

# THE MILITANT

**EXCERPT FROM 'CUBA & ANGOLA'**  
**Cuba's internationalism**  
**was born with the revolution**  
 — PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 81/NO. 8 FEBRUARY 27, 2017

## Actions defend women's right to choose abortion



Militant/Betsey Stone

San Jose, California, mobilization Feb. 11 was one of many across country where defenders of women's right to choose abortion greatly outnumbered pickets against Planned Parenthood.

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Thousands of people rallied at the Planned Parenthood offices here Feb. 11 in response to coordinated protests across the country attacking women's right to abortion and demanding defunding of the organization. The action opposing abortion here drew about 500 people.

At 8 a.m., an hour before the opposing rallies were scheduled to start, the

streets around the clinic were beginning to fill with hundreds of supporters carrying signs saying, "I stand with Planned Parenthood," "Keep abortion legal" and other slogans lettered on handmade placards.

A coalition of anti-abortion groups initiated more than 200 actions across the country Feb. 11, calling for the federal government to end Medicaid

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## Havana book fair pays tribute to Fidel Castro's leadership, example

BY RÓGER CALERO  
 AND JONATHAN SILBERMAN

HAVANA — The 2017 Havana International Book Fair, which opened here Feb. 9, has been marked by book presentations, panel discussions, photo and art exhibits, and other events

paying tribute to Fidel Castro's historic leadership of the Cuban Revolution.

Tens of thousands of people have been pouring into the book fair. This 26th annual event is a giant cultural festival that unfolds for 10 days in Havana and then travels to every province across the island, concluding April 16 in the eastern city of Santiago. This year Cuban publishers have available for sale 4 million copies of some 700 new titles, a significant increase over last year. Publishers from 46 other countries are participating — including Canada, this year's country of honor.

"There is no other book fair in the world like this one, because it is a product of the Cuban Revolution," noted Fernando González at a special program on "Fidel and Culture." González, one of five Cubans who spent more than a decade and a half in U.S. prisons for their actions in defense of the revolution, pointed to the high level of literacy and interest in reading among the Cuban population, of which the book fair is a visible expression.

This year's fair is dedicated to Armando Hart, one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution who as

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## Oscar López back in Puerto Rico! Faces restrictions until May 17

BY SETH GALINSKY

In another victory in his fight for freedom, Oscar López Rivera returned to Puerto Rico Feb. 9 to live with his daughter Clarisa, part of a "transition" to freedom from 36 years in U.S. prisons.

But in a sign of the U.S. rulers' concern about the support for López in Puerto Rico and the boost his return gives to the working-class struggle there, he remains under strict conditions of home confinement, including a ban on making any public statements, until his official release date of May 17. He is required to wear an

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## 'Stop the raids! We are workers, not criminals!'



Above, Joe Brusky; inset, Militant/Bernie Senter  
 Above, more than 20,000 march in Milwaukee Feb. 13 protesting immigration raids and moves by County Sheriff David Clarke to allow his deputies to act as federal immigration agents. Inset, Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, at Feb. 12 protest against ICE raids in Van Nuys, California.

## 'Amnesty now!' says SWP candidate in LA

BY BERNIE SENTER

VAN NUYS, Calif. — "Oh, I already met Dennis when he came to my door in Highland Park and I got a subscription to the *Militant* and some books," Favi Castro told me at the Feb. 12 protest here against recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids. Dennis Richter, Socialist Work-

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## Social disaster for working people in Calif. dam evacuation

BY ERIC SIMPSON  
 AND JOEL BRITTON

CHICO, Calif. — The word spread rapidly in Oroville late Sunday afternoon, Feb. 12. Some got a text alert on their phone, others heard from neighbors. The spillway on the dam outside of town was threatening to collapse. Get out.

"Everyone started crying — guys, girls," 18-year-old Taco Bell worker Jeffrey Chue told the *Militant* at the emergency center in the fairgrounds here. He was just completing his shift.

"I just left and went home. My parents said, 'Let's go,'" Chue said. "But it took 40 minutes to get to the highway, and my gas tank was on empty. It was chaotic on the roads."

The U.S. capitalist ruling families,

**Continued on page 3**

## Thousands join protests against immigration raids

BY SETH GALINSKY

Protesters took to the streets across the country after more than 680 immigrants were arrested Feb. 6-10 by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency in "targeted enforcement actions" focused on undocumented workers who have been found guilty of various crimes.

Immigrants earmarked by *la migrera*, along with others caught up in the raids, were seized in their homes or on the street in the first nationwide raids since President Donald Trump took office. Like similar "targeted" sweeps under the Barack Obama administration, these raids are aimed at dividing and weakening the working class.

The nation's immigration cops said they were stepping up business as usual to carry out Trump's Jan. 25 ex-

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

AT&T Mobility workers fight company concession demands



# US farmers face crisis as prices plummet, debt soars

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As grain prices plummet U.S. farmers face the biggest crisis in decades. “Across the heartland, a multiyear slump in prices for corn, wheat and other farm commodities brought on by a glut of grain worldwide is pushing many farmers further into debt,” the *Wall Street Journal* reported Feb. 9.

The international overproduction of grain is fueling cutthroat competition and tumbling prices. U.S. farmers’ share of world grain sales is now half what it was in the 1970s. And it’s the small farmers — not the grain, feed, pesticide and railroad monopolies that prey on them — that bear the brunt of the crisis.

“I’m very careful how I spend money. I don’t buy new machinery and use bare amounts of fertilizer,” Vern Jantzen, 59, who farms corn and soybeans on 200 acres outside of Plymouth, Nebraska, told the *Militant* Feb. 11. “If you have a good crop you can limp along, but there is still not really enough to cover all your costs. Some farmers are losing \$200 an acre on either corn or soybeans.” Jantzen, whose family has been farming this land since 1891, is a member of the Nebraska Farmers Union.

Farmers’ income in the U.S. will drop 9 percent in 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts. Total farm income over the past four years has declined more than 40 percent, the steepest slide since the 1930s Depression.

Since 2012, corn and soybean prices have collapsed. Corn has plummeted from above \$8 a bushel to less than \$4 today; soybeans from nearly \$18 to \$10;

wheat from over \$9 to \$4.50.

“Last year was the worst grain prices in 30 years,” Randy Jasper, 66, who farms corn and soybeans in Muscoda, Wisconsin, said in a phone interview. “One bushel — 56 pounds — of dry-shelled corn delivered to the market sold for \$2.90 in 2016. It was a good crop yield last year, but farmers couldn’t compete because the price was so lousy.”

Jasper also noted that production costs keep rising. “Twenty years ago seed was \$60 an acre, now it’s \$120 an acre,” he said. “Fertilizer is up 50 percent since then, and the costs of machinery have tripled.”

At the same time the giant food monopolies — Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge, Cargill and Dreyfus, which control 75 percent of global grain trade — have been boosting production in their drive to expand exports to compete on the world market.

Straining to cut losses in a bad market, most U.S. grain farmers have produced record crops. But today the capitalist food giants won’t sell it because it’s not profitable. So the grain just “sits there in bins and holding elevators,” Jantzen said.

Seeking to keep going, farmers and their families get outside jobs. Only 20 percent of family farmers’ household income comes from the farm itself today. Jantzen said he has worked side jobs milking cows and as a truck driver for a local school district.

The farm population dropped from 6 million in 1945 to just over 2 million in 2015. Figures this low have not been

## Chicago interfaith meeting condemns Jew-hatred



CHICAGO — More than 1,000 people joined in an interfaith gathering against Jew-hatred at the Chicago Loop Synagogue here Feb. 8. The rally, sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund, took place four days after an attack on the synagogue left a plate glass window broken and swastikas pasted to the door.

“We are drawn together with a clear message that hate has no place in our city or our country,” Emily Sweet, the council’s executive director, told the crowd.

“Support is evident here from our Muslim and Christian brothers and sisters who are here,” said Dr. Steven Nasatir, president of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. “We are gathered here to say loud and clear that we will not surrender to fear, we will not surrender to hate, we will not surrender to divisiveness.”

In 2015 acts of vandalism and violence targeting Muslims increased by 67 percent. Over the same period Jews were the targets of more than 50 percent of religious-based crimes, according to FBI statistics.

Jenan Mohajir of Interfaith Youth Core spoke of the need for unity, noting, “I am a Muslim woman, the daughter of Indian immigrants, the mother of mixed-race children, and an educator.”

Also speaking at the rally were Bishop Sally Dyck, United Methodist Church; Reverend Dr. Otis Moss III, Trinity United Church of Christ; Pastor Chris Harris, Bright Star Church; and Rabbi Michael Siegel, Anshe Emet Synagogue.

— JOHN HAWKINS

seen since the mid-1800s. Total acres farmed in the U.S. have dropped 24 percent since the end of World War II to 912 million acres.

“In Nebraska we had almost 4,000 dairy farms in the late 1970s,” said Jantzen. “Now its down to 155, and this has a big impact on towns where these dairy farms were.”

There were 28 students in my high school graduating class nearly 40 years ago, Craig Scott, a farmer in Ransom, Kansas, told the *Journal*. Most of them were farmers’ kids. This year there are nine.

Jasper, who gave up dairy farming 20

years ago, said that in 2016 “I lost a little money and in 2015 lots of money. If you have to keep doing this at some point you just go broke.”

In the late 1970s and ’80s thousands of farmers mobilized in actions, including tractorcades to Washington, D.C., to fight farm foreclosures and demand debt relief. Lee Scheufler, a farmer in Sterling, Kansas, told the *Journal* he was on some of those protests. He said he is reminded of those actions today.

“The potential for a big crisis is real,” Scheufler said. “If things stay similar to how they are now, you haven’t seen anything yet.”

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Managing Editor: Naomi Craine

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Fax: (212) 244-4947  
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## THE MILITANT

### Calling Trump a ‘fascist’ disorients working class

The ‘Militant’ covers debates on political questions crucial to the working-class movement, like whether Trump is a new Adolf Hitler or simply the new chief executive officer of the U.S. propertied rulers. There are wide openings for revolutionary-minded workers today.



Calling Trump fascist, as liberals, middle-class left do, would lead to disaster for workers.

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# Actions back abortion rights

**Continued from front page**  
reimbursement to Planned Parenthood for birth control, cancer screenings and other health care. President Donald Trump has said he would support such a measure. A ban on federal funding for nearly all abortions has been in place since 1976, renewed every year by Congress.

Trump has reinstated a ban on U.S. government funding to international organizations that provide abortions or information on how to obtain one. As governor of Indiana, Vice President Mike Pence was in the forefront of promoting state laws chipping away at women's access to abortion.

In many cities, defenders of women's right to choose abortion outnumbered those at the anti-Planned Parenthood rallies, in some cases as many as 10 to 1.

"It's important for everyone to stand up against any attacks on women's rights," Robyn Sellman, a 25-year-old member of the National Organization for Women from East St. Paul, told the *Militant* here. "It's awesome so many people came together to act on this. It shows what we can do when we organize to defend our rights."

The rally here was built by word of mouth, on social media, and through organizations such as NOW. Students from women's groups at area colleges met on their campuses and traveled together with their signs on public transportation to join the rally.

David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, took part in the action. "The labor movement and all working people have a vital stake in fighting against the attacks on Planned Parenthood and the myriad of state laws restricting women's access to abortion," read the statement he and supporters distributed.

In New York, some 300 people rallied across the street from the Planned Parenthood clinic in Manhattan chanting. "Their body, their choice," "Fund Planned Parenthood," and "Abortion is health care, health care is a right." About three dozen opponents of abortion rights rallied on the opposite corner.

Many counterprotesters then joined a rally of a few thousand people in defense of Planned Parenthood at nearby Washington Square Park. Clinic representatives had urged supporters to rally away from the clinic, saying they didn't want patients to see "chaos" outside.

"The right to choose abortion, to control our own bodies, is a requirement for women's equality. It has been attacked by both Democratic and Republican party administrations from the moment it was decriminalized in 1973," said Sara Lobman, a rail worker and member of the Socialist Workers Party, speaking at the rally outside the clinic. "The Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling based it on the rights of the doctor. But it's the right of a woman, and should be protected by the 14th Amendment's guar-

antee of equal protection under the law," she said to applause. "We need to be in the streets to defend women's rights in every state, not look to the Democrats."

In San Jose, California, thousands lined the street near the Planned Parenthood clinic in an impressive show of support for women's right to abortion. Waving signs and cheering as passing cars honked in support, they dwarfed the group of opponents of legal abortion picketing outside the clinic.

"No woman can call herself free who cannot choose the time to be a mother or not," said one of the handmade signs held high at the march and rally that followed the protest near the clinic.

Speakers focused on the important health services offered by Planned Parenthood to working people and youth, who would not have access to health care without it.

The action was organized by STAND San Jose. "We know that statistically speaking, making abortion illegal does not make women not have abortions — it ends safe abortions," Rosa Warren, a founder of the group, told the *San Jose Mercury News*.

At actions in nearby Redwood City and San Francisco, demonstrators who supported legal abortion also outnumbered opponents.

There were similar actions backing women's right to abortion and defending Planned Parenthood in well over 100 cities across the country.

*Naomi Craine in New York and Betsy Stone in California contributed to this article.*

## Protesters discuss how to defend women's rights



Militant/Edwin Fruit

KENT, Wash. — "We have to fight state by state the restrictions that have piled up, making it harder for women to obtain an abortion," Mary Martin, left, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Seattle, told Michelle Rauschenberg, as they took part in a rally of 400 here Feb. 11, countering about 50 people at a "Defund Planned Parenthood" rally across the street.

"It seems like we have to keep fighting the same battles," said Rauschenberg, right, who works as a teacher's aide in the Renton school district.

Shelby Reeves and Tayler Bailey, both 32, shared a sign reading, "It's my body and my choice." That sign "gets to the heart of the matter," Martin said.

"The Roe v. Wade decision decriminalizing abortion was not based on equal protection of women under the law, but rather the vague 'right to privacy,' a shared decision with a doctor, and viability of a fetus, that's our problem," she said. "Opponents of the right to abortion use things like changes in medical care to demand more restrictions."

"This is our right as women, period," responded Bailey. "That is how I was taught to think about this issue."

"Both Democrats and Republicans are responsible for the erosion of abortion rights," Martin said.

"I agree completely, although Tayler doesn't think so," said Reeves.

"Yes, I'm getting more involved in the Democratic Party," said Bailey. Discussions like this on what way forward continued throughout the day.

— EDWIN FRUIT

# Social disaster for working people in dam evacuation

**Continued from front page**  
for whom every judgment is based on protecting their profits and rule, always blame social disasters like the one unfolding here on natural causes.

Melisa Lattemore, 44, an Oroville housekeeper, heard there was a mandatory evacuation so she and her companion piled a few things in a friend's truck and headed for the center. "This is a man-made disaster," she insisted.

Winter rains swelled the Oroville reservoir after years of drought. With the water rising to dangerous levels, engineers let water out of a gated concrete spillway, sending it coursing down a 770-foot drop into the Feather River below. But the rushing water broke up some of the concrete in the 180-foot-wide spillway, creating a 45-foot-deep hole in the chute. Dam engineers reduced the flow of water to try to prevent further erosion. Water in the reservoir rose to 101 percent of capacity.

On Feb. 11 the reservoir overflowed, flooding a parking lot and flowing over the lip of an emergency spillway next to the gated chute.

The next morning engineers told the press and public that the dam was sound and the situation was under control. But the emergency spillway, built out of nothing but dirt, was eroding rapidly.

A few hours later, police agencies suddenly issued an order to evacuate immediately. The order covered 180,000 people from towns downstream along the bloated Feather River — from Oroville to Yuba City. They said the spillway wall could collapse within the hour, creating a 30-foot wall of water and washing away everything in its path.

At the Red Cross evacuation center

here Socialist Workers Party members from Oakland met some of the working people who had picked up and left the danger zone on short notice. Farmworkers, housekeepers, retirees, an unemployed secretary, others on disability, a Walmart worker — all joined us to discuss the social crisis they were living through, its effects and its causes.

People spoke about motels jacking up their prices; lost wages; lack of communication and clear direction from emergency personnel; chaos and panic; and traffic gridlock. Some asked why do we have to fill out so many forms to get help — and what about undocumented workers working in the fields?

And they talked about acts of working-class solidarity — people opening their houses to strangers, friends, family and co-workers, bringing donations and volunteering to help.

"While the rich get richer, the infrastructure is deteriorating," Susan Hildreth, 53, of Gridley said, sitting on her car with two dogs on a leash. "The government didn't set aside money to maintain the dam and the engineers covered it up. I toured the dam 30 years ago for a class — the control room was like Star Wars. But they said it was old then."

The crisis exposed aspects of the broader social crisis produced by capitalism's contraction today. Workers and farmworkers in the area face high rates of unemployment and poverty, and many have been driven into a growing homeless population.

While the government did nothing but tell people to flee, members of Habitat for Humanity and other volunteers organized to get vehicles to try and help the homeless and others to safety.

Some were left to walk from Yuba City to the fairgrounds in Colusa, a 12-hour trip on foot. Very few shelters allowed evacuees to bring their pets.

## Authorities knew of problems

Construction began on the Oroville Dam in 1961. It is the tallest dam in the country and has created the second largest reservoir in California. In 2005, Friends of the River and other environmental groups proposed the state upgrade the emergency spillway to prevent the kind of catastrophic failure unfolding today. The proposal was rejected.

When asked why the proposal was refused, Bill Croyle, acting director of the California Department of Water Resources, told the press Feb. 13 that use of the spillway — and the resulting washing away of the soil — was a "new, never-happened-before event."

The apologists for the rulers have often used the same excuse — this was an unpredictable once-in-a-lifetime event — when preventable disasters strike, from hurricanes Katrina and Sandy to the round of storms that devastated parts of the South in January.

Engineers have reduced the water level in the reservoir — for now — by sending 100,000 cubic feet of water per second down the damaged spillway, further eroding the hillside. More storms are expected later this week and engineers are scurrying to put a temporary fix in place.

"We live in a world of risk," Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown said at a news conference the day after the evacuation order, expressing the contempt the rulers have for the safety of working people. "Stuff happens, and we respond."

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### NEW YORK

#### New York

Hear Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York. Sat., Feb. 25, 7 p.m. Donation \$5. 307 W. 36th St, 13th Floor. Tel: (646) 922-8186.



# Thousands in Puerto Rico protest anti-labor measures

BY SETH GALINSKY

“The economic situation was already pretty difficult before the government’s most recent measures,” Ivan Vargas, a worker at Puerto Rico’s Water and Sewage Authority, said in a phone interview from Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, Feb. 13.

Vargas was one of thousands of workers who marched in San Juan Feb. 9 to protest the government’s anti-labor moves outside the annual meeting of the Association of Industrialists of Puerto Rico, which was attended by representatives of the island’s colonial government and Washington’s Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico.

“Many of my co-workers are temporary workers. Some of them are only getting the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour and minimum benefits,” Vargas said. “Little by little, they are quitting and heading to the United States.”

One of the largest contingents at the march was from the Authentic Independent Union at the water authority. More than two dozen unions joined the action.

Since taking office in January, Gov. Ricardo Rosselló has pushed through laws and executive orders to meet the demands of the bipartisan Financial Oversight Board, appointed by then President Barack Obama to ensure payment to wealthy bondholders of some \$70 billion owed by the U.S. colony’s government agencies.

Under the Labor Transformation and Flexibilization Law adopted in January, employers are allowed to increase the probation period for new workers from

90 days to either nine or 12 months. The law cuts the Christmas bonus by 50 percent for those with less than one year seniority, raises the minimum number of hours needed to qualify for vacations and sick pay from 115 to 130 hours a month, and allows bosses to force employees to work on Sundays without paying overtime.

To sweeten the attack on labor, the law increases paternity leave from five to 15 days for some workers. Rosselló claims the law will save the government \$100 million a year.

Rosselló also signed a law to allow the government to privatize additional public services, and instructed all government agencies to cut expenses by 10 percent.

This is on top of measures by previous governments that laid off thousands of workers, cut pensions and increased taxes on working people.

“The labor reform is disastrous for working people,” said José Rodríguez Vélez, president of the Union Solidarity Movement (MSS), by phone from San Juan. The MSS organizes workers at the Coca Cola and Pepsi bottling plants and at La India brewery. “What the government is trying to do is create divisions in the working class.”

“Before the new law, workers received time and a half after eight hours in a day, now they don’t get it until they’ve worked 40 hours a week,” Pedro Irene Maymí, president of the Authentic Independent Union, told the *Militant* from San Juan. One measure states that all government agencies are under “one sole employer.” This means “they can move workers from one agency to an-



Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano/Luis López

Members of more than two dozen unions rally in San Juan Feb. 9 to protest demands by U.S. fiscal board for deeper attacks on workers and colonial government’s anti-labor moves.

other. Workers will lose their seniority rights,” Maymí said.

“The government claims the law will create more jobs,” he added. “That’s just a pretext to eliminate the benefits and protections that workers have.”

## Junta threatens to use ‘many tools’

The fiscal board, also called the junta, has been pushing Rosselló to make deeper cuts. In a Feb. 2 letter, Financial Oversight Board Chair José Carrión warned the governor that the junta has “many tools it can deploy” if it doesn’t get what it wants. Among its powers: criminal charges against anyone who doesn’t cooperate.

One of the junta’s demands is a 10 percent cut in pensions to save \$200 million. Pensions on the island average \$1,100 a month, but more than 38,000

retired government workers only get \$500.

The Puerto Rican economy has contracted 18 percent since a recession began in 2006. The latest figures show an even further decline over the last year, including an 8.9 percent drop in workers employed in manufacturing, a 13.6 percent drop in cement sales, and a 3.1 percent drop in the number of hours worked.

More protests are planned. Students at the University of Puerto Rico are holding assemblies on campuses across the island to organize against proposed cuts in the university budget and steep increases in tuition. Unions are organizing protests for March 8, International Women’s Day, and for May Day.

Many workers are buoyed by the return of independence fighter Oscar López Rivera to Puerto Rico, although he remains under house arrest. López will make his first public appearance on May 17 when his commuted sentence ends.

“I heard about his return during the demonstration,” water worker Vargas said. “I’ve read a lot about him. He was imprisoned for his beliefs. But not all my co-workers agree.”

“I tell them what I think. And that he is being freed because of pressure not just here but internationally. There’s no going back.”

# Oscar López back in Puerto Rico, faces restrictions

Continued from front page  
electronic bracelet.

López was imprisoned on frame-up charges, primarily of seditious conspiracy, because of his activities in support of independence for Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony since 1898. He was accused of being a leader of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), which took credit for bombings of businesses in the U.S. that operated in Puerto Rico. López was never charged with any act of violence.

Under the mounting pressure of the broad support in Puerto Rico and the U.S. for López’s release, then President Barack Obama commuted his sentence Jan. 17.

López’s daughter, his lawyer Jan Susler, U.S. Congressman Luis Gutiérrez, and Alejandro Molina, co-chair of the National Boricua Human Rights Network, greeted him outside the Terre Haute, Indiana, prison gates. They were later joined by Oscar’s brother José López, San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz and New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.

At a press conference in San Juan that evening, Clarisa López urged those in Puerto Rico who are anxious to see and speak with her father to be patient. “We can’t do anything that could give the U.S. Bureau of Prisons an excuse to return him to federal custody,” she said.

“On May 17 the big party starts,” she said. While still in prison, Oscar López made plans to visit every municipality

in Puerto Rico to thank people for their support and promote the fight to end the island’s status as a U.S. colony.

“The U.S. government refuses to admit that it has any political prisoners,” Susler told the press. “But the way López has been treated proves that’s not true, including his more than 12 years in solitary confinement. After his sentence was commuted, prison officials insisted López keep reporting to guards every two hours,” she said.

López was turned over to the custody of Gutiérrez, on the condition that they make no stops in Chicago and that there be no organized welcome for him in Puerto Rico. When other Puerto Rican political prisoners were released earlier — including Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Oscar Colazo and Carlos Alberto Torres — they spoke to sizable rallies in Chicago.

When the delegation arrived at the prison to pick him up, López was holding a Puerto Rican flag, surrounded by guards armed with rifles, his daughter said.

“I’m not even allowed to say ‘thanks to you’ in the name of my father,” she said at the press conference, referring to the conditions of silence Washington has imposed. “So let me say ‘thanks from me.’”

José López described how his brother first became involved in a wide variety of struggles in Chicago. He moved there from Puerto Rico when he was 14 years old. He was later drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Vietnam.

“Oscar came back to Chicago in 1967, the year after one of the largest, if not the largest, rebellion of Puerto Ricans in the United States, the 12, 13 and 14 of June 1966,” Oscar’s brother said. “Puerto Ricans said they were no longer going to accept being completely marginalized from all aspects of what an ordinary citizen deserves in a society.”

“Oscar said that going to Vietnam was a mistake, to fight against a people who were fighting against colonialism, while in this city the police and national guard were shooting at Puerto Ricans,” José said.

Although Oscar López’s fight for release was supported across the political spectrum in Puerto Rico, not everyone on the island is pleased with his return.

Carmelo Ríos, spokesperson in the Puerto Rican Senate for the ruling New Progressive Party, currently the majority party, criticized those he charged were “exalting” someone who doesn’t deserve it. They have forgotten those of us “who didn’t go underground to see how we could undemocratically overthrow a government we don’t agree with,” he said.

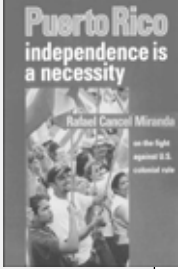
Workers on the American Airlines flight to San Juan had a different attitude. “One of the flight attendants came up to Oscar as we were about to land,” San Juan Mayor Cruz told the press. “She gave him a wing pin and said ‘Bienvenido a su casa’ [Welcome home].

“Then the head of the flight attendants crew came up and said, ‘It’s an honor to have you with us, sir.’” Cruz added.

## Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity

Rafael Cancel Miranda

In two interviews, Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda speaks out on the brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico. \$6



## “It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System”

The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class \$15

**pathfinderpress.com**



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

## AT&T Mobility workers fight company concession demands

NEW YORK — “The most important issue to me is health care,” Mike Williams, a cell tower technician for AT&T Mobility, told Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor in New York, when he joined some 100 Communications Workers of America members and others protesting outside an AT&T store in midtown Manhattan Feb. 10. The contract for the 21,000 wireless workers nationwide at AT&T Mobility expired the next day. Other protests took place across the country.

“I’m already paying \$230 a month for insurance for myself, my wife and our two kids,” Williams said. AT&T wants to steeply increase premiums.

To avoid paying union wages and benefits, the company has been selling more phones and wireless service through “third-party stores,” CWA Local 1101 business agent Heather Trainor told the *Militant*.

Workers inside the store gave thumbs up to the protesters and one held up his computer tablet which read “CWA.” The unionists marched to another store on Sixth Avenue. As we passed a group of construction workers, they joined in chanting, “Every job, a union job.”

— Seth Galinsky

## After 1-week strike, autoworkers in Wisconsin approve contract

OSHKOSH, Wis. — After a week on the picket line, the 60 members of United Auto Workers Local 291 won a new contract with AxleTech International here. Local members Feb. 12 voted overwhelming to approve the agreement.

AxleTech, owned by the Carlyle Group, a Washington, D.C.,-based private equity outfit, had demanded a steep increase in workers’ health care costs.

A solidarity rally planned for Feb. 11 was canceled after the tentative agreement was reached the day before.

“I think the planned rally had an effect on the company’s willingness to give us an acceptable contract,” Bob Mitchell, the local president, told the *Militant*. Mitchell is an assembler in the plant, which makes axles, vehicle parts and military vehicles.

The company, a major contractor for truck maker Oshkosh Corp., has laid off workers as orders for its Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles fell when the Barack Obama administration wound down the scope of Washington’s ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bosses dropped 122 workers in 2013-14.

“Everyday we got more support. When it rained, rail workers brought us umbrellas,” Mitchell said. “The AF-SCME local from the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh brought us food.

“UAW members at Kohler walked the picket lines with us and firemen brought us sandwiches,” he said. “None of our members crossed the picket line.”

“We got an OK deal,” said Russ Remter, a stockroom worker. “The medical premiums increased a little. And we took a hit on the attendance policy, which is now more strict.”

— Dan Fein

## B&H workers fight for union contract as boss moves warehouse

NEW YORK — B&H Photo and Electronics warehouse workers and their supporters rallied outside the company’s store here Feb. 12 to promote the

fight for a first union contract.

B&H informed the United Steelworkers union Jan. 12 that it will soon move its operations from two warehouses in Brooklyn to one central location in Florence Township, New Jersey, 75 miles away. Taking public transport to get there would take hours, workers say.

After a yearlong fight, the warehouse workers in November 2015 voted 200-88 to join the USW. Since then, the company has been stalling in negotiations.

Moving the warehouses is aimed to “break the union,” said Miguel, who has worked at B&H for 12 years. “They should sign a contract for union wages and pay moving costs.”

— Willie Cotton

# Court rules rail workers can strike against ‘one-man crew’

BY LAURA ANDERSON

Rail workers won a victory with a U.S. Supreme Court decision Jan. 9 in defense of their right to strike when the bosses run trains with just a one-person crew.

“The nationwide fight over operating crew size is far from over,” said Dennis Pierce, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen president, in a union newsletter. “But this victory helps to ensure that union contracts requiring two crew members are enforceable by the union, even to the point of a strike.”

In September 2013 over 100 BLET members struck the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway. Workers set up picket lines at the railroad’s main terminals in Ohio and Pennsylvania, shutting it down.

Carrier bosses were using management personnel to run trains alone in defiance of the union contract. Under convoluted and anti-labor provisions of the Railway Labor Act, rail workers can’t strike if the bosses commit “minor” violations of their contract. The Wheeling and Lake Erie bosses went to court, saying the one-man crew was a minor issue and the strike was illegal.

The high court said no.

“The court decision gives BLET



Militant/Bernie Senter

Communications Workers of America members protest outside AT&T wireless store in Los Angeles Feb. 11 against job cuts and rising health care costs in fight for new contract.

members some room to organize against other railroad companies that will continue to press for a single operator of a train or run trains with no operator,” said Dan Crocker, a locomotive engineer on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe working out of Lincoln, Nebraska, and president of BLET Division 98.

Rail bosses have been pushing to boost profit rates. Thirty years ago union contracts set the crew size at five. The bosses have whittled away at this, claiming new technologies make it safe to eliminate workers.

The July 6, 2013, derailment of a Montreal, Maine and Atlantic oil train in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, which exploded in flames killing 47 people and destroying the center of the town, brought the dangers of the one-person crew to attention all across North America. Under special dispensation from Transport Canada, the train was crewed by a single person, engineer Tom Harding.

Harding, along with train controller Richard Labrie, has faced a ferocious anti-worker campaign by the rail bosses and Canadian government to blame him instead of the bosses. The rail workers each face 47 frame-up charges for the disaster and a possible life sentence. Their trial is set for September 2017.

“The WLE bankrolled Ed Burkhart’s failed one-person operation on the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic to the tune of a \$25 million loan,” Pierce said when union members went on strike against the U.S. carrier.

Resistance to the one-person crew exploded Sept. 9, 2014, when SMART union members employed by BNSF Railway across the western two-thirds of the U.S. voted by a clear majority to reject the bosses’ proposal to implement it on their freight trains. Workers organized public protests, mobilizing both union members and residents who lived along the BNSF’s tracks.

“Two workers on all trains are needed to protect rail workers’ safety and the general public,” Dan Crocker said.

“Rail workers that operate the trains handle some of the most hazardous materials that exist, including combustible oil and other chemicals,” he said. “As advanced technology is developed to use inside the cab of the engine to operate trains, workers can give less human attention to what is happening outside the cab, to check your train. This is why you need more workers not less to operate a train.”

Joe Swanson contributed to this article.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 28, 1992

Washington continues to forcibly repatriate thousands of Haitians despite new revelations of the persecution these refugees face upon their return.

On February 11, the U.S. Supreme Court once again refused to block the forced return of the refugees. The high court January 31 lifted a lower court injunction that barred their repatriation after the Bush administration filed an emergency appeal claiming that an additional 20,000 Haitians were about to flee by boat to the United States. This assertion was contradicted by social service groups, diplomats, and even the top U.S. Coast Guard official in Haiti.

In its argument before the Supreme Court, the Bush administration claimed that legal challenges to the forced return of Haitians amounts to an “unprecedented assault” on the prerogatives of the executive branch of government to conduct foreign policy.



February 27, 1967

Union members have little reason to take comfort from George Meany’s denial that the AFL-CIO has taken money from the CIA. Nor is there any reason to give credibility to his assertion that he disapproves of unions taking such money from the cloak-and-dagger outfit. Meany’s statement can best be described in CIA jargon — a cover story.

It has been a matter of scandal for 15 years that Meany’s foreign policy adviser, Jay Lovestone, has collaborated with the CIA in its policy of subverting so-called communist-led unions abroad.

In the days when union leaders saw their role as fighting to improve the lot of the workers they represented, they also regarded international activity as that of aiding workers in other lands in their struggles against employers and governments that acted on behalf of the employers. The CIA-directed activity has been the very opposite.



February 28, 1942

The British ruling class is now powerless to stem by force the surging tide of Indian emancipation. Freedom for India lies within the grasp of the 400 million people of that oppressed country.

But what it can no longer successfully retain by force, the British ruling class now hopes to hold by cunning, by bargaining and by promise.

Feelers are being put forth designed to determine how little the British ruling class will have to pay for India’s support of the war. Downing Street is tendering offers of a “great political voice” for the people of India, “dominion status” — in short, anything but the removal of the British yoke from India.

The struggle for the national independence of India is not the battle of the Indian masses alone. It is as much the struggle of the workers everywhere, and of the British workers in particular.

# Havana book fair opens

## Continued from front page

Cuba's first minister of education directed the revolution's monumental literacy drive, and served for 20 years as the country's minister of culture. Today he heads the Office of the José Martí Program. Daily events honor Hart's revolutionary record, and new collections of his writings are being presented.

## Revolution expands access to culture

"Education has been one of the highest priorities of the revolution," said Juan Rodríguez, president of the Cuban Book Institute, at the book fair's opening ceremony. From the beginning, he said, Fidel Castro led the efforts to expand access to culture in Cuba. This included, in 1961, the yearlong campaign that brought literacy to some 700,000 adults.

These themes were developed in a two-day book fair program on Castro's political leadership. "The biggest cultural development in Cuba was the revolution itself," said historian Rolando Rodríguez in one panel discussion. "Thanks to Fidel's leadership we transformed ourselves, from a subjugated country with an inferiority complex — always looking to the North for direction — into a free, sovereign, independent nation."

Rodríguez gave many examples of Fidel's leadership in transforming education and the broad cultural level in Cuba. Fifty years ago, Rodríguez noted, the Cuban leader asked him to head up the newly founded Cuban Book Institute, part of an effort that established new publishing houses and printing plants.

One day, he said, Castro learned of plans to build a large new printing plant in Santiago de Cuba. He contacted Rodríguez and proposed it be built in Guantánamo instead. Rodríguez argued with Castro, saying it would be much more expensive to build a large industrial project in Guantánamo. It simply wasn't possible because Guantánamo — one of the poorest and most underdeveloped provinces in the country before the revolution — lacked the necessary infrastructure and trained workforce. "That's precisely why we need to build the plant in Guantánamo," Fidel answered, "and why you are going to help me do it," Rodríguez said.

Also on the panel were Fernando González, as well as Gerardo Hernández, another of the revolutionaries known worldwide as the Cuban Five. González is today vice president of the

Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Hernández is vice rector of the Higher Institute for International Relations (ISRI).

## Huge turnout to honor Fidel Castro

González highlighted the massive turnout by ordinary Cubans at events paying tribute to Fidel Castro after his death Nov. 25. Especially significant was the large participation by youth, he said, "because many in these generations — unlike my generation and previous ones — never had direct experience with our commander in chief in the leadership of the country: orienting, educating, persuading."

There is "perhaps no figure in the world against whom the imperialists have invested greater resources to denigrate and attack" than Fidel Castro, Hernández said. Yet "Fidel's image remains untarnished among millions around the world."

Hernández told of his discussions with fellow inmates in U.S. maximum security prisons, where he served more than 16 years. "There were quite a few who could not locate Cuba on a map but they knew who Fidel was." A frequent comment was, "I don't know much about politics, but Fidel really stood up to the American government."

## Interest builds in joining May Day brigade to Cuba

### BY OSBORNE HART

The first-ever U.S. contingent for the 12th May Day International Brigade to Cuba is picking up interest and participation. Individuals from Philadelphia, Chicago, Seattle and other places are preparing to take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn more about the Cuban Revolution today.

The brigade, sponsored by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), will run from April 24 through May 8. Highlights include marching with hundreds of thousands of Cubans celebrating the revolution May 1 and joining in an International Meeting in Solidarity with Cuba the next day. The cost is \$512 plus air fare to Cuba.

Ian McShea, a 25-year-old construction worker from Philadelphia, said he plans to go "to learn for myself so I can better defend the revolution."

"I've been reading a couple of books about the Cuban Revolution," McShea told the *Militant*. These include Path-



Militant photos by Jonathan Silberman

**Havana International Book Fair features numerous presentations and other events. Above, René González Barrios, president of Institute of History, signs his book on 20th century struggles against U.S. intervention in Latin America Feb. 12. Right, display of books Fidel Castro read during revolutionary struggle to bring down U.S.-backed dictatorship.**



"For revolutionaries and rebels around the world," Hernández concluded, "Fidel will always be an example."

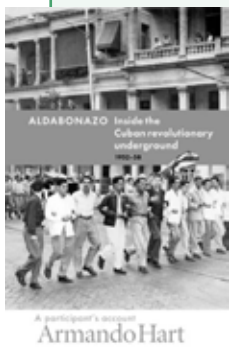
Since the opening day of the book fair, communist workers at the Pathfinder Press stand have talked with many students, workers and others who recounted how they took to the streets to pay tribute to Fidel after his death. "We were responding to the international press that said the revolution doesn't

have support among young people," Yessica Pugh, one of a group of University of Havana students at the fair, told the *Militant*.

Many who visited the Pathfinder booth said proudly that they were among the 6 million Cubans across the island who signed a pledge to continue defending the revolution.

The fair in Havana continues through Feb. 19.

## For further reading



### Aldabonazo

**Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58**  
Armando Hart

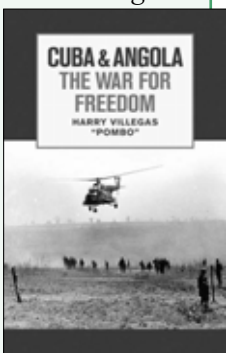
In this firsthand account by a historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, we meet men and women who led the urban underground in the fight against the U.S.-backed Batista tyranny. Together with their comrades-in-arms in the Rebel Army, their actions and example worldwide changed the history of the 20th century — and the century to come. Also in Spanish. \$25

### Cuba & Angola: The War for Freedom

Harry Villegas ("Pombo")

The story of Cuba's unparalleled contribution to the fight to free Africa from the scourge of apartheid. And how, in the doing, Cuba's socialist revolution was also strengthened. Also in Spanish. \$10

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finder's new book *Cuba and Angola: The War for Freedom* and *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*.

"I first heard about the May Day trip at a meeting of the Cuba group here," said Samir Qaisar from Chicago, "and from attending Militant Labor Forums."

"I want to know more about how the Cubans won their national liberation," he said, "and how Fidel Castro led the revolution and built the Cuban Communist Party. Right now I'm studying *The First and Second Declarations of Havana*, and Che Guevara's *Socialism and Man in Cuba*."

The brigade starts with doing agricultural work for several mornings alongside Cubans, discussing politics with other brigade members from around the world, and touring Havana, Santa Clara, schools and medical facilities.

After the May Day events in Havana, participants have two options. One is to travel to the provinces of Cienfuegos and Villa Clara and learn about the history of the revolution there.

The other, at an additional cost, is to attend the May 4-6 Fifth Seminar for Peace and for the Abolition of Foreign

Military Bases in Guantánamo. This town abuts the Guantánamo naval base, illegally occupied by the U.S. Navy since 1903, and, since 2002, home of Washington's notorious military prison.

The May Day brigade is dedicated to Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. Castro, the central leader of the July 26th Movement, which overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista government in the 1959 revolution, died last November. Guevara was killed 50 years ago by the CIA and Bolivian military while helping lead a guerrilla struggle against the dictatorship there.

Since 1959, every Democratic and Republican administration in Washington has worked to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. After the Barack Obama administration re-established diplomatic relations with the island in 2015, Washington continued its crippling economic embargo and occupation of Guantánamo.

The Chicago Cuba Coalition is organizing arrangements for U.S. brigade participants. For more information, contact the coalition at (312) 952-2618 or email: [ICanGoToCuba@gmail.com](mailto:ICanGoToCuba@gmail.com).

## Protesters demand 'Stop the raids!'

### Continued from front page

ective order broadening the scope of who they can go after. "Big cities tend to have a lot of illegal immigrants," one immigration official told the *Washington Post*. They're "a target-rich environment."

In the largest action to date, more than 20,000 people marched in Milwaukee Feb. 13 protesting the raids, the exclusion of refugees and immigrants based on their religion or national origins, and moves by Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke to allow his deputies to act as federal immigration cops.

Protesters came from all over the state in what Voces de la Frontera, which organized the action, called a "Day Without Latinos, Immigrants, and Refugees." According to the group, more than 150 farms, factories, restaurants and other businesses across the state closed down in what was in part a one-day strike against the anti-immigrant moves.

"I don't want to be deported. I work for people and society and it's unfair to get kicked out," Eliseo Rivera, a 30-year-old restaurant cook, told Socialist Workers Party members as they

Continued on page 9



# Cuba's internationalism was born with revolution

Below is an excerpt from the new book *Cuba and Angola: The War for Freedom*, an interview with Harry Villegas, a brigadier general of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. Villegas is known the world over as "Pombo," the nom de guerre given him by Ernesto Che Guevara. This selection is from the first chapter, "Our Internationalism in Africa was Born with the Cuban Revolution." Copyright © 2017 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

MARY-ALICE WATERS: At a mass rally in the city of Matanzas, Cuba, on July 26, 1991, Nelson Mandela, leader of the South African freedom struggle, paid

## EXCERPT FROM CUBA AND ANGOLA: THE WAR FOR FREEDOM

tribute to the Cuban people. Mandela had been released from prison only a year earlier, after some twenty-seven years behind the bars of the white-supremacist apartheid regime.

Let me begin by reading a few paragraphs of what Mandela said to the tens of thousands of Cubans assembled in Matanzas, and to the world:

It was in prison when I first heard of the massive assistance that the Cuban internationalist forces provided the people of Angola, on such a scale that one hesitated to believe, when the Angolans came under combined attack of South Africa, CIA-financed FNLA, mercenary, UNITA, and Zairean troops in 1975.

We in Africa are used to being victims of countries wanting to carve up our territory and subvert our sovereignty. It is unparalleled in African history to have another people rise to the defense of one of us.

We know also that this was a popular action in Cuba. We are aware that those who fought and died in Angola were only a small proportion of those who volunteered.

For the Cuban people, internationalism is not merely a word but something we have seen practiced to the benefit of large sections of humankind.

Pombo, you were one of the Cubans who led that unparalleled action spanning sixteen years, from 1975 to 1991. During those years, more than four hundred thousand Cuban men and women went to Angola as internationalist volunteers. They not only helped the Angolan people defend their independence against invading forces of the white supremacist regime. They helped the people of Namibia win their independence from South Africa. And their actions added to the massive revolutionary upsurge of the South African people that put an end to the apartheid regime.

In short, as Nelson Mandela declared in Matanzas in 1991, these victories made possible by Cuban solidarity changed the course of history in Africa and the world. Today, however, this history is little known among working people and youth in the United States. It is little known among several generations of youth in Africa, and even here in Cuba the memory is fading.



Above, Tricontinental "For the Cuban people, internationalism is not merely a word," said South African revolutionary leader Nelson Mandela. Right, Mandela with Cuban President Fidel Castro in Matanzas, Cuba, 1991. Above, Ernesto Che Guevara, right, and other Cuban volunteers participating in fight against pro-imperialist regime in Congo, 1965.

How did Cuba's participation in Angola's liberation struggle begin?

HARRY VILLEGAS: We have to place the Cuban mission in Angola within a broader framework. As Fidel has said, for us internationalism is paying our debt to humanity. Many of us in Cuba are of African descent. Thousands of Africans and their descendants participated in our struggles against slavery and for independence.

Cuban internationalism in Africa begins with the first years of the Cuban Revolution. It begins in Algeria. In 1961, when the Algerian people were fighting for independence from France, Cuba sent them a shipload of weapons.

Independence was won in 1962. The first thing we did was to send volunteer doctors and other medical personnel. That was in 1963.

Later that same year, when the Moroccan regime, backed by the US, attacked Algeria, we sent soldiers and military equipment to defend the newly independent government. We didn't have to fight there; our strategy was deterrence. When the Moroccans saw we were in Algeria, they pulled out. Later, when we withdrew our troops, we left our tanks with the Algerians for their defense.

### Mission in Congo, 1965

WATERS: Ten years before Cuba's internationalist mission in Angola, revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara led a column of 128 Cuban combatants to the eastern Congo to help independence forces fighting the pro-imperialist regime in that country. You were one of them, and served on the general staff.

VILLEGAS: In early 1965 while on a tour of several African countries Che visited Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. There he met with leaders of the Congolese revolutionary movement. It was agreed that Cuba would send instructors to support that movement. Che led the column, which fought alongside those forces for several months, from April to November 1965.

A few weeks earlier Che had visited Congo-Brazzaville, where he met with Agostinho Neto and other leaders of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the

Liberation of Angola). Angola was still a Portuguese colony at the time. They reached agreement that Cuba would give military training to MPLA cadres in their independence struggle.

A column of Cuban combatants was sent to Congo- Brazzaville in 1965. It was led by Jorge Risquet; the military commander was Rolando Kindelán. That unit helped defend the government of Congo-Brazzaville, which was threatened by the proimperialist regime in the Congo of Mobutu Sese Seko. It also trained the guerrilla fighters who subsequently became the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA). ...

RÓGER CALERO : How do you assess the experience of Che's column in the Congo?

VILLEGAS: The Congo was a tremendous experience for all of us. We went there in April 1965 not to lead the war but to train and advise Congolese combatants in the liberated zones in the eastern part of the country. Fighting alongside them, we took part in am-

bushes and several important battles.

It was a complex situation, however. The Congolese leaders weren't there with their troops; they were living in other countries. In the end, they decided to end combat operations. We left in November 1965.

WATERS: In his book *Episodes of the Revolutionary War: Congo*, Che explains that before arriving there, he and the rest of the Cuban leadership knew very little about the economic and social conditions of the Congo. He says, for example, that they weren't aware that in much of central Africa land was not private property. Unlike Cuba and the rest of Latin America, peasants fighting for land to cultivate weren't a driving force of the class struggle.

VILLEGAS: Yes, as Che pointed out in his diary, there was no concept of land ownership in the Congo. The mode of production and relations among families were different from Cuba and elsewhere

in Latin America. Tribalism existed. A big part of the population looked to their tribe, and to the divisions colonialism had created, rather than to a nation. All these things have to be looked at concretely. There's no single script for the whole world and for all moments in history.

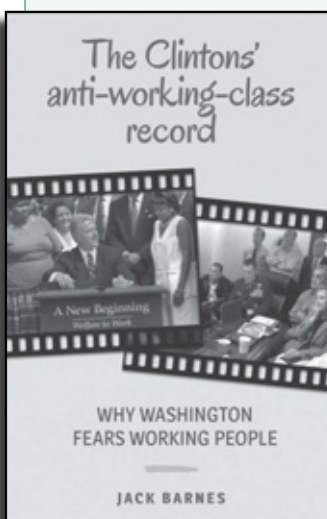
Che concluded that the economic, social, and political conditions didn't yet exist in that part of Africa to carry out a revolutionary struggle against imperialism — and might not for another twenty years.

In fact, a little more than two decades after Che made the commitment to help the MPLA, a historic victory was won when the invading South African army was defeated at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988, securing Angola's independence. So, when Cuba responded to Neto's request in 1975 to send Cuban combatants to Angola, we already had a ten-year history of working with the MPLA. We had already been in Angola helping their independence struggle.

## For the first time in decades, the US rulers have begun to fear the working class

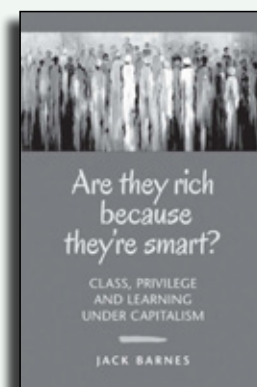
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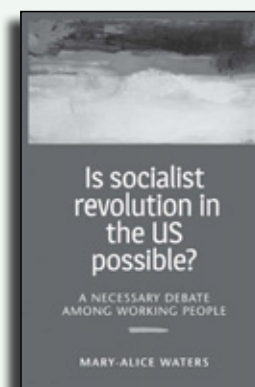


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# Castro: ‘Ours is a more just society and we believe in it’

Below is an excerpt from a television interview with Cuban President Fidel Castro, conducted in Havana by Robert MacNeil and televised on the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour in February 1985. The four-part interview, which was broadcast twice in the U.S., generated considerable debate and discussion. Castro's defense of the Cuban Revolution made a positive impression on many people, and the effect of the interview helped undermine Washington's anti-Cuba propaganda campaign. War and Crisis in the Americas, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February, contains this interview and others, along with speeches by Castro between December 1983 and March 1985. Copyright © 1985 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

MACNEIL: White House spokesman Larry Speakes said that one of the obstacles the Reagan administration sees to improved relations with Castro is what Speakes called violations of human rights in Cuba. I asked Castro about that.

CASTRO: What are the violations of human rights in Cuba? Tell me. Which ones? Invent one. Do we have disappeared people here? Look, if the United States —

MACNEIL: Well, let me give you an



Above, Militant/Róger Calero

2016 May Day march in Havana in support of Cuban Revolution. Inset, Robert MacNeil interviews Fidel Castro. Cuba has a “most fair and egalitarian society,” unlike U.S., which has both “multimillionaires and people begging in the streets, without any homes,” said Castro.

example of what he said. For instance, human rights organizations, like Amnesty International, estimate that you have up to 1,000 political prisoners still in your jails here. Do you have political prisoners still in jail in Cuba?

CASTRO: Yes, we have them. We have a few hundred political prisoners. Is that a violation of human rights?

MACNEIL: In democracies it is considered a violation of human rights to imprison somebody for his political beliefs.

CASTRO: I will give you an example. In Spain there are many Basque nationalists in prison. They're not political prisoners? What are they? Because you also have to analyze what is a political prisoner and what is not a political prisoner. Now then, those who committed crimes during Batista's time, did we have the right to put them on trial or not? Okay. Those who invaded Cuba through Playa Girón. Did we have the right to try them or not? Those who became CIA agents, those who placed bombs, those who brought about the deaths of peasants, workers, teachers. Do we have the right to bring them to trial or not? Those who, in agreement with a foreign power like the United States and backed by the United States, conspired in our country and who struggle and fight against our people in this revolution — because this revolution is not of a minority; this is a revolution of the overwhelming majority of people. What are these people? What are they? Political prisoners? Those

who have infiltrated through our coasts, those who have been trained by the CIA to kill, to place bombs: Do we have the right to bring them to trial or not? Are they political prisoners? They're something more than political prisoners. They're traitors to the homeland.

MACNEIL: Is there anybody in jail simply because of his political beliefs — because he dissents from you politically?

CASTRO: No one is in prison because of either their political or religious beliefs. ...

MACNEIL: May I raise a point? Your system, which you say works very well, it does presuppose that the leadership of the country, you, are always right, that you are infallible. Is that not so?

CASTRO: No, it does not presuppose that, because we are not as dogmatic as the church, although we have been dogmatic, and we have never preached a personality cult. You will not see a statue of me anywhere, nor a school with my name, nor a street, nor a little town, nor any type of personality cult because we have not taught our people to believe, but to think, to reason out. We have a people who think, not a people who believe, but rather who reason out, who think. And they might either agree or disagree with me. In general the overwhelming majority have agreed. Why? Because we have always been honest; we have always told them the truth. The people know that the government has never told them a lie. And I ask you to go to the world, tour the world,

and go to the United States and ask if they can say what I can say, that I have never told a lie to the people. And these are the reasons why there is confidence. Not because I have become a statue or an idol but rather simply because of the fact that they trust me. And I have very, very few prerogatives in this country. I do not appoint ministers or vice-ministers or directors of ministries or ambassadors. I don't appoint anybody, and that's the way it is. We have a system, a system for the selection of cadre based on their capacity, etc. I have less power, 100 times less power than the president of the United States, who can even declare war and nuclear war.

MACNEIL: But doesn't the system mean that the revolution is always right?

CASTRO: You, when you had your independence war you did not even free the slaves and yet you said you were a democratic country. For 150 years, you did not even allow the Black man to be part of a baseball team or a basketball team, to enter a club, to go to a white children's school. And you said it was a democracy. None of those things exists here — neither racial discrimination nor discrimination due to sex. It is the most fair, egalitarian society there has ever been in this hemisphere. So we consider it to be superior to yours. But you believe that yours is the best without any discussion whatsoever. Although there might be multimillionaires and people barefoot begging in the streets, without any homes, people unemployed. And you believe it's perfect, because you believe things.

I don't think that type of society is perfect, really, I think that ours is better. We have defended it better. It is a more just society and we believe in it. Now, we make mistakes, but whenever we make a mistake we have the courage to explain it. We have the courage to admit it, to recognize it, acknowledge it, to criticize it. I believe that very few — that there are probably few people like the leaders of a revolution who are able to acknowledge their mistakes. And I first of all acknowledge it before myself because first of all I am more critical with myself than with anybody else. But I'm critical before my people, critical before the world, the U.S., everybody. Far from — but don't worry. If this analysis had not been correct, the revolution would not be in power. The revolution would not be in power.

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# Defend abortion rights, state by state!

*The following statement was issued Feb. 15 by Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York.*

Thousands of women and men across the United States, many of them young, turned out Feb. 11 in defense of a woman's right to choose abortion, countering a nationwide campaign targeting Planned Parenthood. These actions demonstrated the possibility — and necessity — of organizing a broad public campaign of action, state by state, to push back the growing array of restrictions on women exercising their fundamental right to control their own bodies.

Since the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling decriminalizing abortion, this question has been at the center of assaults on the social and economic gains of women, part of the capitalist rulers' broader attacks on the rights and living conditions of working people. Growing restrictions on access to abortion and laws forcing clinics to close especially affect working-class women and those living in rural areas.

These attacks have "been made easier by the character and content of the 1973 court ruling," notes Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, in *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*. "Roe v. Wade was based not on a woman's right 'to equal protection of the laws' guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, but on medical criteria instead. During the first three months ('trimester'), the court ruled, the decision to terminate a pregnancy 'must be left to the medical judgment of a pregnant

woman's attending physician' (not to the woman herself, but to a doctor!).

"At the same time, the court allowed state governments to ban most abortions after 'viability,' ... something that medical advances inevitably make earlier and earlier in the pregnancy."

The Socialist Workers Party has a proud record in the fight for women's right to choose abortion. That demand, so basic to winning real social equality, became central to the wave of struggles for women's rights that grew out of the victories won in the streets in the 1950s and '60s by millions of fighters for Black rights.

"I propose a constitutional amendment to write Roe v. Wade into the New York State Constitution," Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo told participants in a Jan. 30 rally for Planned Parenthood in New York. But this would further weaken protection of a woman's right to choose!

As protests demanding the right to choose began to spread, abortion was decriminalized in New York in 1970. This removed all restrictions on women's control over their bodies. Cuomo's move to enshrine Roe v. Wade, with its strictures on women's rights, in the state constitution is a stark warning of the need to debate out the road forward and to fight state by state for equal protection of the law.

And it underscores the importance of mobilizing in the streets as opposed to pressure by bourgeois feminists to keep quiet and rely on capitalist politicians, especially in the Democratic Party!

The Socialist Workers Party says: Abortion is a woman's right to choose!

## 'Amnesty now!' says SWP candidate in LA

**Continued from front page**

ers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, was marching in the action that day too.

Government agents arrested 161 people from the Los Angeles area.

As Castro left the protest, she told Richter, "I'll be staying in touch so we can discuss more politics."

Chants of "Stop the deportations" were nearly drowned out by horns honking in support from people driving. Some found a place to park and joined in. Numerous people complimented Richter on his sign that said, "Stop the Raids! Amnesty Now!"

The day before, Richter joined a rally of over 100 union members fighting for a contract in front of an AT&T wireless store in Los Angeles. Protests were held in San Diego, Bakersfield, San Francisco and around the country. The contract covers technicians as well as retail and call-center workers employed at AT&T's wireless division. (See article on page 5.)

Dozens of AT&T workers from the company's traditional wired phone business joined the rally as did

many of those working at DirectTV, recently acquired by AT&T. The contract for 17,000 wireline workers in California and Nevada expired last April.

Richter offered his solidarity and raised the need for the labor movement to fight for unity between native-born and those without papers accepted by the government in Washington.

"We call for amnesty for all immigrants in the U.S. today," Richter told rally participants. "There are 1 million immigrants without papers in the Los Angeles area. If we organize them with the same rights, think what we could accomplish in building strong unions."

"We need an amnesty plan like they had under Reagan," Nathan Atchison, a wireline worker, told Richter.

"We need to rebuild a fighting labor movement that includes all workers, those with or without papers," Richter said. He pointed to the powerful mobilizations led by immigrant workers that took place across the country on May Day in 2006 that defeated the anti-working-class Sensenbrenner Bill.

## 'Stop the raids!'

**Continued from page 6**

marched together.

"Doesn't matter if you're from China, doesn't matter if you're from Puerto Rico or from Mexico, we all stand together as one because we believe that we are the people," Luis Ortega told WBAY-TV News.

**SWP candidates: 'Amnesty now!'**

"The truth is that the capitalists want undocumented workers to come to the U.S., because they can be pressured into a pariah status and superexploited, to drive down the value of all our labor power," Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York, told workers at a Feb. 14 protest there.

"Trump's measures, like those of Obama, Bush and Clinton before him, are not designed to stop the flow of immigrant labor, but to regulate it and to divide the working class," he said.

"That's why protests that say 'Stop the Raids. Amnesty now!' are so important," Hart said. "Our trade unions should organize everyone with or without papers into the unions. Together we can fight more effectively for better wages, working conditions and job safety. We should champion demands and protests that advance the unity of the working class."

**Court upholds injunction**

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in a unanimous vote Feb. 9 upheld an injunction by a federal district court in Washington state staying Trump's Jan. 27 executive order, which imposed a three-month ban on all travelers from seven mostly Muslim countries, a four-month moratorium on admitting refugees from any country and an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees. After nationwide protests, the White House backed off a little, saying the ban didn't apply to permanent U.S. residents.

"We oppose Trump's blanket ban on refugees and visitors from seven countries. No one should be penalized because of their religious beliefs or background, their political views or their country of origin," Hart said. "At the same time the slogan raised by many liberals and middle-class leftists to tear down the wall and open the border is utopian and dangerous. If enacted, such moves would sharply increase joblessness and competition among workers, and deal blows to the unity of the working class."

Lawyers for the state of Washington charged that the executive order was intended as a "Muslim ban."

While agreeing with government lawyers that the president has wide powers on immigration, the Appeals Court ruled that his decisions are subject to review. And, they said, anyone residing in the United States, regardless of whether or not their presence is "lawful," has a right to due process.

The White House is considering rewriting the executive order with a clearer focus, but has not ruled out pursuing appeals of the court ruling.

Trump's Jan. 25 executive order broadening ICE raids has not been challenged in court.

**Protests pushed back factory raids**

Until 2008, one of the main ways the U.S. government tried to instill fear in workers without papers was through factory raids. But after millions of immigrant workers went on strike and protested on May 1, 2006, against an anti-immigrant bill then in the U.S. Congress, factory raids became more and more unpopular among broad sections of the working class.

They were increasingly met with protests that united Black, Caucasian and Latino workers. The last major factory raid was in Postville, Iowa, in 2008.

The U.S. government shifted gears, ending factory raids and relying more on operations targeting "criminal aliens," E-Verify, and immigration "audits" to force bosses to fire workers without papers. Some sweeps under Obama detained over 2,000 immigrants.

In Obama's second term, deporting undocumented workers with felonies or "significant" misdemeanors was proclaimed ICE's top priority.

Trump's executive order says U.S. policy is to detain all individuals who violate federal immigration law. Despite this, the recent raids were largely carried out under Obama administration guidelines.

*Dan Fein and Samir Qaisar contributed to this article from Milwaukee.*

## —LETTERS—

**Protest Jew-hatred**

The New York meeting to celebrate the life of Fidel Castro was a rousing, standing-room-only event that enthusiastically gave tribute to one of our greatest leaders.

One flaw in the event, though, occurred when pianist Dayramir González, who performed there, gave extended remarks. At one point while talking about the problem of rising rents, he referred to how all the money was going "to the top 1 percent, the Jews." It was a shocking thing to hear, and there was an audible gasp from a section of the audience. No one from the speakers platform answered this remark. I hope people spoke to the musician afterward and explained the danger to the working class in Jew-baiting.

*Craig Honts*

*New York, New York*

*Editor's note* — Thank you for noting the jarring anti-Semitic comment at the meeting to celebrate the life and political contributions of Fidel Castro. I was there, but didn't hear much of the program as I was involved in the defense. I agree other speakers or the program organizers should have disassociated the event from González's comments. Such remarks are particularly outrageous at a meeting in tribute to Fidel Castro, who was outspoken

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against Jew-hatred and in favor of the right of Israel to exist. "I don't think anyone has been slandered more than the Jews," Castro said in a 2010 *Atlantic* magazine interview. Taking issue with comments by then president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who denied the fact of the Holocaust, Castro "explained why the Iranian government would better serve the cause of peace by acknowledging the 'unique' history of anti-Semitism and trying to understand why Israelis fear for their existence."

*John Studer*

**The letters column is an open forum on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**