the early 1960s. In 1965 he was second-in-command under Ernesto Che Guevara of the Cuban volunteers fighting alongside anti-imperialist forces in the Congo. Today he is Cuba's ambassador to Equatorial Guinea.

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## BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

The publication here in Cuba of the book *From the Escambray to the Congo* by Victor Dreke, six years after it was first published in the United States in both English and Spanish, is truly an event to celebrate. The availability at this year's Cuba-wide book fair of some eight million books—made possible by the policies and efforts of the Cuban government and the Special Plan of the Cuban Book Institute—is a registration of how far the Cuban

1. "Special Period" is the term used in Cuba to describe the economic and social crisis that exploded there in the early 1990s with the abrupt end of aid and trade on preferential terms with the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.



Militant/Ben O'Shaughnessy  
Iraida Aguirrechu, left, of Editora Política and Mary-Alice Waters of Pathfinder Press at February 16 presentation of Víctor Dreke's *From the Escambray to the Congo* at Havana International Book Fair.

people have come in pushing back the most difficult years of the Special Period.<sup>1</sup> It demonstrates to the world once again that with a clear revolutionary perspective, discipline, and courage, and the kind of leadership the Cuban Revolution has forged, imperialism is not the inevitable victor.

And it demonstrates to the world once again the priority and content that a revolutionary government of the toilers gives to the words of Cuba's national hero José Martí,<sup>2</sup> "To be educated is to be free."

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this celebration.

## He did 'get involved'

I want to speak about the impact this book has had in the United States, including its original presentation during a one-month speaking tour in the United States by Victor Dreke and Ana

2. José Martí organized Cuba's final war of independence against Spanish colonial rule at the end of the 19th century. He was killed in combat.

3. Ana Morales is a doctor who headed Cuba's medical mission to Guinea-Bissau in 1985 and helped found the first medical school there. She toured the United States with Victor Dreke in 2002, speaking on the topic of "Cuba's Medical Missions in Africa, 1963 to Today." At the time she was a professor at the Latin American Medical School in Havana.

Morales<sup>3</sup> in 2002.

In the opening pages of *From the Escambray to the Congo*, Dreke says: "When I was young, my father used to tell me, 'Don't get involved in anything.'"

My father was against Batista, Dreke recalls. "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's how many blacks in Cuba looked at things, Dreke adds. "Fortunately, I didn't listen."

Nor did hundreds, then thousands, and then tens of thousands of other rebel-minded workers and youth like him. They began to resist, to fight back, and their actions changed the course of history not only in Cuba but throughout the Americas and beyond.

"We were ready to die to bring down Batista," Dreke says. But back then, "we didn't know the first thing about revolution."

*From the Escambray to the Congo* is the story, told with humor, without exaggeration or oversimplification, of how hundreds of thousands like Victor Dreke were transformed from inexperienced if unflinchingly courageous revolutionary youth into seasoned proletarian internationalists and leaders of a people capable of defying the multi-faceted aggressions of the Yankee rulers for half a century.

Throughout the Americas, and in the United States especially, Dreke's story has an additional powerful message. It shows us the kind of revolutionary power of the workers and farmers that is necessary to even begin to eradicate the legacy of centuries of African slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination in our hemisphere. Whatever its imperfections, only socialist Cuba provides an example of how the discrimination that still permeates all aspects of social and economic relations in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas can be eliminated.

The desire to learn from the experience of the Cuban Revolution, to learn how to fight—and above all to learn

what it takes to win—is the reason why more than 5,000 copies of the book have already been bought by workers and youth around the world, but more than anywhere else, in the United States.

## 2002 U.S. speaking tour

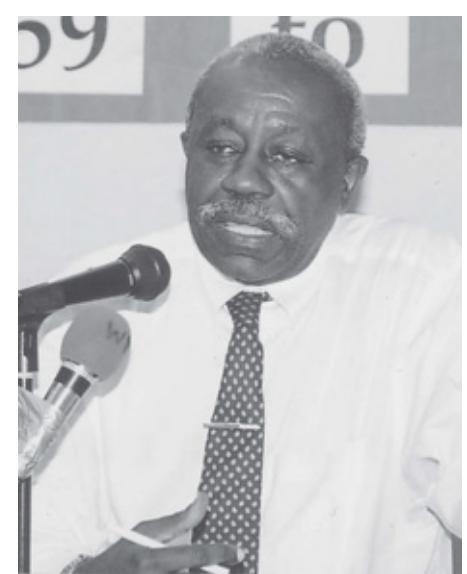
The attraction of the example of the Cuban Revolution was powerfully demonstrated soon after the publication of this book, in October and November 2002, when Victor Dreke and Ana Morales made a four-week speaking tour in the United States. Invited by dozens of university professors and student organizations to speak about "Cuba and Africa: From 1959 to Today," they visited seven states and the District of Columbia, spoke to more than 3,000 people who attended one of the 14 meetings, and participated in 52 other events.

These ranged from formal receptions, including one hosted by a Georgia state legislator, to informal gatherings with rail workers in Washington and Black farmers waging a battle to keep their land in rural Georgia.

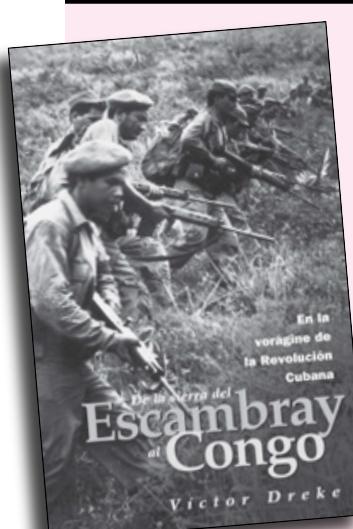
**"Only socialist Cuba provides an example of how the discrimination that still permeates all aspects of social and economic relations in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas can be eliminated...."**

Víctor's first meeting was at Howard University, one of the most prestigious, historic Black institutions of higher education in the United States, located in Washington, D.C. It was an overflow crowd of some 300 students. The meeting actually had to be interrupted after it began and moved to a larger auditorium, since more than 100 students were massed in the hallway outside, loudly and insistently demanding to hear what Dreke had to say.

His last meeting was at Florida International University in North Miami where 250 students, faculty, and oth-



Militant/Jacquie Henderson  
Víctor Dreke addresses a crowd of 250 at successful meeting at Florida International University in Miami as part of a 2002 U.S. speaking tour. Rightists who attempted to disrupt the meeting were prevented from doing so by a defense line that included students, workers, and professors.



By Víctor Dreke

THE AUTHOR DESCRIBES how easy it became after the Cuban Revolution to take down the rope segregating blacks from whites at a dance in the town square, yet how enormous was the battle to transform social relations underlying all the "ropes" inherited from capitalism and Yankee domination. Dreke, second in command of the internationalist column in the Congo led by Che Guevara in 1965, recounts the determination, internationalism, and creative joy with which working people have defended their revolutionary course against U.S. imperialism—from Cuba's Escambray mountains to Africa and beyond. \$17

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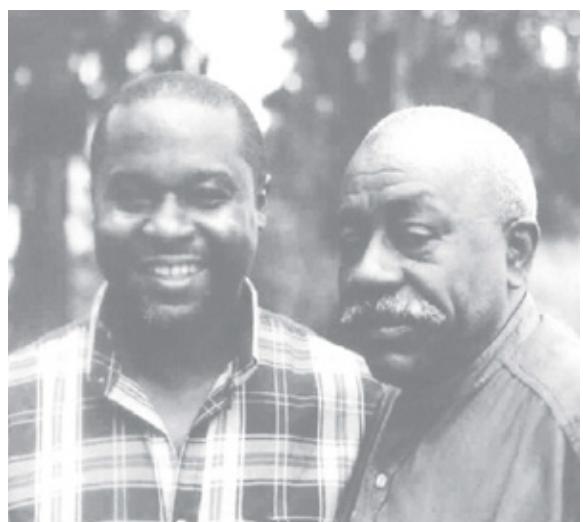
# from 1959 to today

## 'From the Escambray to the Congo'

ers successfully met every challenge by the counterrevolutionary forces there who tried to force the university to withdraw the invitation and deny Dreke the right to speak. When that failed, they made several attempts to physically assault the speakers platform but were successfully prevented by a defense line of students, workers, and professors determined that the meeting would proceed. It did. Víctor spoke and was heard.

It was a tremendous victory.

As Cuban Ambassador Dagoberto Rodriguez, the head of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington at the



Víctor Dreke with Georgia farmer Willie Head, during visit to farms in Valdosta, Georgia, Oct. 27, 2002.

time, noted at the farewell reception for Víctor and Ana, not since the revolution's triumph in January 1959 had any Cuban leader of Dreke's stature had the opportunity to speak so widely in the United States.

Whether Víctor and Ana's visas were granted due to administrative error or political miscalculation we will probably never know, but no similar visa has ever been granted by the U.S. State Department, either before or after. The powerful appeal of the example of the Cuban Revolution to working people and youth increasingly engaged in real struggles in the United States is too dangerous. Especially when told first hand by one of its historic protagonists like Víctor.

### A prior experience

I remember a few years earlier, in 1997, at the time of the 30th anniversary of Ernesto Che Guevara's death in combat in Bolivia, General Harry Villegas, "Pombo,"<sup>4</sup> was invited by professors and students in Los Angeles and Houston to address a number of similar meetings. When the professor in charge asked the U.S. State Department why there was a delay in granting the visa, the representative of the State Department with whom he spoke sim-

4. Harry Villegas, known by his nom de guerre Pombo, is a brigadier general in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces no longer on active duty. Villegas fought alongside Ernesto Che Guevara in internationalist missions in the Congo and Bolivia, as well as during Cuba's revolutionary war. A leader of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, he is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, a deputy in the National Assembly, and a Hero of the Cuban Revolution.

ply laughed. His response was, "You must be crazy to think we would give a visa to Harry Villegas!"

I also remember well the pride and merriment on the face of Pombo's superior at that time, Gen. Néstor López Cuba, when he told me he had given Pombo permission to accept the invitation to speak in the United States.

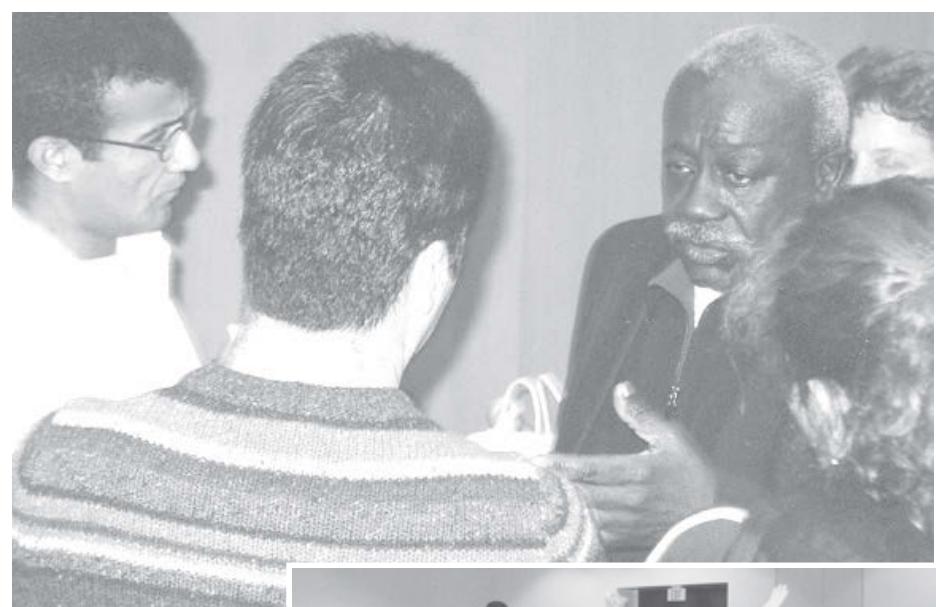
"What's the worst that can happen?" López Cuba joked. "This is a man who was able to escape one of the most ferocious manhunts in history, successfully evading encirclement organized by the CIA and the

entire Bolivian Army, even in a country where the color of his skin made him an unmistakable target.

"If it came to that, I'm sure he could make himself disappear in a city like Los Angeles!"

### Internationalist missions

The record of the Cuban Revolution's internationalist missions in Africa was of special interest to the audiences Dreke addressed in the United States. They came to learn about Cuba's support for national liberation struggles from Algeria, to the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, South Africa, and beyond. They came to learn about the selfless aid of thousands of teachers, engineers, sports trainers, doctors, and other medical



Militant/Charles Williamson  
Above, Víctor Dreke speaking with students and others at Nov. 14, 2002 meeting at Brown University in Massachusetts. Inset, audience during question and answer period of meeting two days earlier at University of South Florida in Tampa.



Militant/Arriana Thompson

personnel serving in dozens of African countries today.

This is a history that many African-American youth have heard of or seen references to, but in fact know very little about. *Conflicting Missions*, the book by professor Piero Gleijeses, who headed the tour committee that sponsored Dreke's speaking engagements, has been a welcome contribution to overcoming this lack of information, and the availability of a new printing of the Spanish translation of that book, presented here at the book fair this year, is welcome news.

But young people and others wanted to hear about this history, first hand, from someone who spoke with the

authority of a direct participant. They came away from those meetings with a greater sense of pride, of confidence in their own political potential, of their own self-worth.

### Equatorial Guinea

We saw the same thing in Africa, in Equatorial Guinea, in October 2005, when the National University of Equatorial Guinea hosted the first-ever book fair in that country. It was an historic undertaking in a country where there is not even one single bookstore.

The Cuban Embassy in Malabo, where as you know Víctor Dreke serves as Cuba's ambassador, gave its

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## Books on Cuba's revolutionary battles

### Continued from page 7

a U.S.-backed mercenary invasion—Washington's first military defeat in the Americas.

Cuba had a tiny air force with dilapidated planes and a shortage of parts, while the mercenaries had many more pilots, planes, ammunition, and spare parts, not to mention the backing of the U.S. armed forces. Yet the Cuban pilots, led by Carreras, quickly achieved air superiority and ended up downing the majority of the enemy planes.

"There are anecdotes of how our mechanics and technicians even had to install modified auto brake systems in our planes to get them functioning," Tamayo said. "But we shot down more planes than the total number of aircraft we ourselves had available. The mercenaries were defeated in less than 72 hours."

Ten Cuban pilots with eight rickety planes flew 70 missions, downing nine B-26 bombers and sinking two of the invaders' transport ships and eight landing craft. Carreras himself shot down two of these planes and sank the two transport ships.

Over the following months, Carreras organized accelerated training courses for young pilots like Tamayo. In his book, Carreras explains that not only did instructors come to Cuba from the Soviet Union but that trainees went to Czechoslovakia and China for instruction.

When the young pilots returned from this training abroad, Tamayo noted, "we



Militant/Ben O'Shaughnessy  
February 14 presentation of *Pombo: A man of Che's guerrilla* and *Por el dominio del aire* by Enrique Carreras, both published by Editora Política. From left: Iraida Aguirrechu of Editora Política, Gen. Harry Villegas, Gen. Arnaldo Tamayo, and Sergio Ravelo of Editora Política.

were still very inexperienced—we basically knew how to take off and land. The older pilots, beginning with Carreras, became our teachers. They taught us elements of combat—the aggressiveness a pilot must have in the air.

"Carreras is a very calm person, very down to earth. But in the air he was a lion, pursuing targets, quickly detecting any sign of danger, launching offensives. Those were the qualities he instilled in us."

### October 1962 crisis

In May 1962, Tamayo said, "we returned to Cuba, and by October, thanks

to the training by Carreras and others, we were ready for air combat." That was when the Cuban people faced down a threatened U.S. invasion of the island during the so-called Missile Crisis, or October Crisis as it is known here.

"I remember one night, when U.S. planes were flying over Cuba everywhere," he recalled. "The commander-in-chief [Fidel Castro] came to our base and gathered all the pilots. He told us that by daybreak we had to be ready, in our planes, with guns loaded, at the end of the runway and ready for action. Of course, the dangers were extremely

Continued on page 11

# How labor, socialists beat McCarthy witch-hunters

Below are excerpts from *The Case of the Legless Veteran*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month in February. The book tells the story of how James Kutcher, who lost both legs in World War II, won an eight-year fight supported by unions across the country to win back his job and pension after being fired by the government for his communist views. He had been a clerk at the Veterans Administration. In the selection below Kutcher describes a

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

1948 news conference that launched his defense campaign. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY JAMES KUTCHER

The press conference was a success. Held at the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark, it attracted reporters and photographers from New York as well as New Jersey. George Novack did most of the talking to the press, but he was not alone. He had the able assistance and legal counsel of Mr. Arthur Burch, a New York attorney. And although only a few days had passed since my meeting with him, he had already reached a number of prominent



Press conference Sept. 1, 1948, in Newark, New Jersey, to announce formation of the Kutcher Civil Rights Defense Committee. Left to right: George Novack, James Kutcher, Carl Holderman, Rev. John I. Daniel.

people in New Jersey, and had interested some to the point where they attended the conference and spoke for themselves.

Outstanding among these was Carl Holderman, president of the New Jersey State CIO Council. . . . Mr. Holderman took a clear-cut stand on my case

## Presentation in Havana by Mary-Alice Waters

Continued from page 9

full support. Pathfinder Press, among others, was invited to participate, which we did with great enthusiasm, making available a range of titles in Spanish, French, and English—from *Habla Nelson Mandela, How Far We Slaves Have Come* by Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, speeches by Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, and *From the Escambray to the Congo*, through various issues of the magazine of Marxist politics and theory, *New International*, to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.

For many of the students who browsed the book tables and attended the presentations at that event, not only were Cuba's contributions to the liberation of Africa unknown; even the struggle against the apartheid regime of South Africa was something about which they had little information. It happened before they were born, or were in primary school at most. Their thirst for knowledge of the history of the struggles of the peoples of Africa—and the descendants of Africa in the countries where millions were

taken as slaves—was overwhelming. In Equatorial Guinea, as here in Cuba, books by Malcolm X were among those most in demand.

And through that book fair, even many professors and others in responsible government positions, learned more fully for the first time the kind of person the Cuban ambassador to their country really was. I remember the surprise of the university rector who was looking at the photo on the back cover of *From the Escambray to the Congo*, the photo of Fidel together with Che and Víctor taken just before the two of them left for the internationalist mission in the Congo in April 1965.

The rector turned to Víctor and asked, "Who is the Black guy in the middle there?" Dreke said, "That's me." There was stunned silence in the room for the few seconds it took for that to sink in. It gave a new resonance to the phrase, "Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador."

❖

We are proud of Pathfinder's contributions to the collective efforts

from the very beginning and did more than any other union leader to get the labor movement to help me. . . .

Ewald Sandner, CIO regional director in New Jersey and a veteran of the miners union, spoke too. Expressing approval for Mr. Holderman's remarks, he said he was certain that the national CIO would "repudiate this vicious persecution and give full support to the defense of James Kutcher."

George Novack announced that a national Kutcher Civil Rights Committee was in process of formation, a nonpartisan citizens group that would aid my fight to keep my job. Then I spoke a few words: "I am not fighting this case only for myself. This witch-hunt in government offices has gone far enough. Somebody has to stand up some time and call a halt to these persecutions. If, by my stand, I can save any veteran or government employee from persecution in the future, I will consider my fight worthwhile."

## Havana by Mary-Alice Waters

that made this book possible, and especially pleased that it will now be broadly known here in Cuba.

We also want to take this occasion to express our special appreciation to our moderator here today, compañera Iraida [Aguirrechú], for her irreplaceable collaboration. Without her indefatigable efforts this book would not have seen the light of day, in either the United States or here in Cuba.

Our pledge is to continue to make *From the Escambray to the Congo* available as widely as possible. "Forward to the next 5,000 sold!"—throughout the United States and the world. Because this is a world in which spreading capitalist financial crisis and imperialist war will make the example of the Cuban Revolution even more compelling to a vanguard of working people and youth who are themselves each day being forced to learn more and more about how to fight and, following the example of men and women like Víctor Dreke, to win.

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## February BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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by James Kutcher

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### By Any Means Necessary

by Malcolm X

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### Su Trotsky y el nuestro (Their Trotsky and Ours)

by Jack Barnes

The fight to rekindle communist continuity with the 1917 Russian Revolution, its Bolshevik leadership, and the founding of the communist international under Lenin, the first truly world party of socialist revolution. \$15. Special price: \$11



### Pragmatism versus Marxism

by George Novack

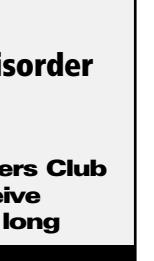
A defense of Marxism against the pragmatism of John Dewey, chief theoretical spokesman in the 1930s of the middle-class democratic movement in the United States. \$20.95

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# U.S. troops out of Korean peninsula!

The following message was sent February 15 by Steve Clark on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party and Ben Joyce on behalf of the Young Socialists to Kim Jong Il, General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea.

The Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists send revolutionary greetings on the occasion of your February 16 national holiday. We reaffirm our solidarity with the people and government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and our unconditional opposition to the economic sanctions and military threats by Washington, Tokyo, and other imperialist powers against your national sovereignty.

Today Washington is pushing further east in its "global war on terror"—from extending an Iraq-style "surge" of increased troops to Afghanistan, to preparing for stepped-up military operations in Pakistan. The U.S. government is working to expand participation in the ballistic missile "defense" system, aimed at securing nuclear first-strike capacity for U.S. imperialism in Asia and around the world. Having already secured joint ABM operations with Tokyo, the U.S. rulers are working to win such cooperation with the government in Seoul, along with its participation in the legal piracy of north Korean ships under the guise of searching for "weapons of mass destruction." Meanwhile, Washington maintains the world's largest stockpile of nuclear weapons.

The U.S. imperialists' wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, their massive military presence in Europe and on the Korean peninsula, are all part of their decades-long plans, where war is to be the norm in order to secure "peace"—on Washington's terms.

The dog-eat-dog workings of the world capitalist system drive the U.S. rulers along this belligerent and expansionist course. Today that system is being shaken by a profound financial crisis. The crisis is destroying enormous amounts of capital, but its consequences will increase the economic and social devastation for working people the world over.

The U.S. employing class, their government, and

their twin parties seek to convince workers and farmers in the United States that we have some stake in their bloody wars of conquest. At the same time, just as the U.S. government continues to use economic and military warfare to try to solve its crisis by beating out its imperialist rivals for markets and resources abroad, it will continue to drive down wages and working conditions inside the United States to increase its "productivity" advantage over its foreign rivals.

The employers meet resistance to these assaults on our conditions, however. Less than one month ago, packinghouse workers at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota, voted by a nearly 2-to-1 margin to defend their union from a company drive to decertify it. The workers in the plant—immigrant and native-born; Black, Latino, white, Native American—overcame the national and racial divisions the boss tried to exploit in an effort to weaken their ability to fight. Instead, in face of ever-accelerating line speed, rising injuries on the job, and no wage raises, the workers banded together to defend themselves. They are now headed into a fight for a new contract, having gotten a taste of what union power is. It sets an example for meat packers and other workers throughout the region.

It is among working people and youth such as these—in the United States, and all over the world—that Washington faces its biggest obstacle in pushing ahead unchecked on decades of war. As working people move into struggle, an understanding of the necessity of solidarity among the exploited and oppressed worldwide—from Europe, Latin America, and Africa, to the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and beyond—can and will take root and grow.

On this national holiday, we remain committed to fight alongside working people the world over, including on both sides of Korea's 38th parallel, for the reunification of your country, which was brutally partitioned by the U.S. rulers in 1945. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops and nuclear warheads from the Korean peninsula and surrounding waters. End the sanctions! Normalize relations! Korea will be one!

# Pakistan vote

Continued from front page

for the pro-Taliban coalition that has ruled the North-West Frontier Province.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicole Thompson said the election was "an important step on the path towards an elected, civilian democracy."

Democrat Joseph Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was in Pakistan for the elections as part of a U.S. Senate delegation. He praised the role of Pakistani army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani in assuring the elections went smoothly and said that Kayani appeared to be a promising partner for the United States, according to the *New York Times*. Democrats have long criticized the Bush administration for not devoting more military resources to the war in Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan.

Although Musharraf has been a firm U.S. ally in the "war on terror," Washington increasingly saw his growing isolation as threatening the stability of the Pakistani government and undermining U.S. efforts to eliminate Taliban and al-Qaeda forces.

In an effort to give his regime more legitimacy, Washington encouraged the decision of Benazir Bhutto, a former prime minister and leader of the PPP, to return from exile last year, with the goal of entering into a coalition government with Musharraf. On November 25, Nawaz Sharif, the prime minister Musharraf overthrew in 1999 and leader of the PML-N, was also allowed to return from exile. Three days later, Musharraf stepped down as head of the army, passing the torch to General Kayani. A former aide to Bhutto, Kayani used to head Pakistan's intelligence services. He was trained extensively at U.S. military schools.

Bhutto was assassinated December 27 in Rawalpindi. Pakistani authorities announced February 17 that four suspects arrested said Pakistani Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud, who has links to al-Qaeda, ordered the killing.

## Fighting on Afghan border

Pakistani troops appear to be making progress in tackling the Taliban and al-Qaeda bases along the border. On February 11 Mansour Dadullah, head of Taliban fighters in the southern Afghan province of Helmand, was captured by Pakistani troops in southwestern Pakistan. That same day Imad Mugniyah, chief of operations for Hezbollah in Lebanon, was killed in Damascus, Syria, by a car bomb thought to be planted by Israeli agents.

On February 17 a suicide bomb killed more than 100 people in southern Afghanistan in the largest such attack since the Taliban was overthrown seven years ago. Last year was the highest for U.S. casualties since the war in Afghanistan began.

The United States has the largest proportion—about 15,000—of the 43,000 NATO troops currently fighting in Afghanistan. NATO commander U.S. Gen. Daniel McNeil has called for 7,000 more soldiers. London, which has 7,800 soldiers in the country now, says it will send 600 more in May.

Ottawa says it will pull all its troops out next year unless 1,000 more troops are added by NATO. A February 18 attack on a Canadian convoy in southern Afghanistan killed 37 people. None were NATO troops.

## War in Iraq

Meanwhile, Iraq's parliament passed a bill February 13 to hold provincial elections by October 1. It is asking the United Nations to play the major role in organizing and supervising the voting.

U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates, in a recent trip to Baghdad, told reporters he favors a pause in withdrawing more U.S. troops from Iraq after reductions already planned bring the total number down from 155,000 to 130,000 by late summer. Gates called for "a brief period of consolidation and evaluation" before further withdrawals are made. He made his comments after meeting with Gen. David Petraeus, who has already proposed a pause.

## Correction

The photo caption on the front page of the February 25 issue of the *Militant* misidentified the worker quoted as Oscar Salgado. His name is Enrique Flores. The translator's name is Rafael Espinosa.

# Books on Cuba's revolutionary battles

## Continued from page 9

high, and the most experienced pilots were placed at the front. Carreras was lucky to be in the front row of the planes that were to take off to confront that powerful [U.S.] air force. But all our pilots displayed the same readiness to go into the air and give the aggressors the fight they deserved."

Tamayo added that combat did not occur. The mass mobilizations of Cuba's workers and farmers stayed the hand of Washington, which pulled back from the brink of war.

Over the years Cuba's air force became increasingly experienced. "The firepower and courage of our air force was demonstrated in Angola, Ethiopia, the Congo, Yemen, and other countries where they served in internationalist missions," he said.

## From the Escambray to the Congo

Two days later, on February 16, Editora Política also presented *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*. In its pages Victor Dreke recounts his participation in the 1950s revolutionary war and, in the first half of the 1960s, his responsibility in helping lead Cuba's armed forces and militias to crush U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary units in the Escambray mountains of central Cuba. In 1965 Dreke was second in command under Che Guevara of the column of Cuban volunteer combatants who joined forces with anti-imperialist fighters in the Congo.

Dreke, who today is Cuba's ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, had planned to speak at the book presentation, but was unable to attend at the last minute due to a schedule change in a state visit to Havana by the president of that African country.

Six years ago Dreke spoke at the first presentation of *From the Escambray to the Congo* at the Havana International Book Fair, to an overflow meeting that drew more than 200 people.

Introduced by Iraida Aguirrechu, Mary-Alice Wa-

ters, president of Pathfinder Press, who interviewed Dreke and edited the book, spoke at the presentation of the new Cuban edition.

Waters's remarks focused on the impact of the book in the United States and the broadly successful speaking tour by Dreke in the United States in the fall of 2002. (See the full text of her remarks on page 8 and 9.)

*From the Escambray to the Congo*, she told the audience, "is the story, told with humor, without exaggeration or oversimplification, of how hundreds of thousands like Dreke were transformed from inexperienced if unflinchingly courageous youth into seasoned proletarian internationalists and leaders of a people capable of defying the multifaceted aggressions of the Yankee rulers for half a century."

"Throughout the Americas, and in the United States especially, Dreke's story has an additional powerful message. It shows us the kind of revolutionary power of the workers and farmers that is necessary to even begin to eradicate the legacy of centuries of African slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination in our hemisphere. Whatever its imperfections, only socialist Cuba provides an example of how the discrimination that still permeates all aspects of social and economic relations in the United States, and elsewhere in the Americas, can be eliminated."



In the opening days of the book fair, hundreds of thousands of people have flocked to the Spanish colonial fort of San Carlos de la Cabaña overlooking Havana Bay, where the annual event is being held. To ease overcrowding at the fair site and help meet the growing demand for literature, this year many new titles were made available at bookstores around the city starting a week before the opening of the festival.

The book fair, which ends here February 24, will then travel to 41 other cities and towns across the island.