Cuba sends doctors to combat Ebola in Africa
Calls on other countries to 'join the struggle'

BY SETH GALINSKY

The revolutionary government of Cuba is sending a 165-member medical team to Sierra Leone to combat the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. This is the largest number of medical personnel being sent to West Africa from anywhere in the world.

Like other internationalist aid from Cuba since working people took power following the 1959 revolution, the mission to combat Ebola “is carried out under the principle that we don’t give what we have left over; we share what we have,” Cuba’s Public Health Minister Roberto Morales said at a Sept. 12 press conference in Geneva. Morales said that Cuba currently

Continued on page 4

Washington escalates war moves in Iraq, Syria

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

With substantial sections of the U.S. ruling class demanding more aggressive action, President Barack Obama declared war against Islamic State forces, which control one-third of territory in both Iraq and Syria, in a nationwide speech Sept. 10.

OPPOSE US BOMBING, TROOPS IN IRAQ, SYRIA! — Editorial, p. 11

The president’s plan focuses on increased airstrikes in Iraq — where more than 150 have already been carried out over the past month — and next in Syria, and assembling a “broad coalition” to back the assault. Obama insisted this will not include U.S. combat boots on the ground, but, he said, others will do so.

If this coalition approach fails, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate

Continued on page 11

Rail workers defend safety, reject bosses’ 1-person ‘crew’ proposal

Meeting in DC marks 16 years in int’l fight to free Cuban 5

BY NED MEASEL

WASHINGTON, D.C. — More than 125 people attended a meeting here Sept. 13 to demand freedom for the Cuban Five. “Tonight’s event is

CUBAN 5 EVENT IN HAVANA — See article, p. 7

part of activities taking place all over the world” to mark the 16th anniversary of their arrest on frame-up charges by the FBI, said Alicia Jrapko, U.S. coordinator of the International Committee

Continued on page 7

Inside

Turkey construction workers resist deadly profit drive
Moscow’s war in Ukraine unpopular inside Russia
On the picket line, p. 5 — Illinois lamp workers win pay raise after 3-day strike
Teachers in British Columbia on strike since June
NY airport workers fight for union, wage raise, break room

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Creston News Advertiser

Rail workers, supporters outside Aug. 25, Creston, Iowa, union meeting oppose one-man crew.

'Paper inspires with news of workers’ fights around world'

BY MAGGIE TROVE

The fall 2014 Militant subscription drive has begun and is on course, with 452 subscriptions! The first chart with quotas and progress from cities in the U.S. and around the world is printed below.

The drive is being led by trade unionists and others who are joining strikes, organizing drives and social protests. They’re increasing the number of workers who read and use the Militant to strengthen their struggles and learn about and meet others who are part of resistance to attacks from
Construction workers in Turkey resist bosses’ deadly profit drive

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Some 1,000 workers and others rallied outside a construction site in Istanbul, Turkey, Sept. 7 to protest the deaths of 10 construction workers killed the previous day as a result of the bosses’ profit-driven disregard for elementary safety procedures. Police attacked the demonstration with water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas.

The deaths were just the latest incident of workers killed in the booming Turkish construction industry. In the last five years, 1,500 construction workers in Turkey died on the job, and 1,940 were disabled.

The protest comes four months after a wave of mass demonstrations across Turkey against mining bosses and the government, sparked by the deaths of more than 300 coal miners in the western town of Soma.

The 10 construction workers died when an elevator they were riding in fell 32 floors as they worked overtime on a Saturday evening. They were among 1,500 workers building the Torun Center luxury high rise residential complex.

Emrah Acar, who worked on elevator maintenance at the site, told Turkish daily Hurriyet that for more than two months “the elevator was going off the rails, and whenever it derailed, we had to press the ‘emergency stop’ but- ton and slam the cabin into the walls to make it stop.” Acar said he had been telling officials about the danger over this period.

Acar said he had been telling officials about the danger over this period.

Aziz Torun, CEO of the construction company, denied the elevator was defective and blamed the workers. Torun also denied he authorized overtime. However, a municipal government agency had granted the company permission to operate 24 hours a day on the project because the posh residence was to be completed in the “public interest.”

On Sept. 2 miner Metin Keskin, 36, was killed in Soma after being hit by a large chunk of coal that pushed him into a steel rod that punctured his chest.

Some workers walked off the job in protest. The Employee Health and Work Safety Council, a miners advocacy group, blamed Keskin’s death on speedup of production by the Imbat company, which runs the mine.

Missouri women’s rights supporters rally against new abortion restriction

BY MAGGIE TROWE

In the latest attack on abortion rights, the Missouri state legislature voted Sept. 10 to extend the waiting period for a woman seeking an abortion to 72 hours, becoming the third state to further restrict access to abortion in the past two years.

The bill was introduced by Republican state Rep. Stacie Straub, who represents the Boundary Area in St. Louis County. Straub said the bill was needed to protect women’s health.

“Women should not have to undergo such a stringent requirement,” Straub said. “This bill is further intrusion of government into the private lives of Missouri women.”

Several hundred supporters of women’s rights rallied against the bill inside and outside the capitol in Jefferson City the day of the vote to overrule Gov. Jay Nixan’s veto of the bill. A similar number of people were there to support the restriction.

Groups defending women’s right to choose abortion included Planned Parenthood, the National Organization for Women, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Caucus of Jewish Women, Catholics for Choice, Missouri Women United and the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Like 20 other states, Missouri already had a 24-hour waiting period for abortions. “The law was already burdensome,” M’Evie Meid, director of statewide organizing for Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri, told The Militant in a phone interview. “The new law is intended to shame or coerce the woman. There is only one licensed provider of abortions in Missouri — the Planned Parenthood Clinic in St. Louis. The average woman travels nearly 100 miles to that clinic, and one in 10 travels 300 miles.”

“It means it will cost more to get an abortion,” Jamie Tomek, president of Missouri NOW, said, “because you have to have two appointments, you have to make two trips, you have to take two days off work.”

“This bill is further intrusion of politicians into Missouri women’s personal lives,” said Laura McQuade, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Kansas and Missouri, in a Sept. 10 press statement.

“We all want women to have the information and support they need to make a carefully considered decision about a pregnancy,” said the statement. “This law won’t do that. It will block access to safe, legal abortion and target women who have the least access to medical care.”

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Workers’ fights worldwide

Continued from front page

the bosses and the government.
Protests against the Aug. 9 killing
of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Mis-
souri, cop Darren Wilson continued
last week. Hundreds of angry residents
attended a city council meeting there
Sept. 9, demanding, and the Road to Workers
Power, both by Jack Barnes.
Candace Wagner, a factory worker
in Brooklyn, said that she and other
workers who read the Militant joined
a “lunch-in” protest of Aviation Safe-
guards employees at company head-
quar ters in Queens Sept. 10 demanding
a decent break room.
Jacquie Henderson and Dennis Rich-
ter, two production workers in Omaha,
Nebraska, drove to Creston, Iowa, to
talk with rail workers about the Burl
ington Northern Santa Fe Railway’s
proposal to reduce crew size on freight
trains to one person. (See article on
front page.) Richter worked for many
years as a union rail worker. One work-
er bought a subscription to the Militant
and another got a single copy.

The scoreboard lists a quota of 20
subscriptions for prisoners. Eight pris-
oners have already subscribed or re-
ceived subscriptions paid for by family
or friends, bringing the total number of
readers behind bars to 99.
Of the 99 subscribers behind bars, 36
are in Florida and 26 in California. At
the Pelican Bay State Prison in Cres-
cent City, Calif., where prisoners car-
ried out a hunger strike last year, eight
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Moscow’s war in Ukraine unpopular inside Russia

BY JOHN STUDER

The Sept. 5 cease-fire between Kiev and Moscow in parts of eastern Ukraine occupied by Russian troops and separatist paramilitary units continues to hold. At the same time, some 1,000 Russian troops remain in eastern Ukraine and there has been sporadic fighting around both the Ukrainian-government-held airport in Donetsk and approaches to the city of Mariupol.

Most people in Ukraine, including in the east, are staunchly opposed to the Russian government-backed separatists or a return to economic and political domination by Moscow.

Moscow’s intervention in Ukraine is also unpopular in Russia. A recent poll by the pro-Kremlin Fund of Social Opinions reported that only 5 percent of people in Russia support Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.

Recently there has been an upturn in strikes and other labor actions in Russia. Miners, metal workers and municipal and state workers have launched spontaneous strikes, mainly seeking unpaid wages. Members of the Interregional Union of Health Care Workers in the city of Ufa declared a hunger strike Sept. 9 to protest low pay. “There are now slightly more than one new strike every working day,” the Moscow Center for Social Labor Rights reported Sept. 8.

Attempting to reinforce the shaky truce, the Ukrainian government voted to defer a trade pact with the European Union that the government’s most influential oligarchs, including President Petro Poroshenko, had been pushing since 2013. Meanwhile, Moscow has been using courts to impose more sanctions on Russian companies.

Leaving aside that the truce, the September 13 that the government’s most important achievement over the last six months was adoption of two “mystery” decrees: cutting public spending by more than 10 percent, hiking housing bills and taxes, and looking to sell state-owned coal mines to private interests.

Meanwhile, Washington and other imperialist governments have moved to impose more sanctions on Russian energy firms, cutting off aid to new oil and gas exploration. The imperialist sanctions are exacerbating an economic crisis that has come down harder on working people. The ruble fell to an all-time low against the dollar Sept. 16. That day Opel car company, the European arm of General Motors, laid off 500 workers and cut production in its St. Petersburg plant from two shifts to one.

Cuba sends doctors to fight Ebola in Africa

continued from front page

The Cuban government, like we have always done during these 55 years of revolution, has decided to participate in this worldwide effort under the leadership of the World Health Organization,” Morales said. “We call on the governments and health ministries of all countries to join the struggle against this disease.”

“We are willing to work shoulder to shoulder with doctors from any country that decides to do so,” he added, “including from the United States.”

Reporters in Geneva asked Morales why Cuba was sending the brigade to Sierra Leone.

Cuba already has 25 health care workers in Sierra Leone treating those infected with the disease. The Cuban volunteers are getting specialized training in Cuba to prepare effectively deal with the deadly disease, which is spread mainly through contact with body fluids.

“We need at a minimum 300 to 600 doctors, and more than 1,000 other health care workers,” Chan said. “As of today, 4,782 people have been infected and 2,400 have died.”

Since the Ebola epidemic began, Sierra Leone and Guinea—Conakry have less than one or two doctors for every 100,000 people.

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Since the Ebola epidemic began, Sierra Leone and Guinea—Conakry have less than one or two doctors for every 100,000 people.

“We are going to work with the public health authorities in Sierra Leone and the government of Guinea—Conakry to set up a plan that prevents the disease and contribute in that way to stopping the epidemic and keep it from expanding to other regions.”

When the Ebola epidemic broke out, Cuba kept all of its medical workers in Africa.

At the same time, the U.S. govern-

ment’s Peace Corps evacuated all 340 of its personnel in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, including all health education workers. The Connecticut-based Heart Fund Foundation pulled out its four U.S. doctors from Liberia after the epidemic began. Boston-based Wellbody Alliance did the same.

The Pentagon announced Sept. 8 that it is sending a 25-bed field hospital for treatment of local medical workers in Liberia, not the general population. No U.S. doctors will staff it.

After Cuba’s aid announcement received wide publicity, President Barack Obama said Washington would send U.S. military engineers and teachers to train health care workers in Liberia.

Cuba sends doctors to fight Ebola in Africa

September 29, 1989

HARTFORD, Conn. — “We came out together and we’ll go in together — that’s our motto,” said Sebastian “Chick” Faraci, one of the 850 strik-

ing workers at the Firearms here. Everyone around him agreed.

That day might not be too far off.

Between 150 and 200 Negro resi-

dents of the area gathered around the house after the blast. When the local racist police arrived, they arrested everyone in the house of the house at the time and the injuries were not serious.

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Despite appeals throughout the summer for federal protection in Missis-

sippi, incidents of violence and harass-ment were the pattern for the summer and such incidents are on the increase.
Illinois mechanics strike for union contract

EAST DUNDEE, III. — Some 25 union supporters joined an expanded picket line Sept. 5 to maintain the mechanics on strike at Al Piemonte Chevrolet. In March the mechanics voted 9-2 to join International Association of Machinists Local 701. They went on strike July 9.

“The company fired a senior me-
chanic for no other reason than he was earning top pay,” said striker Andrew Kuehl. “We did not want to be next, so we called the union to get some job security.”

The main issue in the strike, the me-
chanics said, is medical insurance and pensions. They want the same benefits as workers at Ford and Nissan deal-
shipers, also owned by Piemonte. Ac-
cording to strikers, Piemonte Chevrolet refused to budge on the company’s pro-
posal for a 50 percent health insurance co-pay and a substantially inadequate pension plan.

The dealership has kept the shop run-
ning with the two who voted not to join the union and several new hires.

“After the strike was declared, we have turned away eight potential customers,” said striker Damian Iskra. “The company got a temporary restraining order, starting today, limiting us to two pickets in the entranceway.”

“I support workers in struggle ev-
ery chance I get,” said Ed Hanson, vice-president of the Elgin Association of Firefighters, one of several officials from other unions, including the Labor-
ers’ International Union, at the picket.

Strikers, members of SEIU Workers United Local 2565, approved the contract by a secret ballot vote held at the picket line.

Strikers said the company’s first of-
fer of 30 cents an hour was rejected overwhelmingly. Workers are paid any-
where from $8.25 to $20 an hour. Before the vote more than 100 strik-
ers and their families gathered at the pic-
cket line, grilling dogs and listening to Mexican music, while the union negotiating committee met with company representatives inside the plant.

“About 20 co-workers didn’t support the strike and stayed working. This plant is 95 percent Latino and 80 per-
cent workers, including disabled and indigenous,” said striker Gabriel Mendez, 25, who works in the shipping department. “The company tried to divide us by giving the shippers another 25 percent increase per hour. In the end we all got the same increase.”

The walkout involved 360 of the plant’s 400 workers.

“The company has worked at the plant for more than 20 years, told the Militant. “We stuck together and stayed strong.”

— Alyson Kennedy

Canada teachers strike over wages and class size

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Some 41,000 teachers have been on strike across the province since mid-June, two weeks before the end of the school year. Public schools, which were scheduled to reopen Sept. 2, are still closed.

“Teachers went on strike to demand higher wages and smaller class sizes,” said striker Renee Elliott, who works for Airway Teachers Union. “They have a right to negotiate over class size.”

According to strikers, Piemonte Chevrolet owners paid the workers $8.83 per hour, which the British Columbia government says that teachers have no right to negotiate over class size.

Since 2002, nearly 2,500 special education teachers, counselors, teach-
er-librarians and other school workers have been cut. British Columbia schools have the fewest teachers per student in the country and they earn less than in Ontario and Alberta. The British Co-
lumbia Federation of Teachers is asking for an 8 percent increase over five years, while the government is offering 7 per-
cent over six.

Thousands of teachers and their supporters, including parents, stu-
dents and other unions, rallied here Sept. 5 and across the province days earlier to demand that the government accept the federation’s proposals for binding arbitration to end the strike, which the government has called “a nonstarter.”

Dave Gagnon, a support staff worker at Windsor House School, carried a sign that read, “We need to support teachers because breaking unions won’t stop with teachers.” He said that Canadian Union of Public Employees members who work as school support staff are re-
specting the teachers’ picket lines.

— Steve Penner, Ned Dmytryshyn and Mike Barker

North London care workers strike against pay cut

BARNET, North London — Doz-
ens of UNISON-organized care work-
ers at the Flower Lane Autism Service and Rosa Morrison center, both run by Your Choice Barnet, have begun a se-
ries of two-day strikes and other actions to protest a 9.5 percent pay cut. Barnet Council, the local government that owns Your Choice, is on a drive to turn a profit on the centers, where workers care for people with physical or learn-
ing disabilities.

“In today’s climate, you can’t afford this pay cut,” said Flower Lane worker Sharon Harrison. “Just the rent means you would have to move out of Lon-
don.”

“People with autism need consis-
tency, daily plans, routine,” she said. “It shouldn’t be a business, but simply a service for people who need it.”

During the first walkout Sept. 8-9, workers outside Flower Lane handed out leaflets on their fight. Passing driv-
ers honked in support. A woman whose son goes to Flower Lane brought tea and coffee for the strikers. A busload of striking care workers from Care UK in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, joined a solidarity rally Sept. 9.

Thirty workers have taken redun-
dancy (voluntary layoff) since attacks on conditions began 18 months ago. Workers said that Your Choice has re-
planted them with temp workers, who are paid less and don’t have guaranteed hours.

“People have lost the concept of what a union is,” said Doug Lloyd, a Your Choice worker. “Just the union is the members. If we start using it, we can be strong.”

— Ognmundur Jonsson

Illinois lamp workers win pay raise after 3-day strike

DES PLAINES, III. — Workers at lamp manufacturer Juno Lighting here won pay raises and a new contract Sept. 6 after a three-day strike. The agree-
ment includes wage increases of 45 cents per hour for each of the first two years and 50 cents in 2016. The com-
pany withdrew its demand to make workers pay higher health insurance premiums.

“We broke them in three days. In the end we got what we wanted,” said Gabriel Mendez, 25, who works in the shipping department. “The company tried to divide us by giving the shippers another 25 cent increase per hour. In the end we all got the same increase.”

The walkout involved 360 of the plant’s 400 workers.

The company is on a campaign to orga-
nize 12,000 airport workers who are disrespected.”

— Candace Wagner

ALF/Allyson Kennedy

Workers on picket line during three-day strike at lamp manufacturer Juno Lighting in Des Plaines, Illinois, hear vote totals Sept. 6 approving new contract with wage raise.

— Dan Fein

New York airport workers hold “lunch-in” for union, wage raise

NEW YORK — Airport workers fighting for a union, higher wages and better work conditions held a “lunch-
in” in the lobby of the building housing the offices of Aviation Safeguards in Kew Gardens, Queens. Sept. 10. Work-
ers from JFK and LaGuardia airports, joined by other members and staff of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ and other union support-
ers, followed the commands of “Move in. Keep exits clear. Sit down. Pull out your sandwich. Eat lunch.” Between bites protesters chanted their demands. The protest centered on the need for a decent break room for Aviation Safe-
guards workers at JFK.

“It’s not just about pay,” said Sha-
reeka Elliott, who works for Airway Cleaners at JFK. “Our humanity is be-
ing disrespected.”

The union is on a campaign to orga-
nize 12,000 airport workers who are employed by subcontractors at JFK and LaGuardia.

— Alyson Kennedy

Airport workers and supporters hold lunchtime sit-in in lobby at Aviation Safeguards near JFK airport in Queens, New York, Sept. 10, demanding company provide decent break room.

— THE PICKET LINE —
Nelson Mandela: Only disciplined mass action will win

Below is an excerpt from Nelson Mandela Speaks: Forging a Democratic Nonracial South Africa by Nelson Mandela (1980-2005). Mandela was the central leader of the African National Congress and president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999, and was imprisoned for 27 years by the South African government for fighting to end white-supremacist apartheid rule. As a result of a powerful mass movement in South Africa — strengthened by the defeat of Pretoria’s invasion of Angola by Angolan and Cuban troops — Mandela was released from prison on Feb. 11, 1990. That same day he spoke the following words to a mass rally in Cape Town. Copyright © 1993 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

“The sight of freedom looming on the horizon should encourage us to redouble our efforts. It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured,” said Nelson Mandela, leader of African National Congress, the day he was freed from prison. Above, women workers demonstrate at City Council offices of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, August 1991.

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BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY NELSON MANDELA
Tolerate the injustices of South Africa. Black and white, recognize that apartheid has no future. It has to be ended by our own decisive mass action in order to build peace and security. The movements of defiance and other actions of our organization and people can only culminate in the establishment of democracy. The apartheid destruction on our continent is inexcusable. The fabric of family life of millions of my people has been shattered. Millions are homeless and unemployed. Our economy lies in ruins and our people are embroiled in political strife. Our resort to the armed struggle in 1961 with the formation of the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, was a purely defensive action against the violence of apartheid. The factors which necessitated the armed struggle still exist today. We have no option but to continue. We express the hope that a climate conducive to a negotiated settlement will be created soon so that there may no longer be the need for the armed struggle.

I am a loyal and disciplined member of the African National Congress. I am therefore in full agreement with all of its objectives, strategies, and tactics. The need to unite the people of our country is as important a task now as it has always been. No individual leader is able to take on this enormous task on his own. It is our task as leaders to place our views before our organization and to allow the democratic structures to decide on the way forward.

On the question of democratic practice, I feel duty-bound to make the point that a leader of the movement is a person who has been democratically elected at a national conference. This is a principle which must be upheld without exceptions.

Today, I wish to report to you that my talks with the government have been aimed at normalizing the political situation in the country. We have not as yet begun discussing the basic demands of the struggle. I wish to stress that I myself had at no time considered negotiations on the basic demands of our people can begin. I reiterate our call for, inter alia, the immediate ending of the state of emergency and the freeing of all, and not only some, political prisoners. Only such a normalized situation which allows for free political activity can allow us to consult our people in order to obtain a mandate. The people need to be consulted on who will negotiate and on the content of such negotiations. Negotiations cannot take place above the heads or behind the backs of our people. It is our belief that the future of our country can only be determined by a body which is democratically elected on a nonracial basis.

Negotiations on the dismantling of apartheid will have to address the question of the democracy of our people for a democratic, nonracial, and unitary South Africa. There must be an end to white monopoly on political power and a fundamental change of our political and economic systems to ensure that the inequalities of apartheid are addressed and our society ethically thoroughly democratized.

Sydney: 1755. E-mail: seattleswp@qwestoffice.net

This will not be able to forgive. The sight of freedom looming on the horizon should encourage us to redouble our efforts. It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured,” said Nelson Mandela, leader of African National Congress, the day he was freed from prison. Above, women workers demonstrate at City Council offices of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, August 1991.

To relax our efforts now would be a mistake which generations to come would be able to forgive. The sight of freedom looming on the horizon should encourage us to redouble our efforts. It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured.

We call on our white compatriots to join us in the shaping of a new South Africa. The freedom movement is the political home for you too. We call on the international community to continue the campaign to impose political and economic sanctions now would be to run the risk of aborting the process towards the complete eradication of apartheid. Only such a normalized situation which allows for free political activity can allow us to consult our people in order to obtain a mandate. The people need to be consulted on who will negotiate and on the content of such negotiations.

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Continued from front page

Nevertheless in that place, we achieved an entire trial through just 16 images,” Solidarity.”

Antonio Guerrero, titled “Absolved by the Cuban 5 and held at the headquarters in prison –– and I know that you will help us win their release and bring them home.”

Fernando González, now vice president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), which organized the event, and René González have been leading the international defense effort since their return.

One of the highlights of the two-day event was an exhibition inaugurating “Absolved by Solidarity,” a new series of 16 watercolors by Antonio Guerrero. The paintings depict some of the most memorable moments in the 2000-2001 frame-up trial of the five Cuban revolutionaries and the dignity and humor with which they confronted their accusers.

“These paintings were inspired by the 15 watercolors I painted in 2013 that depicted the 17 months we spent in the punishment cells” of the Federal Detention Center in Miami, writes Guerrero in his introduction to the collection. “This work is a continuation of that story.”

Delegates to the conference called for coordinated activities around the world in September 2015, including the next “5 Days for the Cuban 5” in Washington, D.C., and support to an international solidarity action in South Africa in early 2015 that will highlight the role of the Cuban Five in Cuba’s nearly 16-year-long internationalist mission in Angola that helped bring down the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Events in DC mark 16th anniversary of fight to free Cuban 5

Who are the Cuban Five?

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the Five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

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Given the importance for working people in the United States, Cuba and worldwide of reversing Washington’s decades-long economic embargo and hostile state policy toward Cuba, the Militant is reprinting a 2013 interview with Ramón Sánchez-Parodi, a longtime leader of the revolution. The interview first appeared in the Dec. 13, 2013, issue of the Cuban daily Granma.

In 1975 Sánchez-Parodi represented the Cuban government in negotiations with the U.S. public administration of President Gerald Ford that had been proposed by the White House in June 1974, shortly before the resignation of President Richard Nixon. The secret talks led to the reciprocal establishment of Interests Sections in Havana and Washington, D.C. Sánchez-Parodi then headed the Cuban Interests Section in Washington from its opening in 1977 until 1989.

The U.S. administration of Dwight Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations with Cuba in January 1961, two years after the Rebel Army and July 26 Revolution Movement, under Fidel Castro’s leadership, led a massusive popular insurrection that overthrew the U.S.-backed tyranny of Fulgencio Batista and brought workers and farmers to power. In October 1960 the Eisenhower administration had imposed a partial trade embargo against Cuba. In February 1962 Democratic Party President John Kennedy issued an executive order imposing a near-total embargo, which remains in place to this day. Since then the U.S. rulers have rejected repeated proposals by Cuba’s revolutionary government to end the embargo and normalize relations.

The interview was conducted by Granma journalist Dalia González Delgado. The Militant has translated it into English and provided footnotes on facts many readers in the U.S. and elsewhere may not be familiar with.

Born in 1938, Sánchez-Parodi was active in the urban underground during the revolutionary struggle. In 1957 he and others were arrested at a police station, but the others were released a few weeks later. In 1959, Sánchez-Parodi was arrested again and imprisoned. He was released a month later to take a position as a student aide in the Communist Party. In January 1959, Sánchez-Parodi became a student aide and later a member of the revolutionary guerrilla movement. He was arrested again in August 1959 and imprisoned for six months. In 1960 he joined the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba and was assigned to the Ministry of Industries. He was arrested again in April 1961 and imprisoned for six months. In 1962 he was released and went to the United States to participate in negotiations with the U.S. government.

Sánchez-Parodi was appointed to represent Cuba in the United Nations in 1969 and served as deputy foreign minister until 1994, and then as ambassador to Brazil until 2000. He also served as deputy foreign minister from 1994 to 2000.

In those talks what did the U.S. ask for?

To speak with Sánchez-Parodi so he could tell us, from his viewpoint, what a possible normalization of relations would mean, and when we’ve been closest to achieving this in the past.

When the Interests Sections were opened, what was the state of relations between Cuba and the U.S.?

After the break in diplomatic ties in January 1961, there was always some kind of communication — first informally and then formally — between both governments concerning our relations. In 1974 Henry Kissinger, secretary of state and national security advisor, taking advantage of a visit by a group of Americans who came to interview Fidel, sent a message to him. The essence of the letter was the following: Cuba and the United States are two countries with different political, economic and social systems; they disagree on the majority of fundamental inter-


2. During the 1975 talks Washington relaxed some penalties against U.S. companies in third countries trading with Cuba, but these were later reimposed and made even harsher.

3. In 1975 Ford reduced travel limits by Cuban diplomats at the U.S. from a 25-mile to a 250-mile radius. The 25-mile limit was reinstated by President Ronald Reagan in 1983.
toward Cuba is matter of US state policy

publican administration; ‘Cuban-American lobby’ doesn’t influence US decisions on Cuba

Washington’s and Havana’s “conflicting interests” in Africa and key factor in decision of U.S. rulers to halt negotiations with Cuba.4 We talked about other issues, but that was the most important one.

We agreed to have a new round of talks in August. But later the U.S. government said it was not possible to continue the negotiations because of Cuba’s support for the independence of Puerto Rico. They used that argument.

Was it an excuse?

I believe so, because then they began to link that issue with the presence of Cuban troops in Africa. And things then came to a stop.

In my opinion, the real reason was the electoral campaign (the general elections would be in 1976). There was a confrontation within the Republican Party between Ronald Reagan and Ford, and Ford didn’t want to give Reagan ammunition to attack him. So the decision was to stop talking to Cuba.

But later, near the end of the campaign the following year, both presidential candidates, Ford and James Carter,5 sent us messages indicating that if they won the elections, they would resume talks. Carter said he didn’t want the talks to be secret but rather public. After his victory came his executive order on the process of normalizing relations with Cuba, including the opening of the Interests Sections.

At the time the Interests Sections were opened, was it expected that the dialogue would proceed further and the Interests Sections would become embassies?

Yes, by both the U.S. and us. But the circumstances were always complex, and there were many opposing interests.

Reagan himself was active in promoting agreements with Cuba, such as the migration accords in 1984, which had been previously suspended.4 He not only promoted these agreements, but when we signed a memorandum of understanding, the announcement was made by the White House, not the State Department, which gave the accord an authority it had not had before.

This shows there has always been an interest on their part. Even Carter’s presidential statement of March 1977 said clearly: “to normalize relations with Cuba.”

Why wasn’t normalization achieved?

Among other things, there were differences within the Carter administration over foreign policy. These involved not only Cuba but Iran and the Soviet Union. At the same time, there was the issue of Africa, where we had conflicting interests, and also the processes of armed insurrection in Latin America, particularly in Nicaragua.5

Were we closest to normalizing relations under Carter?

Of course, because he was the one who made the decision to normalize relations.

There has never been a similar moment after that?

I don’t think so. We thought maybe with Barack Obama, but once his nomination as the Democratic candidate in 2008 was assured, he began to move to the center and adopt more conservative positions.

8. In late 1975 the apartheid regime in South Africa invaded Angola following the victory of its independence struggle. Washington backed Pretoria. At the Angolan government’s request, Cuba sent tens of thousands of volunteer combatants to help defeat the invaders. In December 1975 Ford declared that the action “destroys any opportunity for improvement of relations.”

The triumph of the Nicaraguan Revolution in July 1979 gave impetus to revolutionary struggles in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America.

9. The “Inter-American System” was the term used by Washington to describe the decades-long period during which it largely set foreign policy for Latin American and Caribbean governments, especially policy toward Cuba, through U.S. domination of the OAS.10 On March 30, 1981, John Hinckley Jr. shot and wounded President Reagan.

Claim that U.S. policy toward Cuba is run by so-called Cuban-American lobby goes “against all logic and reality,” says Ramón Sánchez-Peñal. American politicians of Cuban descent “have no power,” he said. “They are simply being used.” Above, opponents of Cuban Revolution protest in 2009 against Miami conference that discussed business opportunities in Cuba.
US-Cuba relations

Continued from page 9

sion during the Mariel events, but that was mostly political tension, and we had a capacity for action.4

You have insisted on more than one occasion that U.S. policy toward Cuba is state policy. So do you dis- 
agree with those who claim the policy toward Cuba is directed by the Cu-

bano-American lobby in Florida? That has nothing to do with U.S. 
policy. We’ve given it a lot of publicity. But that goes against all logic and reality.

First of all, using the term “Cuban-American” is one of those things we do when we use U.S. terms and take them as absolute truths. It’s a term used in the census, and it refers to social groups. A Cuban-American is anyone who writes in the census form that he or she is Cuban-American. But what do Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio5 have to do with Cuba?

But even if we accept the term, what weight do they have in the elections? In counties in Florida where there are Cuban-Americans, the Democrats have always won since 1992, and almost always since 1960.

Some of them, like Ileana Ros- 
Lehinen,6 are powerful. ... But what did she do against Cuba during the time she headed the Headed Forei 
gn Relations Committee?Zero.

11. In 1980, in response to stepped-up U.S. military moves to crush the Ni-
caragua and Grenada revolutions of 1979 and deal blows to revolutionary 
Cuba, Havana for several months had opened the port of Mariel for private 
boats from the U.S. to pick up Cubans who wanted to emigrate. As part of the 
popular rationalization for its 
military moves, Washington had been 
claiming that Havana was preventing Cubans from leaving the island. In November 1987 when the U.S. 
and Cuban governments reiterated 
migration pacts, Havana agreed to reauthorize more than 2,500 of the 
250,000 Cubans who had come to the 

12. Republicans Rafael Edward “Ted” 
Cruz (Texas) and Marco Rubio (Flori-
da), both of Cuban descent, have 
been U.S. senators since 2013 and 2011, 
respectively.

13. Ileana Ros-Lehinen has been a 
Republican member of the U.S. House of 
Representatives from Florida since 1989. She immigrated to the U.S. 
from Cuba as a child.

When those Cubans 
who used to control Cuban society 
politicians, business, everything in Cuba — were here, all they could do was 
what they were told by the Yankees. And now that they have nothing in Cuba — and they 
know it — what do they do? We often fall into the trap of 
accepting arguments and 
implikations about the United States as true, when they are false.

This does not mean 
the issue of Cubans who have emigrated to the U.S. is not im-
portant to us; we have to solve it according to 
our interests.

When Scarabee (an oil drilling rig) 
was approaching, Ileana Ros-Lehin-
ien and Mario and Lincoln Diaz-
Balart sent an open letter to Obama, 
arguing that this went against the 
blockade and U.S. interests, and 
demanding that the president do some-
thing about it, or trauma ignored them. 
They have no power. They are used. 

To maintain state policy ... 
And the state policy is clear. The 
executive order establishing the 
blockade, the Helms-Burton law,15 
the decision to codify it as federal 
law, OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets 
Control), and all other actions against 
Cuba are state policy. Changing this 
would require political will by the 
government and other institutions, 
and that is lacking.

Why do they need to change it? 
How can the United States resolve 
its policy toward Latin America with-
out resolving its relations with Cuba?

14. Mario Diaz-Balart has been a 
member of the U.S. House of Represen-
tative from Florida since 2003. His 
brother Lincoln was in Congress until 
2011. They are of Cuban descent.

15. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 — known as 
the Helms-Burton Act — was signed into law by President William Clinton. 
Among other things, it increased the financial burdens to Cuba of foreign 
trade and further restricted access to medicine and medical equipment.

We have full relations with all Latin 
American and Caribbean countries, 
even with the United States we have 
diplomatic links. This was the region where the United States advanced the most in 
its isolation policy against us. Those 
countries are not going to change 
their policy toward Cuba. They al-
ready said there will be no Summit of the Americas16 (to be held in Panama 
in 2015) if Cuba does not participate. 
What will the United States do?

Do you believe the moment for 
nor-
malization of relations is near? 
It doesn’t work like that. The lift-
ing of the blockade does not occur by 
decree; it is a process that can take 
years. There are things that can be 
done, such as the ongoing talks on 
the postal mail issue. 
But even if they say “the blockade 
is lifted,” relations in the world are 
governed by a series of bilateral and 
mutilateral agreements that would 
have to be negotiated between Cuba 
and the U.S. For example, air commu-
nications, the future of Radio Marti, 
visas, consular fees. All that has to be 
negotiated; and all that takes a long 
time, based on our interests and theirs. 

Of course, the day the United States 
says, “The Torricelli” and the Helms-
Burton laws are eliminated, Kennedy’s 
exclusion order is revoked, and other things that can have a big impact, a tremendous impact. 
I believe this is not going to hap-
pren under Obama; it might happen in a future presidential term, whether 
Republican or Democrat. In fact, an-
other one of our mistakes is to think 
it will be done by the Democrats. Di-
rect talks began with none other than 
Nelson Kissing. 
I think conditions are ripe, because they can’t hold much longer.

16. Since 1994 OAS-organized “Summit of the Americas” meetings of foreign 
ministers have excluded Cuba. At the most recent summit in 2012, all govern-
ment representatives except those from the U.S. and Canada supported inviting 
Cuba to the next summit, set for 2015.

17. In 1992, President George H.W. Bush 
signed into law the Cuban Demo- 
cracy Act, introduced by U.S. Rep. Rob-
ert Torricelli. It reimposed embargo 
provisions, lifted in 1975, barring 
trade by U.S. subsidiaries abroad 
and denied access to U.S. ports for 
ships engaging in commerce with Cuba.

So if it doesn’t happen under Obama, 
do you think there will be progress toward an approach afterward?

In fact, some progress is being made. And the political climate favors the 
lifting of the blockade. The U.S. is in a cri-
sis and, as I said, they have to redesign 
their policy toward Latin America. This policy cannot be based on the Inter-
American system. Besides, 188 coun-
tries voting for the lifting of the block-
ade means total isolation.18 

The real goal of U.S. policy toward Cuba is to restore its domination over the 

territory. They do not settle for less. 
I do think that, if not under the next 
administration, perhaps under the 
following one,19 there will have to be a sub-
stantial decision to head toward normal-
ization of relations with Cuba. The easi-
est thing — and what above all would 
force change — is for the United States 
to lift the ban on U.S. citizens traveling 

to Cuba. That would necessarily force 
changes in other aspects of the blockade.

The United States and Cuba have never 
had an entirely normal relationship. 
There was a long period of dependence, 
than hostile relations or no relations at all. What would normal relations be 
like?

They are not normal relations. It 
would be a beneficial relationship for 
both countries, but it has to be free from 
any attempt at domination, like the kind 
of relations we have with lots of coun-
tries. This does not mean there won’t be any conflicts. Our political and econom-
ic system is not an obstacle to having normal relations with anyone.

And do you think that at some point 
they will give up their intention of dom-
ation?

If they don’t renounce that, there 
won’t be normal relations. We have 
demonstrated to them for more than 
half a century that every attempt to 
restore that domination has failed.

18. For 22 years in a row, the U.N. General 
Assembly has voted overwhelmingly 
for a resolution condemning the U.S. 
embargo. In 2013 only the U.S. and Is-
rael voted against, with the Marshall 
Islands, Micronesia, and Palau — ef-
cisely U.S. colonies — abstaining.

19. Following Barack Obama’s final 
term, the next U.S. president will take 
ofice in January 2017. The one after 
that will presumably assume office 
either in 2021 or 2025.

“Obama has never been on a course to normalize relations,” said Sánchez-Parodi. At the same time, the founda-
tions of U.S. control over Latin American governments’ relations with Cuba “have been blown to pieces.” Above, 
Cuban President Raúl Castro in Havana Jan. 28 opens summit of Community of Latin American and Caribbean 
States (CELAC), launched in 2010 to counter U.S-dominated Organization of American States. From 1964 to 1975 
OAS banned member states from having diplomatic or trade relations with Cuba. At OAS meeting in 2012, all 
government officials except those from U.S. and Canada supported Cuba’s inclusion at next OAS summit in 2015.

“Our political and economic system is not an obstacle to having normal relations with anyone,” said Sánchez-Parodi. But, he said, Washington would have to reverse its intention to dom-

Oppose US war moves in Iraq, Syria!

Working people in the U.S. and around the world should protest Washington’s escalating military intervention in the Middle East.

U.S. war moves in response to the advance of reactionary Islamic State forces are not designed to aid the toiling majority who live there, contrary to Washington’s pretenses. The Kurds have need to obtain weapons from wherever they can, including the paltry quantities Washington gives them. When the victorious powers of London and Paris carved up the Middle East following World War I, they denied the Kurds a homeland. Standing against their oppression today are the working people of America and Europe, as well as the Turkish, Arab and Persian rulers of the Middle East.

The Kurdish Peshmerga is the most formidable army engaged in battle against Islamic State forces, but lacks adequate weaponry. The Kurdish fighters need to obtain weapons from wherever they can, including the paltry quantities Washington gives them.

Washington supports the U.S. rulers and the local oppressors beholden to them.

At the same time, orking people over the world should back the oppressed Kurdish people’s fight to defend their homeland and their rights.

Today, however, we can see this was the beginning of a new world order, a disorder accelerated by the U.S. “war on terrorism” which began in 2003. Washington’s second Iraq war overthrew the Sunni-dominated Hussein dictatorship, but brought more death and dislocation. It also brought unintended consequences — both setbacks and openings for working people.

When Washington pulled out in 2011, it left behind a shaky, Shi’ite-dominated sectarian regime. The Kurds accelerated the disintegration of the imperialist order imposed a century earlier, including the nation-states of Iraq and Syria themselves.

When Islamic State forces overran Iraq were freed from the oppression of Saddam Hussein’s Baath Socialist Party, the Shi’ite-dominated government marginalized the Sunni Arabs, fueling a sectarian war. Iran’s influence in Damascus and Baghdad was expanded. Misdirectionary al-Queda offshoots gained a growing foothold in the Sunni-Arab regions.

As these forces fought each other, the Kurds had a unique role to play. In Syria, as well as in Turkey, the Kurds are a sectarially-based political movement whose goal is to take advantage of capitalist disorder to seize territory and economic control.

Washington is not at heart a religious movement, despite its call for theocratic Caliphate. It is a sectarially-based political movement whose goal is to take advantage of capitalist disorder to seize territory and economic control.

Island State’s brutality, oppression of women and contempt for human dignity close down political space for working people to organize and fight.

The Kurds, an oppressed nationality living in Iran, Syria and Iraq, have stepped forward to take on Islamic State and to advance their struggle for a Kurdish homeland and democratic revolution, which until now, relentlessly opposed Kurdistan independence, wants to reimpose a centralized Iraqi government with powers over the Kurds’ autonomous region.

Peshmerga, the army of the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq, seeks the weapons necessary to further this struggle. Washington and other imperialists, fearing the dynamic of cooperation among Kurdish sovereignty, are not providing needed arms and other material.

Peshmerga, backed by fighters from the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) from Turkey, recaptured six villages on the outskirts of Mosul from Islamic State forces.

Members of the Committees for the Protection of the Kurdish People (YPG) in Syria are also fighting alongside Peshmerga to retake Shingal, the city that Islamic State forces overran last month, driving tens of thousands of the Kurdish-speaking Yazidi religious group from their homes and threatening to kill those who did not convert to Sunni Islam.

The struggles have begun as a massive popular revolt in March 2011 against President Bashar al-Assad’s brutal rule. His regime responded with bomb attacks and sieges, targeting civilians, killing more than 190,000 people and displacing 10.5 million, according to the U.N. In the face of this assault — and refusal by Washington to provide arms to counter the slaughter — opposition weakened and fractured, and Islamic State forces pushed them aside and filled the vacuum.

In his war speech Obama called for a “political solution” in Syria, while Assad, backed by Moscow and Tehran, remains in power.

Continued from front page

Reactionary al-Qaeda offshoots gained a growing foothold in the Sunni-Arab regions.

In Syria, a popular uprising was brutally crushed by the Bashar al-Assad regime. The U.S. rulers feared the rebellion of the masses more than they opposed Assad, and the Barack Obama administration cut a deal with Moscow that strengthened Assad and let secular opposition forces bleed. The devastation and chaos provided fertile ground for Islamic State to grow and prepare its offensive.

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The struggles have begun as a massive popular revolt in March 2011 against President Bashar al-Assad’s brutal rule. His regime responded with bomb attacks and sieges, targeting civilians, killing more than 190,000 people and displacing 10.5 million, according to the U.N. In the face of this assault — and refusal by Washington to provide arms to counter the slaughter — opposition weakened and fractured, and Islamic State forces pushed them aside and filled the vacuum.

In his war speech Obama called for a “political solution” in Syria, while Assad, backed by Moscow and Tehran, remains in power.

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Reactionary al-Qaeda offshoots gained a growing foothold in the Sunni-Arab regions.

In Syria, a popular uprising was brutally crushed by the Bashar al-Assad regime. The U.S. rulers feared the rebellion of the masses more than they opposed Assad, and the Barack Obama administration cut a deal with Moscow that strengthened Assad and let secular opposition forces bleed. The devastation and chaos provided fertile ground for Islamic State to grow and prepare its offensive.

Island State is not at heart a religious movement, despite its call for theocratic Caliphate. It is a sectarially-based political movement whose goal is to take advantage of capitalist disorder to seize territory and economic control.

Kurdistan, an oppressed nation living in Iran, Syria and Iraq, have stepped forward to take on Islamic State and to advance their struggle for a Kurdish homeland and democratic revolution, which until now, relentlessly opposed Kurdistan independence, wants to reimpose a centralized Iraqi government with powers over the Kurds’ autonomous region.

Peshmerga, the army of the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq, seeks the weapons necessary to further this struggle. Washington and other imperialists, fearing the dynamic of cooperation among Kurdish sovereignty, are not providing needed arms and other material.

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