

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

An interview with Cuban Brig.
Gen. José Ramón Fernández

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Half a million workers strike in Puerto Rico

Two-day general strike protests sale of national patrimony

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Chants of "Huelga! Huelga!" (Strike! Strike!) thundered at dawn as close to 1,000 unionists, waving signs and Puerto Rican flags, blocked the highway entrance to the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport here July 7. It was the first day of a 48-hour general strike in this Caribbean nation and U.S. colony.

A coalition of about 50 trade unions organized the island-wide strike, involving hundreds of thousands of workers, to support striking telephone workers in their fight to oppose the sale of the state-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Co. to a private consortium led by U.S. telecommunications giant GTE.

They also protested the government's plans to sell other state-owned enterprises to capitalist investors.

It was the first strike of this magnitude in Puerto Rico since the 1930s. Besides affecting air traffic at both the international and commuter airports in this city, unionists paralyzed the docks, city buses, a few factories, banks, major shopping centers, university campuses, and government offices. Picket lines went up throughout San Juan and other cities.

The largest contingent of the strikers

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Militant/Martín Koppel

Some 1,000 unionists picket the airport, shutting it down the first morning of general strike.

Rallies in U.S. support Puerto Rico strike

Demonstrations in support of the general strike in Puerto Rico took place in cities across the United States July 7.

PHILADELPHIA — "Don't sell Puerto Rico! Puerto Rico no se vende!" chanted some 40 protesters from Philadelphia and

Camden, New Jersey, outside the offices of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rican here.

Luis Senabria, leader of the Committee to defend Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, urged everyone present to attend the July 25th march on Washing-

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Watsonville: Hundreds protest anti-union thug assault on farmworkers

BY NORTON SANDLER

WATSONVILLE, California — A gang of antiunion thugs attacked supporters of the United Farm Workers as they were working at Coastal Berry's Silliman strawberry ranch here on July 1, injuring three workers.

At a UFW rally of 300 the next day protesting the attack, union supporter Noel

Hernández told the *Militant* what happened.

"We gathered as we usually do in the morning but the foreman was not around. Then a main supervisor came over and told us to start working at 7:30. The time came to start working and the puncher gave us our cards [to record the quantity of berries picked]. We grabbed the boxes and started

picking," Hernández explained. "We looked over and a group of 20 *contras* were coming." *Contras* is the term UFW backers use to describe antiunion thugs.

Some of the *contras* work in the fields, "but there were also truckers and stackers,"

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Auto strikers are resolved to fight GM

BY JOHN SARGE

FLINT, Michigan — As the strikes by 9,200 workers at two General Motors (GM) plants here enter their second month, the world's largest auto maker is taking new steps to pressure the workers and their union, the United Auto Workers (UAW). While attempting to deny jobless benefits to some 120,000 workers laid off as a result of the strikes, the company is trying to get the parts produced that it needs to resume production of its most profitable models.

The stakes in this labor battle are high. GM "needs to cut more than 50,000 U.S. hourly positions — or 22 percent of the workforce — to become as competitive as its rivals, even though it has already shed 64,000 jobs since 1992, according to people close to GM," said a major article in the July 7 *Wall Street Journal*. This is typical of coverage in the big-business press these days. "GM officials say they can't agree to any accord that would block the company's efforts to increase productivity and reduce the number of workers plant by plant," the *Journal* continued.

Strikers and others in this city, who have seen GM's downsizing for well over a decade, are responding with anger and acts of solidarity. UAW Local 651, with 5,800 members on strike at the Delphi-East complex, is selling a cap declaring "One day longer." Vehicles around this city of 134,000 sport bright yellow and white UAW flags. Numerous local merchants have signs in their parking lots declaring "We support the

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Anheuser-Busch workers vote again on contract

BY RAY PARSONS
AND ALYSON KENNEDY

ST. LOUIS — Eight thousand members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) are taking a second contract vote at 12 Anheuser-Busch breweries across the United States. Their last contract with the company expired March 1.

During voting in April, IBT members rejected a nearly identical offer by 78 percent. The pact demands sweeping changes: allowing the company to impose mandatory overtime, gut the use of seniority in job bidding, use more part-time and temporary workers, eliminate jobs considered "non-core" in the production of beer, and cut vacation benefits and increase the probation period for new hires. "Busch wants to go back to the 1930s. He wants to control our families for profit," said Ray Budding, a Teamster with 24 years at the flagship plant in St. Louis. "I'm not going to let him!"

August A. Busch III is chairman of the board and president of Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc. The company, maker of Budweiser beer, reaped profits of \$1.3 billion in 1997 on sales capturing 45 percent

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'Protest attack on Houston abortion clinics'

BY JERRY FREIWIRTH

HOUSTON — Three women's clinics here that perform abortions were attacked early on July 8 by the release of a highly noxious chemical. This follows four similar attacks last weekend in New Orleans, according to Judy Reiner, a spokesperson for Houston Planned Parenthood, which is one of the largest providers of abortion and reproductive services in the area. The chemical, presumably released by an opponent of the right to choose abortion, was identified as butyric acid. It made several people ill.

The Socialist Workers candidate for Texas governor, Laura Garza, denounced the attacks, saying, "This is an attack on the rights of all working people. The right to abortion is vital if women are to be full and equal members of society." Garza called for broad public protests of the clinic attacks.

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July 4 pro-independence march in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Pittsburgh Young Socialists recruit, build conference — page 4

S. Korea: auto workers strike

Closing down four auto plants, some 26,000 workers at Hyundai, South Korea's largest auto maker, began a 48-hour strike May 6. Workers there are demanding that the company cancels its plan to lay off several thousand workers, which the bosses say is needed because of the economic crisis in the region.

Seoul pledges to free prisoners

The South Korean government announced July 1 that it would release a large number of the 500 political prisoners it holds, without the requirement that they renounce their political views, the *New York Times* reported. The prisoners are to be released by August 15, the 50th anniversary of the ousting of the Japanese occupation force from Korea. Woo Yong Gak, who has spent nearly 40 years in solitary confinement, may be freed in the amnesty. Seventy-four other political prisoners who were released in March were forced to sign letters renouncing support for communism and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The freed prisoners will still be subject to Seoul's "security law." This legislation, often used against trade unionists, bars such activities as listening to North Korean radio broadcasts or distributing communist literature. Seo Joon Shik, a former political prisoner, said, according to the *Times*, that Seoul is trying to use the release to divert attention from the economic depression engulfing the country. South Korea has been mired by record rates of bankruptcy, bank closures, and unemployment, which is rising at an average of 8,000 people per day.

Indonesian police attack West Papua activists

After demonstrators on Biak Island, 2,000 miles east of Jakarta, refused to lower the flag of the West Papua Movement, cops began firing into the crowd with plastic bullets July 6. They injured 24 people and arrested 180. The protesters are demanding independence for West Papua, or Irian Jaya province, which was taken over by Indonesian forces in 1963. It was previously a Dutch colony. Other protests over the previous week in Jayapura, the provincial capital,

and in other towns were attacked by police. At one demonstration a student was killed by the cops.

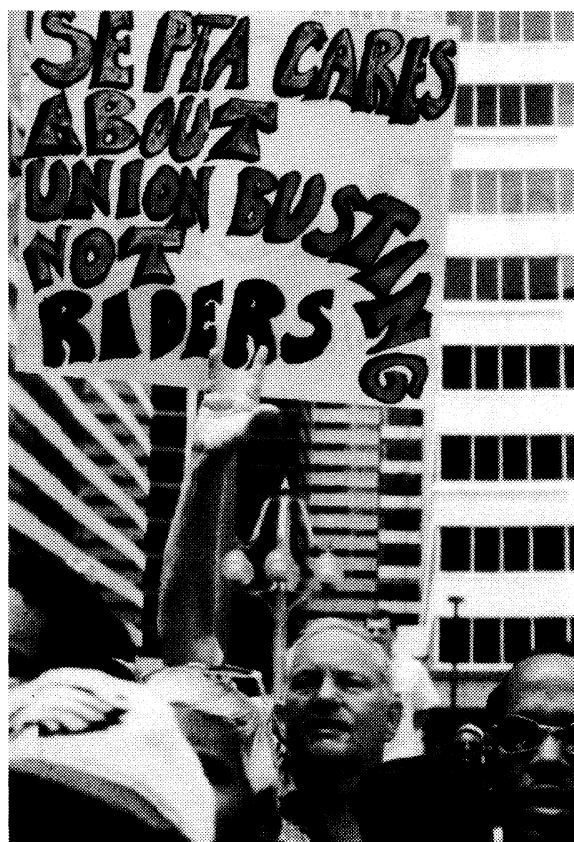
1,500 protest racist killing in British Columbia

Some 1,500 people of all ages and nationalities marched in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey June 28 to protest the killing of Sikh temple caretaker Nirmal Singh Gill and other racist attacks. Five skinhead members of a group called White Power have been charged with killing Gill. A coalition of about 50 organizations that make up the Communities Against Racism and Extremism (CARE), called the rally. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police demanded the coalition pay \$17,000 for police "protection" at the protest. CARE refused to pay, and won support from local unions, community organizations, and several other groups.

'Free Leonard Peltier!'

Several hundred people, many of them young, rallied at the Ellipse, behind the White House, June 27 to demand freedom for imprisoned Native American activist Leonard Peltier. Peltier was framed-up for the June 26, 1975, shoot-out between the FBI and the American Indian Movement (AIM) at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, in which two federal agents and an Indian man were killed. At Peltier's May 4, 1998, parole hearing, he was told he will not receive another parole hearing until 2008, despite the fact that the government admits it has no evidence Peltier shot the agents. Among the many speakers at the rally were Steve Robideau of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Pam Africa of MOVE, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, and Socialist Workers candidate for D.C. city council chair, Brian Williams. The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee can be contacted at P.O. Box 583, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. Phone (785) 842-5774. E-mail: lpdcc@idir.net

1,000 rally to back Philadelphia transit strikers



Militant/Pete Seidman

"Being able to stay out for the long haul is key," Transport Workers Union (TWU) striker Johnny Carter told the *Militant*. One thousand workers rallied here July 7 in support of the TWU workers. The strike has shut down bus, trolley, and subway service for 435,000 passengers by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transport Authority (SEPTA). At the event unionists cheered for workers in Puerto Rico out on strike in solidarity with the telephone workers. Talks resumed later that day but with "no progress." The TWU rally and the announcement of a food bank were initiated in response to a ferocious campaign launched against the union by the big-business media and politicians. Strikers appear unfazed by SEPTA's intransigence and the possibility this may force the strike to last even longer. Striker Larry Spann, a bus operator for 20 years, said, "It's the same at General Motors, if they lose, every auto union's going to go down." Donations can be dropped off at 2233 Spring Garden Street from 5:00 a.m. to midnight. For more information, call: (215) 972-4140.

Venezuela workers demand raises

Petrochemical workers in Venezuela began an indefinite strike July 3, demanding higher pay in face of inflation that is expected to total between 30 and 40 percent this year. Court workers are also on strike, and public-sector doctors walked off the job for 72 hours in early July. Teachers are also threatening a work stoppage.

Venezuelan officials claim they cannot meet the wage demands because of plummeting world oil prices, and say workers should accept austerity during the economic crisis. The government is seeking some \$800 million in new loans from the International Development Bank and World Bank. Already 40 percent of the Venezuelan budget goes to pay the government's debt to the imperialist banks.

Kosova: Washington tries to derail independence movement

Richard Holbrooke, U.S. government special envoy to the Balkans and Clinton administration nominee for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has been shuttling between Belgrade and Pristina, Kosova's capital, along with other U.S. officials and Russian government representatives. Holbrooke is pushing for acceptance by Albanians — who make up 90 percent of Kosova's 2.1 million people — of the political leadership of Ibrahim Rugova and his Democratic League of Kosova. Rugova is

one the most overtly pro-capitalist politicians among Albanians who support self-determination.

"Rugova himself is going to continue to seek a broader base for his goal, which is a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Kosova problem," said Holbrooke while in Pristina July 5, prior to leaving for Belgrade for a meeting with Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic. The Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) has refused Holbrooke's proposals so far and is pursuing its armed struggle for independence. Richard Miles, the U.S. charge d'affaires in Belgrade, said he and other diplomats were trying to find out "who can control the guys with the guns — the KLA."

"The ethnic Albanian leadership is confronting this crisis of war and peace without any coherence," Holbrooke complained in Pristina. Washington is pushing for negotiations between Kosovar Albanians and Belgrade that could lead to the return of Kosova's autonomy within Serbia. At the same time, the U.S. government opposes independence and is pursuing deeper military intervention into the Balkans to bring back the domination of capitalism to Albania and Yugoslavia.

— MEGAN ARNEY

Ned Dmytryshyn in Vancouver, Pete Seidman in Philadelphia, and Janice Lynn in Washington, D.C., contributed to this column.

THE MILITANT

Support struggles of farmworkers

Farmworkers in Watsonville are battling attempts by the growers and their thugs to intimidate workers who want to unionize and fight for better conditions. The *'Militant'* prints the truth about this and other labor struggles. Don't miss a single issue!



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Strike in Puerto Rico

Continued from front page

blocking access to the international airport was from the water and sanitation workers union UIA. They were joined by members of the Union of Dock Employees (UDEM), port authority employees (HEO), Teamsters, the Independent Union of Airport Workers (UITA), the electrical workers union UTIER, restaurant workers, airport fire-fighters, and other unions.

Hundreds of pickets were young workers, many in their early 20s, who gave the protest a festive, even exuberant air. "And you thought the strike would never come — well, the strike has now arrived!" the unionists sang over and over, to the accompaniment of tambourines and a trumpet. "Struggle yes, surrender no!" was a popular chant.

In response, the government deployed 200 heavily armed riot cops to the scene, creating a tense standoff. Union officials eventually negotiated the withdrawal of the cops, to cheers from the workers. Having disrupted air and highway traffic for four hours, the unionists moved on to other picket sites in the city.

'We showed power of labor movement'

"The general strike was a total success," said Ricardo Otero, 42, a splicer at the phone company and member of the Independent Union of Telephone Workers (UIET), the following day. "We showed the power of the labor movement by shutting industries and commerce. We dealt a blow to the governor and proved he [Rosselló] can't ignore the people's will by selling the telephone company."

Otero was speaking to a *Militant* reporter at the closing rally at 1500 Roosevelt Avenue, the phone company's headquarters, where pickets have been up since the strike began July 18. Some 6,400 telephone workers around the country, belonging to the UIET and the Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Workers (HIETEL), are on strike.

"We achieved our objective, which was to paralyze the country," HIETEL president Annie Cruz emphasized at a rally at the end of the first day of the general strike. Whether or not the sale of the phone company is carried out, "we have unified the union movement." She reported that half a million workers took part in the strike nationwide.

Noting the international attention the strike has won, Cruz added, "Throughout the world it has been shown that the Puerto Rican people like democracy but are not a submissive people, and that here we are waging a struggle against privatizations that has taken place in other countries." She was referring to working-class struggles in many other countries, from Brazil to France, against the bosses' efforts to open up state-

owned enterprises to capitalist investment and ownership, with the accompanying layoffs and assaults on unions.

In an interview at the union headquarters the day before, Cruz also pointed to expressions of international labor solidarity the telephone strikers have received, "especially in places where they have had experiences with privatizations such as Europe." The union reports getting messages of solidarity from France, Britain, Denmark, Japan, and Israel, among others. Cruz also pointed to solidarity picket lines in several U.S. cities including New York, Tampa, and Dallas.

Many workers taking part in the general strike said they were protesting plans by the administration of Gov. Pedro Rosselló to sell off other state-owned corporations. "If they sell the telephone company, what's next? It might be the Water Authority," remarked Carmen Ramos Sánchez, a member of the water and sanitation workers union who was blocking the highway near the airport together with hundreds of her co-workers. She added that her union's contract had expired in June and they were in negotiations that could be affected by the outcome of the labor battle over the phone company.

The government has already sold off some hospitals, hotels, a shipping company, a pineapple farm, and some prisons.

Other unionists pointed out that the economic crisis was fueling working-class anger. While in Puerto Rico, as in the United States, the economy is not yet in a downturn in the business cycle, the official unemployment rate in this U.S. colony is around 18 percent, and unofficial estimates range between 29 and 35 percent. Some towns, like Peñuelas, Juncos, and Las Piedras, have been hit by plant closures and have even higher jobless rates.

Worker after worker on the picket lines and protest caravans offered a similar response to the government's attempt to sell the telephone company. "It's our national patrimony. The telephone company belongs to us," said Edgardo López, 25, a Teamster on one of the mass picket lines that shut down the docks July 8. Adding insult to injury is the widespread view that the phone company is being sold at a giveaway price, as well as Rosselló's refusal to even discuss the issue with the unions, despite the fact that majority of public opinion is decisively opposed to the sale.

Lolita Lebrón cheered

At the July 8 labor rally capping the two-day general strike, the enthusiastic ovation that greeted Nationalist heroine Lolita Lebrón, who spent a quarter century in U.S. prisons for taking part in an armed attack on U.S. Congress in 1954, captured the outpouring of nationalist pride and resistance



Militant/Martin Koppel

March in San Juan July 4 demanding release of political prisoners (see below).

that has marked the struggle around the telephone strike. Her brief remarks brought cheers in the crowd of several thousand people when she evoked the figure of independence fighter Pedro Albizu Campos.

Speaking next, HIETEL president Cruz saluted Lebrón for "having defended our country in such an honorable manner."

Demonstrators responded with chants of "Puerto Rico cannot be sold — Puerto Rico must be defended!"

During the two days of the general strike, it was difficult to go a few blocks anywhere in San Juan without running into union picket lines or caravans of cars with drivers and passengers waving Puerto Rican flags.

Some of the biggest picket lines were at the electrical company and Water Authority. Both days, thousands of teachers massed at the Department of Education starting at 3:00 a.m., preventing anyone from entering or leaving. At one point, the cops provoked a scuffle when they tried to allow someone to cross the picket lines. Despite a deployment of 14,000 cops, the actions around the country were disciplined and mostly peaceful.

Several car caravans with workers from different unions cruised through the city streets, converging in the afternoon at 1500 Roosevelt Avenue. "I was pleasantly surprised that it wasn't only union members that took part in the strike," said one telephone striker who asked that his name not be used because he is also a member of the National Guard. "When our caravan passed through the banking district, bank employees came out to applaud us. The same thing happened when we went by hospitals and other workplaces."

One driver had painted on his car window, "Temporary worker — I'm joining the

strike — They can go to hell."

Faced with the prospect of mass pickets, all the branches of the Banco Popular shut down during the strike, as did the Plaza Las Américas and several other major shopping malls. Workers at the malls' fast food restaurants either joined the protest actions or took the days off. Banco Popular was targeted because it is the junior partner in GTE's majority bid for the telephone company.

In the city of Manatí and the San Juan suburb of Carolina, telephone workers and other unionists set up picket lines in front of pharmaceutical plants. United Auto Workers members at the Eli Lilly plant in Manatí honored the picket lines, and the Carolina plant was also disrupted for a while.

Labor mobilizations took place at more than a dozen cities around the island. The biggest were in Mayagüez and Ponce. In Mayagüez, hundreds of dock workers, teachers, health-care workers, and telephone workers shut down the Medical Center. The airport there was also affected by the strike. As in San Juan, students and professors blocked the entrances to the University of Puerto Rico.

The picket lines, caravans, and especially the rallies attracted thousands of high school and college youth. Many came with hand-painted signs, which expressed support for the strikers and making colorful remarks about Rosselló and his family. At the closing rally in San Juan, the Federation of Pro-Independence University Students (FUPI) had a sizable contingent.

A substantial number of the workers and students at the strike rallies expressed support for independence for Puerto Rico. Most pro-independence organizations were not prominent at the actions. At the closing July 8 rally, however, speakers included Rubén Berríos, leader of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, and Julio Muriente, president of the New Puerto Rican Independence Movement (NMIP).

Virulent big-business propaganda

The government and big-business media responded to the massive working-class outpouring with undisguised hatred. *El Nuevo Día* and the *San Juan Star* ran crude cartoons portraying strikers as monsters or terrorists. The telephone company, the police, and the ruling pro-statehood New Progressive Party bombarded the public with ads in the daily papers and radio stations making sensationalistic claims about thousands of alleged acts of sabotage against telephone lines. The virulent campaign, however, seems to have had little effect on working people, many of whom feel insulted by its coarse character.

Supporters of Rosselló were only able to mobilize a rally of a few dozen government employees. A handful of supervisory personnel held a counterpicket at the Isla Grande port complex, carrying a U.S. flag along with a Puerto Rican flag.

Meanwhile, leaders of the opposition Popular Democratic Party (PPD) have sought over the last few days to intervene in the labor actions. San Juan mayor and PPD figure Sila Calderón issued a pre-strike televised message expressing support for the telephone workers' demands against the sale of the state-owned company, although not supporting the strike as the PPD mayors of Ponce and Mayagüez did. PPD president Aníbal Acevedo gave a militant speech at the July 8 union rally, presenting himself as a supporter of the strikers and calling for a referendum on the sale of the company.

Rally demands freedom for Puerto Rican political prisoners, ousting of U.S. military

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND VERÓNICA POSES

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — A number of political actions took place in Puerto Rico July 4 to demand the release of jailed Pu-

erto Rican independence fighters, call for the U.S. Navy to get out of the island of Vieques, and support the strike of 6,400 telephone workers.

The same day, supporters of Gov. Pedro Rosselló and the ruling New Progressive Party (PNP) rallied to advocate statehood for this U.S. colony and celebrate the U.S. independence day.

Several hundred people, mostly supporters of independence for Puerto Rico, rallied at the gates of Fort Buchanan here. Dozens carried bright orange pennants declaring "It's time to bring them home," referring to the 15 Puerto Rican independence fighters being held in U.S. jails for their political views. The demonstrators also protested the U.S. Navy occupation of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.

One of the protesters, Estelí Capote, 17, expressed her outrage at the harassment of *independentistas* by the U.S. political police, which has railroaded the 15 fighters to long prison terms. "In Puerto Rico people are being persecuted for their ideas. For a century they [the U.S. government] have tried to suppress us. But that's also been enough time for people to wake up. The struggle around the telephone company was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Originally the action had been planned to take place in Ceiba, on the eastern coast, near the Roosevelt Roads U.S. naval base.

After the telephone workers strike developed into the central political battle in this Caribbean nation today, the organizers of the protest changed the site to San Juan to link up with the strikers.

Che Paralitici of the Hostosiano National Congress, Julio Muriente of the New Puerto Rican Independence Movement, and Ricardo Jordán, of the Committee to Save and Develop Vieques, addressed the demonstrators. Paralitici noted that the U.S. Southern Command, previously based in Panama, is being transferred to Fort Buchanan despite opposition in Puerto Rico to the massive U.S. military presence on the island.

Fight against U.S. Navy in Vieques

Jordán, who is also a member of the UTIER electrical workers union, explained that the U.S. Navy occupies two-thirds of the land in Vieques, using it for target practice and in the process ruining the livelihood of many fishermen. He pointed out that cancer rates among Vieques residents are unusually high, a fact many attribute to Navy pollution of the area.

As the rally took place in San Juan, 25 fishermen held a protest against the U.S. Navy near the Roosevelt Roads base. They took their boats from Vieques and entered restricted waters used by the U.S. military.

After the rally at Fort Buchanan, the dem-

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The 'Militant' tells the truth about working-class struggles, from Puerto Rico to Cuba, Indonesia, Ireland and the United States. These efforts are backed by working people who financially support the 'Militant' and make special reporting trips possible. Send a contribution to the 'Militant' travel fund: 410 West St., New York, N.Y. 10004.

— YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD —

YS in Pittsburgh recruits and builds conference

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 1573 N. Milwaukee, P.O. Box #478, Chicago, Ill. 60622. Tel: (773) 772-0551. Compuserve: 105162,605

BY MARK GILSDORF

PITTSBURGH — Young Socialists here are gaining reinforcements this week in their efforts to build the upcoming Active Workers Conference being held in Pittsburgh July 11-12. Harry Suparto, a young worker from Indonesia, recently joined the Pittsburgh chapter. He has been actively building the conference through the petitioning effort to place Socialist Workers candidate Dorothy Kolis on the ballot for U.S. Congress in the 14th district. Asked what attracted him to the YS, Harry responded that going to the strike at MSI in Marietta, Ohio by steelworkers; participating in an anti-Ku Klux Klan rally; and talking to coal miners at mine portals helped convince him to join. "I also liked the fact that the socialist movement supports independence for Puerto Rico and discusses other events from around the world, instead of just focusing on narrow local issues," said Harry.

As part of the effort to build the confer-

ence, Jacob Perasso, a member of the YS in San Francisco and Manuel Gonzalez, a college student from Santa Cruz, California, have come to Pittsburgh a week early to join teams of socialists selling the *Militant* to coal miners and other industrial workers in the region.

The chapter has also been holding a weekly class series at the University of Pittsburgh where it is an official campus organization. The classes, held on Thursday evenings, have helped the chapter attract a new layer of young people around the socialist movement and involve them in petitioning teams. Some of the readings used in the classes have included *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Socialism on Trial* by James P. Cannon, and the interview with Cuban general Enrique Carreras that was printed in the *International Socialist Review* as a supplement to the July 6 issue of the *Militant*. The next class the chapter is planning is on the pamphlet *Puerto Rico: U.S. Colony in the Caribbean* and the recent coverage of the telephone workers strike from the *Militant*, which the chapter will use as part of its efforts to help build a delegation from Pittsburgh to the July 25 March on Washington for Puerto Rican independence.

Mark Gilsdorf is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 14213.

U.S. activists solidarize with Puerto Rico phone strikers

Continued from front page

ton, which will mark 100 years of resistance to U.S. colonialism on the island. Angel Ortiz, member of the Philadelphia city council; Benjamin Ramos, a Pennsylvania state representative; and Mario Africa of the MOVE organization spoke along with others. Pete Seidman gave greetings from the

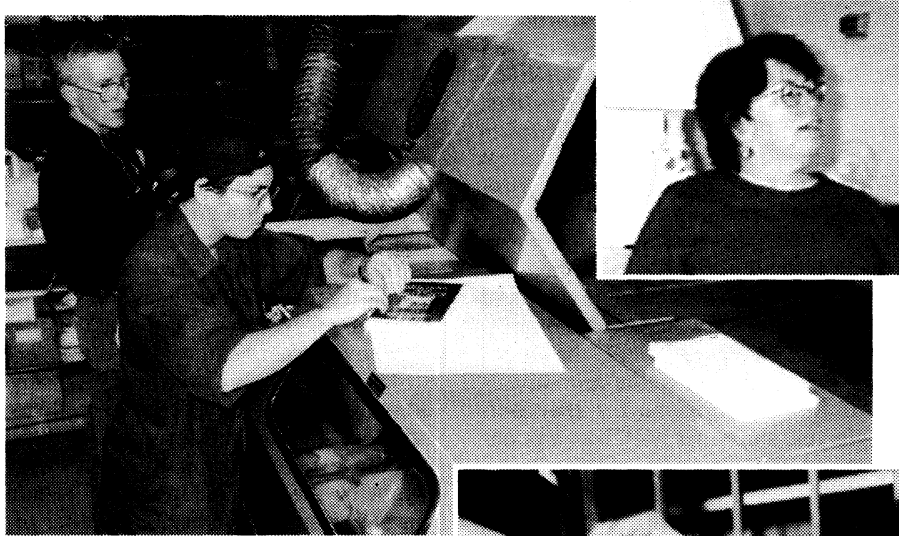
Socialist Workers campaign. Many of the speakers expressed their solidarity with the strike by the Transport Workers Union here. Candace Wagner

SAN FRANCISCO — More than 100 workers, activists and students gathered on July 7 to support the general strike in Puerto Rico. The picket line was held outside the GTE Telecommunications Office and was organized by Comite '98 of California, a national coalition that is organizing events around the 100th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Protesters carried large Puerto Rican flags, and signs reading "Puerto Rico is not for sale!" and "Stop antiunion violence, from San Juan Puerto Rico, to Watsonville, CA!" Unionists of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, the Communication Workers of America, and the Painters Union spoke at the picket line to support the striking workers in Puerto Rico. Members of the League of Filipino Students and Accion and Boricua y Caribeña spoke about the importance of building the July 25th events in San Francisco. Samantha Kern

MINNEAPOLIS — Sixty people rallied in front of the Federal Building to support the general strike in Puerto Rico. Some of the signs said "U.S. out of Puerto Rico." Olivia Levens-Holden, 12, said she was there because "I believe in Puerto Rico, and I want to be part of this, I am proud!" Peter Frase, 18, said he was there after seeing a flyer. "I am here to show support and solidarity to the Puerto Rican strikers." Javier Aravena

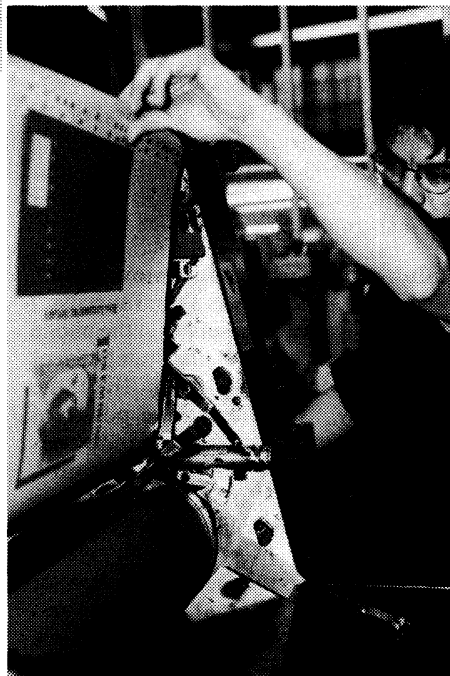
MIAMI BEACH — Fifty people gathered at Tap Tap, a Haitian restaurant, July 3 for an event building the July 25 march on Washington to call for independence for Puerto Rico and demand the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners. Irving Forestier of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners spoke along with Andrés Gómez of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, an organization of Cuban-Americans who support the Cuban revolution. Two Spanish-language TV stations interviewed activists there. Rachele Fruit

Two more Pathfinder books, prepared by volunteers, are coming off presses



Militant photos by José Aravena (above, right); Ruth Cheney (inset)

Binding *Sexism and Science* by Evelyn Reed at Pathfinder's print shop July 8 (above). This was second title to be reprinted as a joint product of volunteers and the print shop. The book was put into electronic format by supporters of the communist movement. Peggy Brundy (top, inset), for example, formatted the book. Brundy is a member of the San Francisco Bay Area-based steering committee that organizes nearly 140 volunteers around the world digitizing Pathfinder books. The cover of *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* — the third book to be produced in this fashion using modern computer-to-plate techniques — was printed July 8 (right). The next day, volunteers completed formatting this title, the final stage of preparing the electronic files.



Scheer fund helps make revolution in Pathfinder book production possible

BY MAREA HIMELGRIN

ST. PAUL, Minnesota — A total of \$7,589 has been collected for the Helen Scheer Memorial Fund Appeal. The fund, which was organized in the Twin Cities, was launched at an April 26 meeting here that paid tribute to Scheer's life.

A deeply political person, Scheer was an active member of the Socialist Workers Party since 1944 up until a few weeks before her death from cancer at age 76 on April 11. Her life and example served as an inspiration to several generations of the communist movement.

The money contributed to the fund in her name is being used as seed money to begin a fund that will enable Pathfinder Press to transform its production techniques using the latest computer technology. Ninety-six people made contributions or pledges at the meeting and an additional nine people sent in checks after reading about the fund in the April 27 and May 18 issues of the *Militant*. Kitty Loepker, a steelworker from St. Louis, sent a note in with her check say-

ing, "Hi — from St. Louis. It is my pleasure to donate to this fund as a tribute to this wonderful woman. I never had the opportunity to meet her, but I felt that I know her after reading the articles in the last two *Militants* about her life."

In a letter thanking those who made contributions to the fund, Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and Doug Jenness, the Twin Cities organizer of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote, "Pathfinder's ability not only to provide new titles dealing with the most important questions facing class-struggle fighters today, but to also keep in print hundreds of titles produced by Pathfinder and its predecessors over a period of some 70 years — because they are needed today and will be needed tomorrow — is a powerful revolutionary legacy, worthy of the movement Helen devoted her life's energies and imagination to building."

Marea Himelgrin is a member of the United Steelworkers of America.

Socialists in Sweden protest new attack on Pathfinder shop

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — The Pathfinder bookstore here was attacked early in the morning July 2. A big newspaper box was thrown through the display window and landed on a shelf, destroying some books and causing damage to the shelf.

This was the fourth such incident in less than a year; the previous attacks on the bookstore took place August 15, October 5, and January 11. The attack on October 5 was observed by a witness who saw five skinheads throwing stones through the window. This time a witness saw two young men.

The recent attack on the bookstore happens as other attacks on free speech have taken place in Stockholm and Sweden lately. An art exhibition at the Historical Museum in Stockholm that had been condemned by several prominent businessmen and politicians as child pornography was attacked and destroyed on July 1. This act was carried

out by a group of youth who left leaflets from the "National Youth," which calls itself a "Swedish patriotic youth organization" and says it will continue to take action against "destructive and degenerate art."

Birgitta Isacsson, the director of the Pathfinder bookstore in Stockholm, issued a press statement immediately after the attack on the bookstore on July 2. She was quoted in the Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet* saying that she considers it a political attack. "These forces who want to suppress the freedom of speech with violence must not be allowed to have their way," she added.

Catharina Tirsén from the Pathfinder bookstore and Ernesto Oleinik of the Young Socialists, one of the organizations that use the bookstore premises for political activities, were interviewed for half an hour about the attack on the bookstore and freedom of speech by Radio Nueva America, a Spanish-language radio in Stockholm, July 4.

Renewal drive July 8 - August 4 Help win long-term readers to the socialist press

	Militant Goal	PM Goal
Australia	3	1
Canada		
Montreal	4	3
Toronto	9	1
Vancouver	12	1
Canada Total	25	5
Iceland	3	
New Zealand		
Christchurch	6	
Auckland	6	
N.Z. Total	12	
Sweden	4	1
United Kingdom		
London	10	2
Manchester	3	
UK Total	13	2
United States		
Atlanta	7	3
Birmingham, AL	10	2
Boston	14	3
Chicago	14	6
Cleveland	8	2
Des Moines	8	4
Detroit	10	2
Houston	8	2
Los Angeles	20	8
Miami	10	5
New York	30	15
Newark, NJ	20	8
Philadelphia	8	1
Pittsburgh	10	1
San Francisco	17	7
Seattle	13	3
Twin Cities, MN	13	2
Washington, D.C.	9	3
U.S. Total	229	77
Int'l Total	289	86
Int'l Goal	275	85

'The Revolutionary Armed Forces are the people in uniform'

Interview with Brigadier General José Ramón Fernández
of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba

A young military officer in Cuba in the 1950s, José Ramón Fernández opposed the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista imposed on Cuba through a March 1952 military coup. Together with other military personnel, Fernández worked to depose the hated regime. In 1956 he was arrested and jailed in the infamous prison on the Isle of Pines (today the Isle of Youth). Following the January 1959 revolutionary triumph led by the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement headed by Fidel Castro, Fernández helped train Cuba's new Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). In April 1961, working directly under Fidel Castro, he was the field commander at Playa Girón, where the popular militias and the FAR defeated the U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion force in 72 hours of combat.

Today Fernández is a vice president of the executive committee of the Council of Ministers and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. No longer on active duty, he is a brigadier general of the FAR.

This interview with Fernández was conducted in Havana, Cuba, on October 25, 1997, by Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters, and Martín Koppel. Barnes and Waters were in Havana to participate in the October 21-23 international workshop on "Socialism as the 21st Century Approaches," sponsored by the Communist Party of Cuba, and to cover that conference for the socialist newsweekly the *Militant* and Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*. Barnes is national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and Waters is editor of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*. Koppel is editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Interviews with two other veteran revolutionaries and high-ranking officers of the FAR conducted by the same reporters have appeared in recent issues of the *Militant*. An interview with Division General Néstor López Cuba was published in the June 22 issue. The July 6 issue featured an interview with Division General Enrique Carreras.

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Waters: The book *Secretos de generales* (Secrets of generals) published here in Cuba this year is a valuable portrait of a cross section of leaders of the Cuban revolution.¹ The interviews have a real impact, especially on young workers and students who are attracted to the Cuban revolution and want to understand it better. It would be useful for our readers to know a little more about some of the things you describe in that book — how you became involved in the struggle against Batista before the

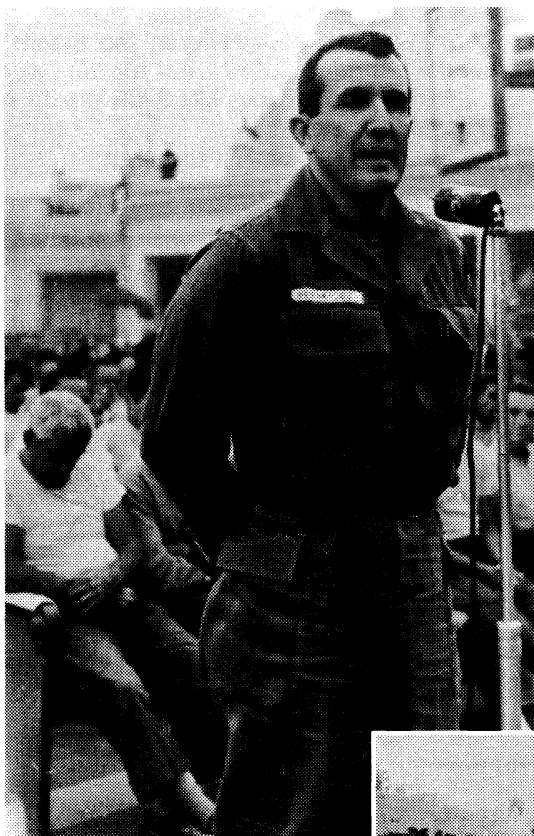
revolution, as well as your responsibilities in building the new revolutionary army once the prior task of destroying the old regime had been achieved.

Fernández: I was imprisoned for three years during the struggle against Batista. I had been part of a movement formed in early 1956 by young officers mainly from the military schools and the Havana garrison. We attempted to overthrow Batista and restore the bourgeois democracy that had existed here. Although the scope of the 1940 constitution of the Republic of Cuba was quite advanced it was never enforced, as you know.

The March 10 military coup was prepared and organized by a group of active-duty army and navy officers neither whose ideas nor records augured anything good for the country in any way.² They were joined by a large group of retired officers who came from the post-1933 years when Batista was the strongman in Cuba, a disgraceful past. The coup was supported by some venal politicians with ties to Batista and his theft and corruption in the previous epochs.

After March 10, there were a good number of officers who had not been able to prevent the coup, but did not accept it nevertheless. Small groups of conspirators spontaneously began to develop. They were sometimes diverted by the ebb and flow of promises that, from time to time, appeared to offer a political solution to the conditions Batista's March 10 coup had created in the republic.

As time went on, it became clear that no political solution was possible, that Batista would enact no change or



Granma
José Ramón Fernández was the field commander of Cuban revolutionary forces that defeated U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. At right, Cuban militia units head to the battlefield. Within 72 hours the invasion was crushed. Above, Fernández testifying at trial of mercenaries captured there. Most of the 1,200 prisoners were released in December 1962 in exchange for medical goods supplied by Washington.



trained professional (and I say this with no vanity), I was given the task of helping to train the Rebel Army — more than to train it actually, to help transform the Rebel Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces in general.⁴

The Rebel Army had a few thousand men who had fought against the army of Batista's tyranny. Their numbers had multiplied in the final days of December 1958 and continued multiplying in the first days of January, attracted by the prestige and authority that the Rebel Army had achieved through the armed struggle, and by the revolutionary honesty of the guerrilla leaders under the command of Fidel Castro. There was great hope that this army

¹ *Secretos de generales* comprises interviews by veteran Cuban journalist Luis Báez with 41 top military officers of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, including Fernández. It was published in 1996 by Si-Mar publishers in Havana.

² On March 10, 1952, Fulgencio Batista organized a military coup against the government of Carlos Prío and canceled scheduled elections. Batista was a retired Cuban army general who had been strongman in successive governments in Cuba from 1934 — in the wake of a revolutionary upsurge that toppled dictator Gerardo Machado — until 1944. As the Cuban bourgeoisie and their Yankee patrons reconsolidated power following the initial battles of late 1933, Batista bought off most of the insurgent political leaders, using repression against those who resisted.

Following the 1952 coup, with support from Washington Batista imposed a brutal military dictatorship that lasted until January 1, 1959. On that date Batista fled the country as his military and police forces crumbled in face of the victories won by the advancing Rebel Army commanded by Fidel Castro and the growing popular support for the July 26 Movement, culminating in a revolutionary general strike.

³ In November 1954 the Batista regime held an election to provide legal cover for the March 1952 coup. The only other candidate running, Ramón Grau San Martín, whose candidacy had given legitimacy to Batista's maneuver, backed out of the race the day before the election, leaving Batista as the sole candidate.

⁴ The Revolutionary Armed Forces was established in October 1959, consolidating under a single command structure the Rebel Army, as well as the Rebel Air Force, the Revolutionary Navy, and the Revolutionary National Police.

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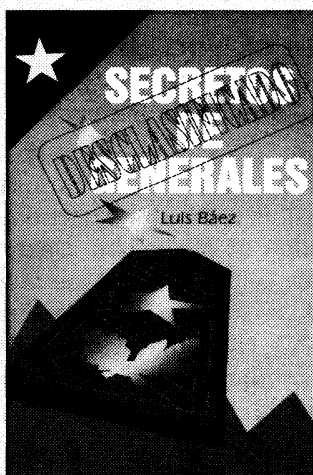
Secretos de generales

(SECRETS OF GENERALS)

By Luis Báez

In this collection of 41 interviews, top officers of Cuba's armed forces tell how they joined the revolutionary movement to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in the 1950s. They discuss their experiences around the world spanning several decades as they fought alongside national liberation movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This "is not a textbook on the past but living history," explains Revolutionary Armed Forces Minister Raúl Castro in the preface, a "treasure of moral values and accumulated combat experience."

IN SPANISH.



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Granma
Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista (holding cigar) flanked by Gen. Francisco Tabernilla (left), and Adm. J. Rodríguez Calderón.

would be both the guardian of the revolution and the base of support for the gigantic task that lay ahead to transform the society and its political, economic, and social system; to preserve our sovereignty; and to impose a code of honor and ethics in public affairs. All this, I repeat, gave the Rebel Army popularity, sympathy, and great prestige. Many thousands of young people were attracted toward it, as well as others of all ages, and the revolution really needed that.

This was a very complex period. The Rebel Army, fulfilling the tasks that fell to it by law, was replacing Batista's corrupt army of 80,000 men. It benefited from its reputation as a patriotic army defending the people, a reputation it continues to consolidate. Both the Rebel Army and the people repudiated the army that had served Batista, an

"The entire people form a shield that makes the revolution invincible."

army that committed crimes and abuses right up to the fall of the tyranny.

At the beginning of the period immediately following the triumph of the revolution, there was not, in general, a clear and firm consciousness of the need for structures, for discipline, for the norms indispensable to a modern-day military force. The members of the Rebel Army — although excellent combatants who had been capable of defeating the corrupt army of the Batista tyranny — needed training along these lines. It was essential to organize and train these cadres in the handling of weapons, in tactics, in combat engineering, in communications, and in all those specific areas of knowledge that are essential for any armed force.

It was a very interesting, a very important process, in which Raúl [Castro], minister of the armed forces since the early days, played a decisive role. He is a revolutionary with a tremendous sense of organization, discipline, and an understanding of the need for technical training.



Council of State Office of Historical Affairs, Havana
"The Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra set an example of truthfulness, of ethical conduct, of respect for the integrity of prisoners." Above, Rebel Army combatants on march during 1956-58 war to overthrow Batista's tyranny.

He is very methodical — very persistent in working continuously on whatever is important for a given task.

'War of the entire people'

As you know, Fidel is commander in chief, a position he has held since the Sierra Maestra.⁵ As president of the Council of State, he is also, by law, supreme commander of the armed forces. He lays out the strategic lines. The concept of the war of the entire people is Fidel's, for example; it is the guiding philosophy of our armed forces today. We don't aim to crush an invasion, or an armed attack by whatever great power — I'm not mentioning names — with our armed forces alone. Our armed forces are powerful, but all the people are needed to inflict such a defeat. A defeat like the one suffered by Joseph Bonaparte's army in Spain.⁶ A fighting spirit like that of the Vietnamese. The aim is that the adversary, the invader, will see in each citizen an enemy who, through ambushes and continuous attacks, allows no respite; that each citizen makes sure the invaders never feel safe. That's why we say we are unconquerable.

We can arm considerably more than one million people — sufficiently trained and organized. The armed forces have been reduced in numbers in recent years, without sacrificing their combat capability. Our weapons are in good condition and are adequately distributed and protected. Training remains solid, and our reserves keep growing. Morale is high and we are determined to win, as Fidel and Raúl have taught us. Men and women, the entire people, form a shield that makes the revolution invincible.

⁵ The Rebel Army conducted the 1956-58 revolutionary war against the Batista regime from a base in the Sierra Maestra mountains of eastern Cuba.

⁶ Napoleon Bonaparte's brother Joseph was proclaimed king of Spain in 1808 following France's conquest of that country. A popular war of resistance within Spain laid the basis for the defeat of the French forces, who were finally driven out in 1813. In a series of articles on the Spanish revolution of 1854 written for the *New York Daily Tribune*, Karl Marx drew lessons from the earlier peasant-based resistance to French occupation. See "Revolutionary Spain," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 13, esp. pp. 400-439.

Fidel and Raúl know, just as you do, that the primary force is the individual human being — a will to fight, a love of country, a sense of honor and duty. To be determined to fight, a man or woman must be convinced of why they're doing so. In our case the people fight to defend a society where there is no racial discrimination; where the role of women has been expanded and continues to grow; where education — I would say an exemplary education — is free and available to the entire people; where there is a public health care system that, despite shortages, maintains a low infant mortality rate and a high life expectancy, and that treats

and fights diseases in a way comparable to any developed country. A country where there is social security that has left no one destitute, in spite of the economic crisis. A more just society, where those of us who shoulder responsibilities dress, eat, and work the same as the people as a whole, with great modesty; where there are no special food rations or other privileges.

A country with a democracy, where the entire people participate in making important decisions; where the entire people participate, in the most direct way conceivable, in electing those who govern.

A country where we have defended our sovereignty, where love of country and defense of the national flag are paramount and where the first requirement is loyalty to the country, loyalty to the socialist revolution. That is the first requirement, one that cannot be replaced by anything of a technical character.

We live in a world where we deeply need these convictions and practices in order to be able to fight and win.

Participating in a modest way in building the Rebel Army in the early years, as I did, coming to be vice minister of the armed forces with Raúl under the leadership of Fidel, has been the true fulfillment of my life; this is what has given it meaning. The fact that I was able to participate in the armed struggle in defense of the country at Girón has contributed greatly to this personal fulfillment.⁷

Finally, I can say that today the armed forces, at the head of the people and under the leadership of our party, constitute a formidable enemy for any adversary. We are not looking for war with anybody. But whoever attacks us, if he doesn't die, will have to retreat after one, three, five, ten years of fighting us, or our children, or our grandchildren. We defend the sovereignty of the country and socialism. This is what we fight for. This is what we work for unstintingly.

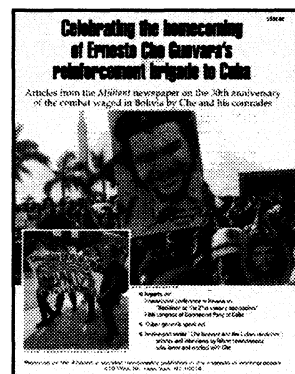
October 1962 'Missile Crisis'

Barnes: Perhaps we could raise a question about the October Crisis.⁸ We are commemorating the thirty-fifth anniversary of those days right now, and understanding the lessons of that crisis is an important question for us in the United States.

Fernández: And a difficult one for me, since I did not participate in it directly.

Barnes: Some of the previously classified documents and tape recordings from the Kennedy administration that have been released over the past few years give new evidence of what communists in the United States have always explained to the American people about the October Crisis. What we said as youth — demonstrating against U.S. government war moves in the streets of Los Angeles, of Chicago, of Minneapolis, and elsewhere — has been

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND WORLD POLITICS



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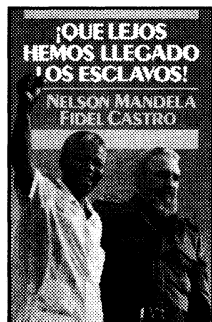
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FROM PATHFINDER

Available in bookstores, including those listed on page 12.



⁷ Girón is the name Cubans used to designate the April 1961 battle during which Cuba's militia and its Revolutionary Armed Forces defeated a U.S.-organized invasion by 1,500 Cuban mercenaries. The counterrevolutionaries landed at the Bay of Pigs on Cuba's southern coast on April 17 and planned to declare a provisional government to appeal for direct U.S. intervention. Within 72 hours, however, the invaders had been defeated; the last of them surrendered at Playa Girón (Girón Beach) on April 19.

⁸ In the face of escalating preparations by Washington for an invasion of Cuba in the spring and summer of 1962, the Cuban government signed a mutual defense agreement with the Soviet Union. In October 1962 President Kennedy demanded the removal of Soviet nuclear missiles installed in Cuba following the signing of that pact. Washington ordered a naval blockade of Cuba, stepped up its preparations to invade, and placed U.S. armed forces on nuclear alert. Cuban workers and farmers mobilized in the millions to defend the revolution. Following an exchange of communications between Washington and Moscow, on October 28 Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, without consulting the Cuban government, announced his decision to remove the missiles.



Granma

Above: Cuban militia members during the October 1962 "missile" crisis. The Cuban people "prepare ourselves well for war, so we can win peace. If we didn't have the military power that we do, we would have been attacked." Right: Opponents of U.S. attacks on Cuba mobilize to protest Washington's war moves, November 26, 1960, at action sponsored by Fair Play for Cuba Committee at United Nations in New York.



Militant/Joseph Hansen

confirmed.

As you know, the story as told by most of the capitalist media and politicians in the United States is that [U.S. president John] Kennedy and [Soviet premier Nikita] Khrushchev saved the world from nuclear war, in spite of Cuba. We've always said no. It was Cuba, the Cuban people, the FAR that saved the world from nuclear war. Through their courage and determination, they made Kennedy understand there were limits to aggression beyond which his administration would have had to pay too great a price politically.

We have always explained that the Kennedy White House had been stepping up plans to invade Cuba throughout the entire period leading up to the crisis, and it initially seized on deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba as the pretext to do so. But the documents that are now being published show that when Kennedy asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an estimate of the casualties that could be expected from an invasion of Cuba, they responded with the figure of more than 18,000 dead and wounded American soldiers in just the first ten days! At that moment Kennedy, who was not a military dictator but simply a politician

prepare ourselves well for war, so we can win peace. If we didn't have the military power that we do, we would have been attacked. I have no doubt about that. Girón was an alert, but in more recent years there have been other warning signals. The danger — as attested to not only by attacks and sabotage but by systematic threats and a consistent pattern of hostile acts — has led us to maintain our defense capacity in readiness and to continuously increase and improve it.

At the request of the legitimate government of Angola, Cuban forces fought against an invasion backed by several capitalist powers that had penetrated more than one thousand kilometers into Angolan territory.¹⁰ History will one day recognize that in winning the liberation of Namibia and putting an end to apartheid, an important role was played by the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces — which fought in Angola alongside the armed forces of that country, assisting those who had long struggled for such an outcome. We have to say that the decisive victories in the air and on land were won by these troops.

Our forces in Ethiopia, defending that country against Somali intervention, did the same thing as in Angola.¹¹ It

have to be firm and intelligent in order to defend it. History will one day record that few statesmen in the modern epoch of humanity have had the talent, wisdom, courage, and sense of the moment that Fidel has had in defending the revolution.

For almost forty years we have been navigating along the edge of a possible attack, firmly defending our sovereignty, the revolution, and socialism. And we have maintained a course that has proved capable of defending our principles while avoiding a war.

There is a somewhat defiant billboard in front of the U.S. Interests Section, and it can be read a number of different ways.¹³ But I like to view it as saying what we truly feel: That we are not the least bit afraid of you. It shows we are ready to fight. It should not be seen as a provocation, but as a warning: Don't mess with us. We're small but we know how to defend ourselves, and we will defend ourselves. We have the means to do so, we will defend ourselves, and we will win.

I like very much what Comrade Barnes says; I have the same conviction. And I am convinced of something else. For Kennedy it was a political problem not to carry through with the invasion of Cuba in 1961 — and I'm not referring just to Kennedy, who inherited the invasion from Eisenhower. It was a political problem because of what those invading forces of Cubans armed, trained, and organized by the CIA represented and what they signified in Congress and in different spheres of U.S. political life. It was evident that one sector of the government and the CIA supported the invasion, but it was also clear that an

¹³ The billboard, which faces the building that houses the U.S. diplomatic mission in Havana, says: "Imperialist gentlemen, we are not the least bit afraid of you."

"We don't aim to crush an invasion with our armed forces alone. Our armed forces are powerful, but all the people are needed."

facing the American people under conditions of bourgeois democracy, began looking for other options. It was that estimate of the armed resistance U.S. forces would face in Cuba that made Kennedy begin looking to find a way out.

You can now follow all the White House discussions, day by day, hour by hour, in the transcripts of tape recordings of meetings in Kennedy's offices. Even better, you can listen to the tapes themselves at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. You can hear the pauses, the inflections that are sometimes more expressive than the words.

We educate young fighters in the United States to understand that revolutionists must study the past in order to be prepared to act in all situations — and 1962 will not be the last "October Crisis." Times are coming when the working class will once again confront nuclear or other forms of blackmail from the capitalist exploiters and war makers, and revolutionists must know how to stand firm and prevent the rulers from wreaking their destruction.

When two small planes that took off from Miami were shot down over Cuban territory in February 1996, we explained that this was not some new policy course.⁹ The decision had been made and announced to the world by Fidel many years earlier during the October Crisis. "You cannot violate Cuba's sovereignty," the Cuban people and their leadership said. "We will stand." And it's very important to demonstrate that resolve whenever the aggressors begin new probes.

That's how we try to educate workers and youth in the United States about the October Crisis. We would appreciate any thoughts or opinions you have about it.

Fernández: You have said something that is very true:

⁹ On February 24, 1996, three Cessna planes organized by the Florida-based counterrevolutionary organization Brothers to the Rescue were warned several times that they had violated Cuban air space. Having ignored these warnings, two of the planes were shot down, and four men on board were killed. Cuba had experienced ten other incursions of its air space within the previous twenty months, as well as flotillas organized by Brothers to the Rescue to violate Cuba's territorial waters. "We have confronted this provocation with great patience," the Cuban government stated earlier in a July 1995 communiqué. "The responsibility for whatever happens will fall, exclusively, on those who encourage, plan, execute, or tolerate these acts of piracy."

was no accident that our armed forces were capable of fighting and defeating well-organized armies. We are convinced of this and we deeply admire those internationalist combatants who fought in defense of the sovereignty of others.

We maintain a firm position, a principled position. We do not lie, and we always fight and argue armed with the truth. We keep our people informed. This has been an important factor. The Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra set an example of truthfulness, of ethical conduct, of respect for the integrity of prisoners.

I remember when a U-2 was shot down during the October Crisis.¹² The U-2 was downed because the commander of the Soviet antiaircraft missile forces who was here, without waiting for instructions from Moscow, complied with the order given to the Cuban antiaircraft batteries, to fire on low-flying planes, and it shot down the U-2.

U.S. planes began flying low over various military installations and areas where our troops were positioned. They had been warned that "beginning in the morning we will shoot at anything that flies overhead." When we started to shoot the flights stopped.

In other words, we must have right on our side, and we

¹⁰ In 1975 Cuban forces were sent to Angola, at the request of the newly independent government there, to defend that country against a South African invasion. Between then and the departure of the last Cuban troops in 1991, more than 300,000 Cuban volunteers fought there; 2,000 were killed. The decisive moment came with the defeat of the South African army at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela said in 1991 that Cuba's role in defeating the apartheid army constituted "a turning point in the struggle to free the continent and our country from the scourge of apartheid." In Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, *How Far We Slaves Have Come!* (Pathfinder, 1991), p. 20.

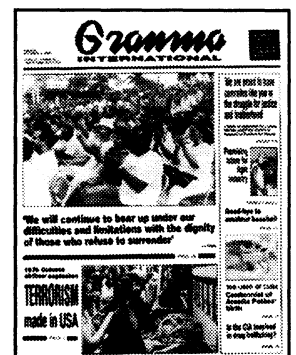
¹¹ In 1977 Cuban troops were sent to Ethiopia, at the request of its government, to help train its forces to beat back a U.S.-supported invasion by Somalia, which was seeking to turn back the revolution that toppled the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 and initiated a land reform that broke up the vast estates of the ruling classes.

¹² The high-flying U.S. U-2 spy plane was downed over Cuba on October 27, 1962. For more on this incident, see the interview with FAR Division General Enrique Carreras, in the *Militant*, July 6, 1998.

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Twenty-nine-member Cuban Council of State, of which Fernández was a member, reviews and confirms death sentence of Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa and three other army and Ministry of the Interior officers convicted on charges of trafficking in drugs and abuse of power in July 1989. Ochoa's acts "compromised the integrity of the country's name," Fernández stated.

invasion would have had a high political cost because of the number of casualties that the U.S. armed forces could suffer.

But U.S. administrations often understand how bad wars are only when the bodies of dead soldiers start coming back and public opinion starts clamoring. Until the bodies start arriving, war is not bad. It wasn't until body bags started arriving from Vietnam that [U.S. president] Lyndon Johnson began losing sleep, and others started thinking that a solution had to be found. The same thing happened in Korea — we forget about Korea now, but the same thing happened then.

"For almost forty years we have been navigating along the edge of a possible attack, defending our sovereignty."

I'm sure the people of the United States would not react the same way if the bodies were coming back from defending against an invasion of Los Angeles, Seattle, Boston, or any other city. But people know and understand when a war is unjust, when the U.S. government is fighting a war outside its territory for hegemony or to advance economic interests.

When I was in a museum in China, I saw on display a statement by Gen. Mark Clark, who had been head of the U.S. Fifth Army in Italy during World War II and later served as commander of the troops in Korea. Following the Korean War, he made a statement that he had the sad honor to sign the peace after the first military defeat of the United States.¹⁴

The death of every single man hurts us; we take care of every family and every person. We wish no one had to

¹⁴ Clark, who signed the armistice in July 1953 ending the Korean War, wrote that he "had gained the unenviable distinction of being the first United States Army commander in history to sign an armistice without victory."

die. But unfortunately we have had thousands of deaths — in the struggle against Batista; in the repression by Batista's forces in the streets of all the cities and in fields across Cuba and in the battles waged by the Rebel Army against the tyranny.

Later we faced the fight against the bandits.¹⁵ I'm sure no one in the United States would deny that these bandits were an artificial creation of the CIA, children of the CIA. Just like the grouplets today in Cuba, some of whom seek to present themselves as political parties, often with five people. They receive financial backing from the United States. But those people don't represent anything in Cuba, they're alien to the people. They are the representatives of a foreign power that supports, pays, and maintains them.

Let me make myself clear: I don't mean by this that there are no discontented people in Cuba, or people who disagree with socialism. I'm aware there are — in fact, there have to be. We have shortages, privations, difficulties. We run risks; there are dangers. There are people who are more consumer-oriented, who would like a more comfortable life, without struggles. There are people who perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, place a shirt, a pair of pants, or a car above the country's sovereignty or above social justice, and these people are clearly not enthusiastic about the revolution. That's one thing. But it's something completely different for there to be a sector of the population that has taken organizational form, or that can be given organizational form, that is represented by grouplets such as I described.

These are two different things. These grouplets represent no one, not even themselves, in fact. What they represent perhaps are those who pay them.

Popular support for revolution

We have just held elections.¹⁶ I am the deputy of a municipality in the interior of the country. So I can speak about this process from experience, since I have lived through it and have close ties to my municipality. Ninety-seven point six percent of the population voted in the elections held October 19. I believe Clinton was elected by about 50 percent of 50 percent, by approximately 27 percent of the

¹⁵ In the early 1960s, small bands of counterrevolutionaries, armed and financed by Washington, carried out sabotage and other operations against the revolution, primarily in the Escambray mountains of south central Cuba.

¹⁶ Elections to the municipal assemblies of People's Power, Cuba's local government bodies, were held October 19, 1997, with a second round October 26 in districts where no candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote. Municipal elections are held every two and a half years.

eligible voters in the United States.

Here some ballots are left blank and others are intentionally spoiled; in these elections it came to 7.2 percent of the ballots cast. Some people, particularly those who are very old, vote for two or three candidates when they're only supposed to vote for one, for example. Others intentionally vote against, that's clear.

The vast majority of the people today support Fidel, socialism, and what Fidel and socialism represent: sovereignty, education, health care, social justice. There's no doubt about that.

Some of you were here the day of Che's funeral.¹⁷ You saw how people lined the streets, in silence. It was truly exemplary. There was sincere homage to a person who gave his life for the ideals we are defending. It was an incredible thing, as was the ceremony in Santa Clara, which was very moving and impressive.

Our adversaries must know this. I believe the CIA knows it, the Pentagon knows it, and I also think Clinton knows it.

Raúl Castro and the FAR

Barnes: I'd like to ask you a question about Raúl [Castro]. Raúl is a special target of propaganda in the United States. Fidel the U.S. rulers tried especially hard to assassinate.



Granma

"There are 150,000 small farmers who have titles to their land in Cuba. Their land rights have been and continue to be respected." Above, Cuban peasant receives title to his land following May 1959 agrarian reform.

sinate; now they just hope as a mortal he goes away someday soon. With Che, they hope to sell some Che T-shirts, beer, and watches, and they pray that young people don't get too interested politically. But they are always going after Raúl. He is bad, maybe even worse than Fidel.

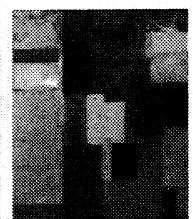
I've always been very struck by this. I was in Cuba in the summer of 1960 for several months, and I learned firsthand the leadership standing Raúl had earned in the Rebel Army and during the first year and half of the new revolutionary government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces. I think the U.S. rulers fear that continuity of the Cuban revolution. They fear the integrity of the army and its closeness to the Cuban people.

During the trial of General Ochoa and the others a number of years ago, I remember seeing some television footage from Cuba of the Military Court of Honor and of the review of the sentences by the Council of State.¹⁸ One

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

¹⁸ In June–July 1989, four high-ranking officers of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Ministry of the Interior were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for hostile acts against a foreign state, drug trafficking, and abuse of office. The most prominent among them was Arnaldo Ochoa, a division general in the Cuban army who had smuggled ivory and other goods while heading Cuba's mission in Angola and established contacts with Pablo Escobar and other major international drug dealers. At the same trial, ten other Cuban army and Ministry of the Interior officers were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from ten to thirty years.

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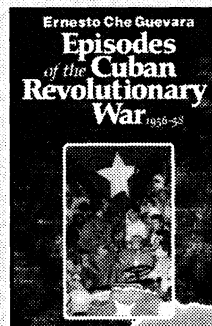
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look at Raúl's face revealed the pain he felt because of what had happened in the Revolutionary Armed Forces, even if it was an isolated thing. Soon afterwards Furry [Gen. Abelardo Colomé Ibarra] was named to head the Ministry of the Interior,¹⁹ and it seemed to us that the army was taking even more responsibility for the honor and the direction of the Cuban revolution.

So we would like to get out a little more of the truth about Raúl, whose place in the revolution is hidden from many, above all in the United States. And perhaps you could tell us how you view the responsibility of the armed forces in the march forward of the revolution, the honor and integrity of the FAR, and its internationalism.

Fernández: Raúl is a revolutionary with great human qualities, very strong principles, and firmness in the cause we defend. He is a hard worker, organized, systematic, and disciplined. He is very demanding in his work — above all of himself, and then of others. If Fidel was the founder of the Rebel Army and the creator of its strategic conception, Raúl has been the one who implements. Through his hard work and capacities over more than thirty years, he has organized a solid Revolutionary Armed Forces, politically firm, trained, and capable of defending the country, and above all, prepared to do so side by side with the people, who are an integral part of it. The FAR is very closely tied to the people. What Camilo²⁰

said is true: the armed forces are the people in uniform.

Raúl is a man like any other. Forceful but extraordinarily affable, he has a very Cuban personality; he communicates very well with the people; loves children; is capable

¹⁹ Before being named minister of the interior, Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé was deputy minister of defense and first substitute for the minister, Raúl Castro.

²⁰ Camilo Cienfuegos, a commander of the Rebel Army, was named chief of staff following the victory over Batista in January 1959. His plane was lost at sea in October 1959 while he was returning to Havana from a mission to combat a counter-revolutionary mutiny in Camagüey led by Hubert Matos.

'We marched out of prison in perfect formation'

BY MIKE TABER

An officer in the Cuban army prior to the revolution who graduated from the artillery school of the U.S. Army, José Ramón Fernández opposed the 1952 coup that placed U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista in power. In *Secretos de generales*, Fernández tells the story of how he became a revolutionary.

Fernández was part of an unsuccessful revolt on April 4, 1956, by army officers who became known as "los puros" (the pure ones). "Among the officers in that group, I was the most radical," Fernández says. "I thought we had to arrest Batista and execute him for his responsibility in the killings of thousands of people. I had proposed that we needed to carry out an agrarian reform, purge the armed forces, implement the 1940 constitution, and confiscate the goods stolen by public officials. That's as far as I got at the time." For his participation in that revolt he was arrested and imprisoned by the Batista regime, remaining in jail on the Isle of Pines for the next three years.

Fernández was assigned to Building 4, one of several cylindrical cell blocks that made up the Isle of Pines prison. More than 500 political prisoners eventually were incarcerated in Building 4, the vast majority of them members of the July 26 Movement, the organization led by Fidel Castro. Through these revolutionists, Fernández recalls, "I became familiar with the real objectives of the struggle. I got a clearer understanding not simply of the justice of the cause — which I already believed in — but of the determination, firmness, ability, capacity for struggle, and will to win of that improvised army that was meeting out lesson after lesson to the army of the tyranny, as well as to the supposedly more capable officers who were leading it."

The members of the July 26 Movement designated Fernández as head of Building 4. For more than a year he also acted as military instructor to the revolutionary prisoners, who organized their own battalion within



Photos by Lee Lockwood
January 1, 1959. Just-released political prisoners in Havana — some of them still in white prison uniforms — arm themselves to help crush resistance by Batista supporters, forestall U.S. maneuvers, and bring the Rebel Army and July 26 Movement to power.

tripod at the entrance of the prison building, all the while telling the prisoners to remain calm, that they would soon be pardoned. Their noisy indignation "had no effect on Viera, but it did have an impact on some of the soldiers accompanying him, who were in favor of opening the prison doors. Viera de la Rosa took them outside and severely upbraided them."

Meanwhile, Washington was directing a frantic effort to forestall the victory of the Rebel Army and maintain the old regime in Cuba, only without Batista. A key player in the U.S. rulers' plans was Col. Ramón Barquín. Barquín had been the central leader of the 1956 "los puros" conspiracy, and he was imprisoned on the Isle of Pines along with Fernández. Once it became clear to the U.S. government that none of Batista's associates were acceptable to the Cuban people to head the military, Barquín — a former military attaché to Washington — became the Yankees' choice. On January 1 Barquín was released from prison and flown to Havana, where he took command of the main military base, Camp Columbia.

Later that same day Barquín flew back to the Isle of Pines. No longer a prisoner, he was now the leader of a U.S.-sponsored attempt to derail the revolution. Barquín "proposed to name an officer he trusted among the prisoners to take control of the Isle of Pines garrison," Fernández says. But the maneuver was flatly rejected by the July 26 Movement as well as some of the officers, including Fernández.

That's when Armando Hart, the ranking July 26 Movement leader in the prison, "came to see me in my cell," recalls Fernández. Hart "asked if I was prepared to take charge of the Isle of Pines on behalf of the July 26 Movement and the revolution. I said yes."

As the former warden and his deputy exited the prison compound, Fernández and another officer went to the garrison. "I spoke with the soldiers in a clear and energetic voice," he says. "I told them there would be no persecution of anyone who hadn't committed crimes, and I ordered them to stack their weapons up in the gun racks."

Together with an escort of four or five sympathetic soldiers, Fernández then went to the cell block itself. With the aid of the machine gun that had been placed in front of the entrance, Fernández — who had rapidly donned a first lieutenant's uniform — confronted the surprised guards.

"I ordered them to open the cell doors. I had to issue threats," Fernández says, "since there was determined opposition to doing so."

"Rapidly the battalion of political prisoners I had been training for months inside the cell block fell into rank and marched out of the prison in perfect formation."

Fernández and Hart, at the head of the July 26 Movement battalion, quickly took control of the Isle of Pines. Hart headed the island's civil authority, and Fernández became military commander. Forty-eight hours later, they were called to Havana.

As for Barquín, his ill-fated effort to hold onto power collapsed January 2, when the Rebel Army columns of Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara entered Havana.

Joining the Rebel Army

On January 12, 1959, Fernández met Fidel Castro for the first time. Castro proposed that he serve the Rebel Army as head of its school for cadets. Fernández replied he wasn't sure he wanted to.

"Do you have a job?" Castro asked. "I told him I'd been offered a job as manager of a sugar mill. He went on to ask me: 'How much does it pay?'"



"I told him 1,000 pesos."

"I don't know if I could pay you that much."

"I continued arguing. Fidel began pacing the small room. Suddenly he stopped and said:

"I think you're right. You go off to the sugar mill. I'll go off to write a book. And let the revolution go to hell!"

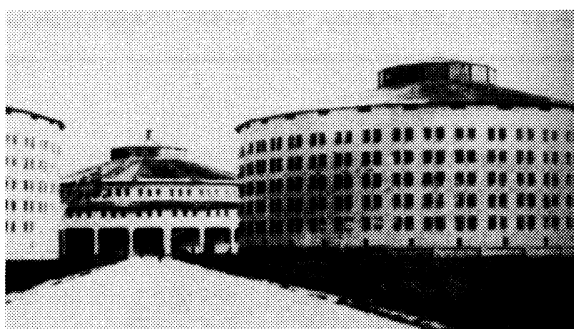
"That very day," Fernández says, "I became director of the school for cadets."

Two years later, in the early morning of April 17, 1961, Fernández was called on by Fidel Castro to be the chief field commander of the Cuban militias and regular forces combating the U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion. Working under Castro's command, Fernández directed operations until the mercenary army was crushed, within 72 hours.

"I went to Girón with enthusiasm not merely because I would be defending a just cause and confronting a powerful enemy. In addition, in my own case it was a long-sought opportunity to fulfill a personal goal."

"It's true that I had rebelled, gone into opposition, and broken with the Batista regime, and we shouldn't underestimate what that meant in those days," Fernández says. "But unlike the compañeros who had fought in the Sierra, and those who operated clandestinely in the cities day in and day out, I hadn't had the opportunity to put my life on the line to demonstrate the justice of the ideas I held."

"At Girón I participated with my own hands in defense of the revolution and socialism. It strengthened my conviction that my destiny would be forever linked to that of this heroic people."



Isle of Pines prison, 1950s, which was closed after the revolution. Renamed the Isle of Youth, the island became a center for young people from around the world studying in Cuba.

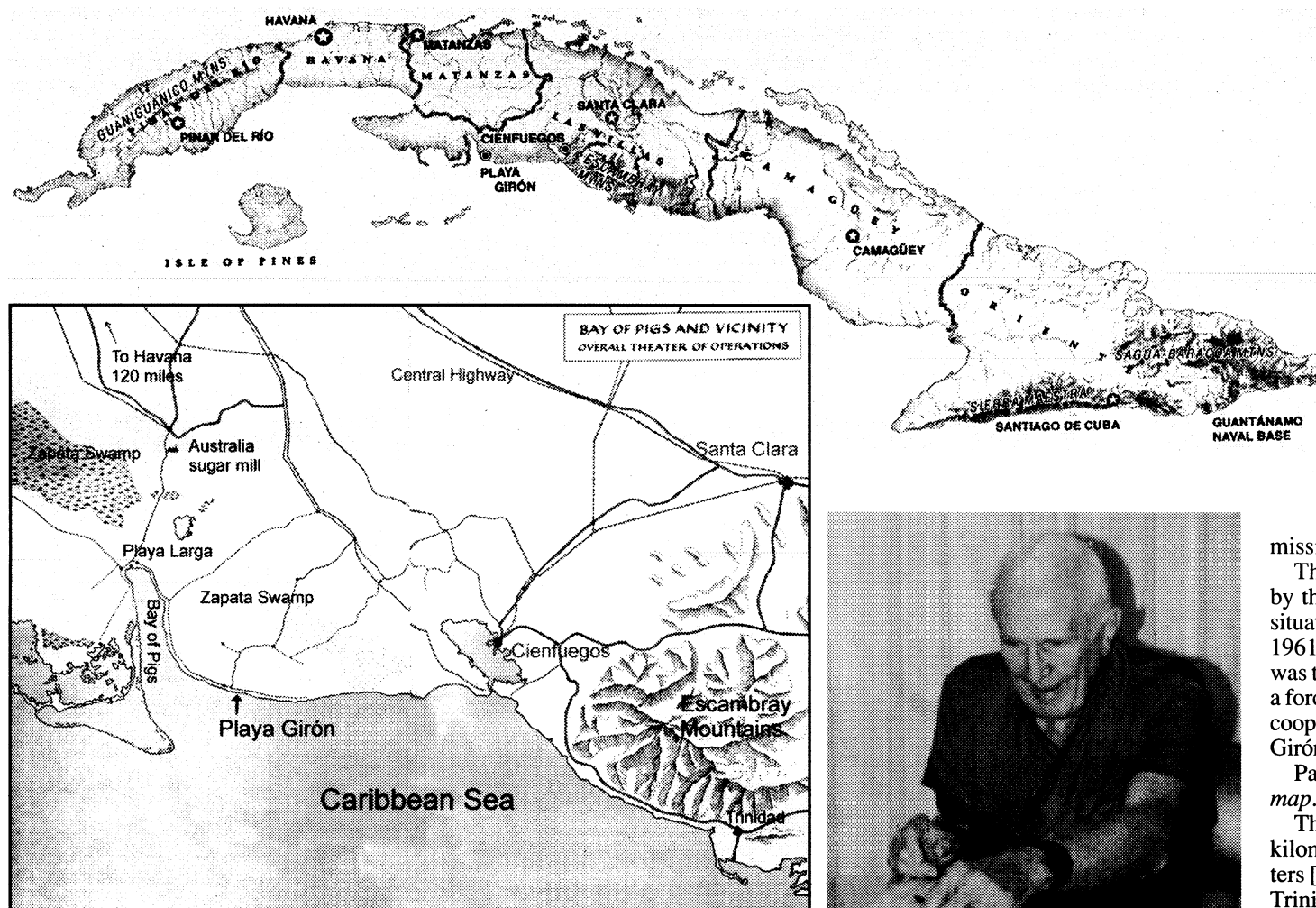
the prison — training they would put to good use on January 1, 1959.

On that day Batista fled Cuba in face of the advancing Rebel Army, whose victories had unleashed a revolutionary rising and general strike across Cuba.

Revolution in the prison

As soon as the prisoners figured out from the unusual broadcasts they were receiving on their carefully concealed transistor radio that something extraordinary was happening, Fernández and another prisoner, Enrique Borbonet — also a former officer in the Cuban army — demanded to see the warden, Maj. Carlos Viera de la Rosa. A few minutes later Viera came. "Amid generalized tumult in the cell block," Fernández says, "we vehemently demanded that he let us out, since we knew Batista had fled." Instead Viera said he had to go to Havana, a short plane ride away, to get more news.

When the warden returned a few hours later, he reinforced the guard, placing a well-aimed machine gun



Map of Cuba, top, with inset detailing area of 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. For Washington, "promoting counterrevolutionary groups in the Escambray was part of preparation for the invasion and was timed to coincide with the landing," Fernández explained, pointing to map of the island.

of telling stories, making jokes, and enjoying them. He'll chat with somebody, then go to another person's house, and then go do something else. Young people like Raúl very much. When he shows up at a youth event he sparks a true show of enthusiasm.

Raúl is very sincere in what he says, and he has a deep sensibility in dealing with others. He has many friends, and he knows how to be a friend, a father, a comrade, and a firm and demanding political and military leader. And he has the talent and ability for the positions he holds, and for any others he might take on.

I am sure, as you said, that Raúl was deeply shaken by the Ochoa affair, above all, as well as by what happened in the Ministry of Interior. This was something unexpected. Human beings can fail, and that's what happened with Ochoa. He lost his way, made a profound mistake, conducted himself incorrectly, and created a complex and difficult situation by his behavior.

In that period the enemy accused Raúl and other leaders of the revolution of drug trafficking. Ochoa's behavior — the contacts he and his emissaries had made, the acts they had carried out — compromised the integrity of the country's name.

Regardless of the prestige Ochoa may have had, he was never an outstanding leader of the army. He was a man with personal merits, known as a general who had played a certain role, but this did not alter the fact that measures had to be taken, and that they had to be strong ones, in accordance with the gravity of the deeds committed. As a member of the Council of State at the time, I took personal responsibility for those measures. I had to give an opinion, and I did so with conviction and without reservations.²¹

Cuba has been against drugs from day one. In fact, drugs are practically unknown among the people here. In the 1980s, when I was minister of education, I visited a Latin American country. When the minister of education of that country asked me what we were doing to fight drugs in the schools, I had to ask him twice: Which schools are you talking about? In primary and secondary school, he responded. I was appalled that an eleven- or twelve-year-old child could have access to drugs and be allowed to use them.

Bourgeois armies and revolutionary armies

Waters: It would be useful to return to a point you made earlier about the difference between a bourgeois army and a revolutionary army — the difference in the treatment of soldiers, and the relations between soldiers and officers.

Fernández: As a rule, a bourgeois army imposes its

²¹ On July 9, 1989, Cuba's Council of State reviewed the death sentences and all twenty-nine members, including Fernández, voted to ratify them. Fernández was minister of education at the time. The entire proceedings of the Council of State meeting, at which every single member spoke, were telecast throughout Cuba. A documentary record of the case of Ochoa and others convicted with him — including remarks from the Council of State meeting by each of its members — can be found in *Case 1/1989: End of the Cuban Connection* (José Martí Publishing House, Havana, 1989).

command, with some variation, through law, through established norms based exclusively on hierarchy and rank. A socialist army, our army, also uses norms and requires obedience. But discipline is achieved through conscious methods, and the commanding officers derive their authority from the consent of their subordinates; they earn that authority every day by their ability, work, and example.

In this army nobody can give orders who is not respected, who does not have the approval of one's subordinates. Command, clearly, isn't conferred by elections, but it's essential to have the consent and approval of one's subordinates. The army requires very strict discipline; there can be no concessions on that. But it must be very just, very humane, and maintain the highest moral values.

There have been tremendous abuses in other armies we know, or have known. To me, the attitudes that exist in the U.S. Marine Corps and among its instructors are often bestial; they're often criminal, inhumane, and unworthy. They are truly contemptible in a military institution. I'm

"We are poor, but we have dignity. We would be ashamed to be rich as a result of theft, exploitation, or corruption."

not talking about the young people who have drowned in the swamps. I'm talking about the dehumanizing and denigrating methods of treating young people. That is unacceptable. That is an example of the difference between the two types of armies.

When someone who exercises authority or enforces discipline must do so, this often rankles those who are the objects of the command. You have to remember, however, that in our armed forces there are the units of the party; there are units of the UJC [Union of Young Communists]. These organizations strive for discipline and at the same time defend and guarantee the rights of individuals. There are places where one may speak frankly and say everything, regardless of rank. That doesn't happen in other armies.

Battle in the Escambray

Barnes: You referred earlier to the fight against the bandits in the Escambray? Could we return to that?

During the conference that Mary-Alice and I took part in here, Compañero Balaguer²² talked about the generation of leaders that won their spurs not in the struggle against Batista, but at Girón, and in fighting to clean the bandits out of the Escambray. But the Escambray is a chapter of the revolutionary struggle that is very little known in the United States today.

²² Cuban Communist Party leader José Ramón Balaguer gave the keynote address at the October 21–23, 1997, international workshop in Havana that Barnes and Waters had just participated in. Balaguer, who is head of the Central Committee's Department of International Relations, joined the Rebel Army in 1958, fighting in the Second Eastern Front.

It's important for revolutionaries in the United States to learn about this. Many of us spent time in Nicaragua, and we closely followed the Nicaraguan revolution. We watched with concern as we saw methods being used there to defeat the U.S.-organized counterrevolutionary forces evolve in a manner that finally compromised the Sandinistas' ability to win the political battle in the countryside. For that reason, among others, the question of the Escambray is very important for workers and youth who try to draw lessons from the Cuban revolution.

Fernández: I only participated in the Escambray on two occasions. Each time it was for one week, commanding some special unit that had been called up to fight there. But the battalions under my command that were training in Havana, at least those from the militias, were the principal forces in the mission to eliminate the bandits in the Escambray.

The fight in the Escambray was conducted mainly by the militia units. The Escambray was an artificial situation created by U.S. agencies in late 1960 and early 1961 to promote subversion in Cuba. One of its aims was to provoke general uprisings and convert them into a force that would coincide in time and place and would cooperate with the invading brigade that landed at Playa Girón, which was initially scheduled to land at Trinidad.

Pardon me for a second. [Fernández goes to get a map.]

This is a tourist map of Cuba — the country is 1,200 kilometers [744 miles] from east to west, 100 kilometers [62 miles] from north to south, on average. Here is Trinidad, where the Girón landing was originally going to be. Kennedy was against it, since it's next to a city and was going to be too much of a scandal. That's part of history; it's in all the books.

Instead, the landing took place here, [pointing to the map] at Playa Girón in the Bay of Pigs. And the Escambray [pointing] is here. In other words, promoting counterrevolutionary groups in the Escambray was part of the preparation for the invasion and was timed to coincide precisely with the landing. The Escambray was to serve as a base of support, creating a zone that could be dominated by the invading brigade and by enemy forces in general. The invasion force left from here [pointing to the map] — from Nicaragua. They had trained in Guatemala. Then they moved over to Puerto Cabezas on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, and from there they were originally going to come to this place, to Trinidad.

The CIA created those groups with the support of Cuban agents. The Florida station of the CIA was at that time the largest in the world — that's a recorded fact in the CIA's own books, not in our imagination. Many Cubans who had abandoned the country joined the mercenary force: many former officers of the old army; sons of landowners, of rich people; extended families of the bourgeoisie; and also a fair number of lumpen. They were paid as soldiers, at wages that were high for the time. They were recruited in Miami and sent to Guatemala, where

they formed a brigade. The command of all the battalions in the invading brigade, and all the company commanders, were former officers of the old army. When we took them prisoner, I knew all the commanding officers by name. A good number of them had been my students before the revolution, when I was an instructor and assistant director of the school for cadets.

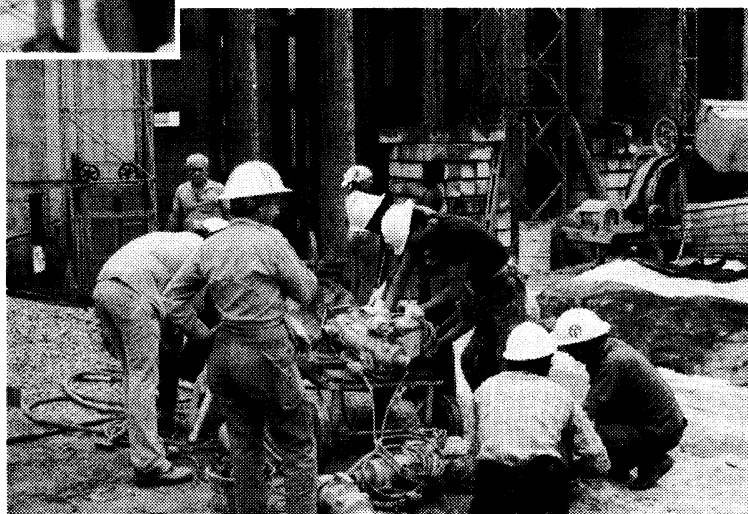
During the time there were bandits in the Escambray, planes flew over Cuba daily. There's a book called *Operation Puma*, in which a former air force captain of the old army explains how many flights he made on behalf of the CIA, dropping food, weapons, medicine, and communications equipment for the bandits in the Escambray. Those bands had no popular support, although it would be fair to say that some landowners from the area did back them. In many cases the support they received was obtained through coercion and terror.

The Rebel Army and the militia never killed a prisoner, tortured a prisoner, or abandoned a single wounded enemy soldier — not during the struggle in the Sierra, not in the struggle against the bandits, not at Girón. That is a matter of principle, of ethics, in our armed forces, one Fidel has strictly demanded from the beginning of the revolutionary struggle. And this was important during the struggle against Batista. There were soldiers who were taken prisoner two or three times. They would be taken prisoner, disarmed, turned over to the Red Cross, and a few months later they would be taken prisoner again. This demoralized Batista's army, because contrary to Batista's propaganda, which said the Rebel Army killed prisoners, whenever soldiers were in danger they preferred to put up their hands and turn over their weapons. And that earned



In Che Guevara, Cubans pay "sincere homage to a person who gave his life for the ideals we are defending." Above, tens of thousands gather in Santa Clara, Cuba, on October 17, 1997, to solemnly welcome to Cuba the remains of Guevara and a number of his comrades killed in Bolivia in 1967.

The rectification process of the late 1980s helped make it possible for Cuba to confront the challenges of the Special Period. The Special Period was "linked to rectification in the effort to find solutions that the country needs to emerge victorious." Right, members of a volunteer minibrigade build new apartment building in Havana, January 1988.



Militant/Terry Coggan

the Rebel Army great authority.²³

In December 1960 and January 1961 there was a great mobilization in Havana. Some 40,000 men mobilized into 40 battalions of almost a thousand each. A cordon, a physical barrier, was formed around the entire Escambray. Some militia members participated in that cordon for a month and a half, two months — militiamen with their weapons ready, protected from inclement weather only by nylon tarps, stayed firm, to prevent anyone from entering or leaving. The bands were practically eliminated. Thus, when the attack at Girón came, the invaders got no support either there or in the cities. Because in the cities, the Ministry of the Interior, the police, and the militias and the people were providing information: "So-and-so is not a revolutionary and is conspiring; he is meeting with others and they are conspiring against the revolution. Hold so-and-so in preventive detention." Whenever there were signs of counterrevolutionary activity, the persons would be detained, taken to the indoor sports complex, and watched,

mitted, and they were brought before the tribunals.

In the Escambray today there is no trace of any trauma. No peasant can say his child was killed by the revolutionary forces, or that he was tortured for protecting a band of insurgents. Some of those insurgents knew people or had family in the Escambray.

Many resources were used to eliminate these bands armed by the CIA. There was a famous group that wanted to head off to the United States. A film about them was made here. A small boat was outfitted, flying the U.S. flag, with people aboard who spoke English. It approached the northern coast and flashed false messages to this group, and the leader boarded with his band. But it was actually a Cuban boat, stocked with U.S. cigars, soft drinks, whisky. Members of the band were told to go below to get their shots, since they had to be vaccinated to enter U.S. territory. When they went down the stairs, there were two members of the Rebel Army below who seized their weapons and took them prisoner. There are numerous anecdotes like this.

Bought and paid for by Washington

These gangs of bandits were always fed, paid, supplied, and inspired by the United States, by its agencies of espionage and subversion.

They focused on the Escambray, but there were counterrevolutionary gangs throughout the country — we estimate there were more than five thousand bandits, in small bands in various places. It was the Cuban people who wiped them out; the militias were the ones who mainly fought against these bands.

After the bandits had been defeated in the Escambray,

we carried out a combination of political work and efforts to satisfy, to the best of our ability, the peasants' material needs. Today more than 95 percent of the housing units in Cuba have electricity — even though they may be isolated houses. The poverty-stricken thatch-roof, dirt-floor huts from before the revolution have disappeared. There are roads and telephones in many places. Peasants have schools, doctors, food supplies, and agricultural assistance.

There are 150,000 small farmers who have title to their land in Cuba. Their land rights have been and continue to be respected. We have taken many measures in the countryside. In 1994 and 1995 three million hectares [almost 7.5 million acres] of land — nearly half the land in cultivation in Cuba — were turned over to the Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPCs) that grow sugarcane, raise cattle, and cultivate fruit, along with growing many other crops.

We did not fight the counterrevolutionary bandits using criminal methods. Assistance was given to their families. If someone who died — including those who had betrayed the Rebel Army — had children in an isolated rural area, those children were offered scholarships. In other words, our revolution has had a deeply humane spirit, which in turn has increased its prestige.

We are sometimes accused of violating human rights. As our foreign minister [Roberto Robaina] has pointed out, this is part of a selective campaign carried out by our adversaries to create hostility against Cuba and undermine our prestige. As far as I am concerned, the first human right is the right to live, to receive an education, to live with dignity, to have the possibility of always receiving health care, to a job, to hold a place in society based on one's capacities, technical training, talent, and desires. And to have a right to a country that exists with dignity, as a sovereign nation.

Not a single prisoner has been tortured here in Cuba; not a single person has disappeared —

not one, in thirty-eight years. Who among those who accuse us of human rights violations, or who act as accomplices by voting to condemn us, could raise their hand and say the same thing? We do not permit anyone to be mistreated for reasons of sex, religion, or the color of one's skin. I'd like to know how the human rights of Hispanic immigrants or Blacks are observed in the United States. Look at California, Florida, New York. Could they say what I have just said? They can exert pressure and muster votes to condemn us, but they are following a selective policy toward us, and we do not feel guilty.

Few places guarantee human rights as Cuba does — not just in word but in deed. Very few — if anyone — among those who condemn us on the basis of human rights has any moral standing whatsoever to do so. That's a point I wanted to be sure to make, since we have spoken of struggle, of ethics, and of morality.

We are poor, but we have dignity. We are not ashamed of our poverty. We would be ashamed to be rich as a result of theft, of exploitation, of corruption. We would be ashamed to become rich that way.

The Special Period and rectification

Barnes: We'd like to ask you one question about the Special Period. We've followed developments in Cuba in recent years closely and written about them. One thing we've noticed is that workers and youth in the United States who look to the revolution often seem to draw a sharp divide between the Special Period of the 1990s and the rectification process that began in the latter half of the 1980s.²⁴ We've tried to explain that this is not accurate — that the political rearming of the revolution that was at

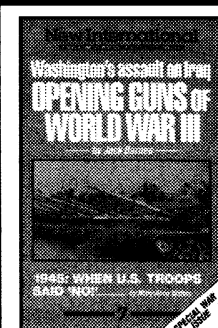


"I'd like to know how the human rights of Hispanic immigrants or Blacks are observed in the United States." Above, March 1997 protest in Queens, New York, against killing of Dominican worker by cops.

²⁴ The **Special Period** is the term used in Cuba for the extremely difficult economic conditions the Cuban people have faced since the early 1990s, and the policies the leadership has implemented to defend the revolution. With the disintegration of the regimes of the Soviet bloc that previously accounted for 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade, much of it on terms favorable to Cuba, the island was brutally thrust deeper into the world capitalist market. The sudden break in trading patterns — which took place as the world capitalist crisis intensified, and has been exacerbated by the ongoing economic warfare organized by Washington — led to the most severe economic crisis in Cuba since 1959. By 1996, however, through the efforts of Cuban working people, the decline in industrial and agricultural production bottomed out. Shortages of food and other essentials, though still severe, have begun to be eased.

The **rectification process** in Cuba between 1986 and the beginning of the 1990s marked a turn away from increasing reliance on the system of economic management and planning used in one variant or another throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Policies copied from those countries had become more and more dominant in Cuba throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. At its height, rectification took on the character of a growing social movement led by Cuba's most conscious and disciplined working people. As the economic and political crisis accelerated from 1990 on, many of the special measures associated with the rectification process, such as the spread of volunteer work brigades to build badly needed housing, had to be shelved.

New International



Opening Guns of World War III Washington's Assault on Iraq

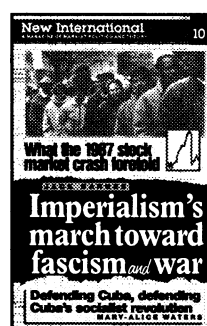
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Granma

Cuban construction workers in Angola, December 1988, part of effort to defeat imperialist-backed forces and South African troops seeking to overthrow the Angolan government. "History will one day recognize that in winning the liberation of Namibia and putting an end to apartheid an important role was played by the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces."

the heart of rectification, the place of Che and the reconquering of a truly communist course, are all deeply connected with the capacity of the Cuban people and youth to understand and meet the challenges of the Special Period.

We shouldn't look at the efforts to overcome the crisis of the Special Period as just an economic matter, we've explained. Che never looked at anything that way. He always pointed to the connections between economics and politics that were central to advancing the transition toward socialism.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces has a key role in the struggle to confront the Special Period. The army not only guarantees every Cuban a rifle, a grenade, and a land mine to defend the revolution, but has also set an example in

"The armed forces set an example. It has shown that *si se puede* — 'it can be done.'"

production and discipline. As you remarked in answering a previous question, the army is very close to the people.

No one who has been here in Cuba for the last three weeks during the party congress and the solemn ceremony in Santa Clara you described earlier — as Martín and Mary-Alice have been for most of that period, and as I've been for the past week — could fail to recognize the popular affirmation of the communist course of Fidel and Che registered in these events. No one could confuse Cuba with what was presented as socialism for so long in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. No one could fail to see the deep connection between moving forward in the Special Period and preparing new generations in Cuba for their revolutionary internationalist role in the world that is coming.

So, we would like to hear any of your views that would help us better understand the challenges of the Special Period, the place of the army in it, and its connection to the political course that Che and Fidel fought for and exemplify.

Fernández: If you look at the newspapers in Cuba dated April 20, 1986, you'll find Fidel's speech from the day before, entitled "The Rectification of Errors and Negative Tendencies."²⁵ It was given at the main rally on the anniversary of Playa Girón, April 19, 1986.

No one at that time was thinking about the fall of socialism — the collapse not of the ideas of socialism, but of the methods used in the work, in the goals of the parties claiming to be constructing socialism. For me, socialism remains the same today as it was in the 1980s — a just idea, one that seeks to create a society that will eliminate inequalities and make human beings the central element, the reason for its existence.

²⁵ For other speeches from this period by Castro, see "Cuba's Rectification Process: Two Speeches by Fidel Castro," in *New International* no. 6 and *In Defense of Socialism* (Pathfinder, 1989).

But we had copied certain things, believing that those who had seventy years of experience were doing them well.

For a number of years, however, we had begun to see things that did not really lead to the objectives we were pursuing. Fidel had understood that the policies being followed here in Cuba not only on the economic level but in many other areas were deeply flawed. We had copied and imitated, and were carrying out many things we should not have been doing.

Our party has always been very much linked to the masses. In Cuba, for someone to be taken into the Communist Party, that person has to be approved by the collective decision of both members and nonmembers at their workplace. It is a highly selective process, based on the qualities, merits, and prestige of the in-

dividual.

I am speaking of 1986. The collapse of the socialist camp did not begin to become visible until 1988 or 1989. It is natural to think that everything took place within the framework of a single conception of perfecting things. But clearly the Special Period gave rise to very concrete conditions that implied there had to be modifications in some of the actions we had taken within the rectification process.

We lost 85 percent of our trade overnight. We used to get 14 million tons of fuel, a figure that was reduced to zero. We used to get spare parts, transportation equipment, machinery for our factories, cereals, and other food products. We used to export sugar, nickel, and other products at mutually advantageous prices — at what I would call just prices. If the price of machinery or chemical products went up, so too would the price of the products or raw materials we were exporting over there. A just exchange between rich and poor.

This is a world in which the rich countries, the rich societies, tend to become richer, despite the fact that there are also poor people there. And the poor societies are becoming poorer and poorer. This is what is happening in Africa, and to a large degree in Latin America.

So we took measures. I remember

when the minister of the armed forces [Raúl Castro] invited the central leaders of the government to a meeting of criticism and self-criticism, pointing concretely to what we needed to rectify and modify.

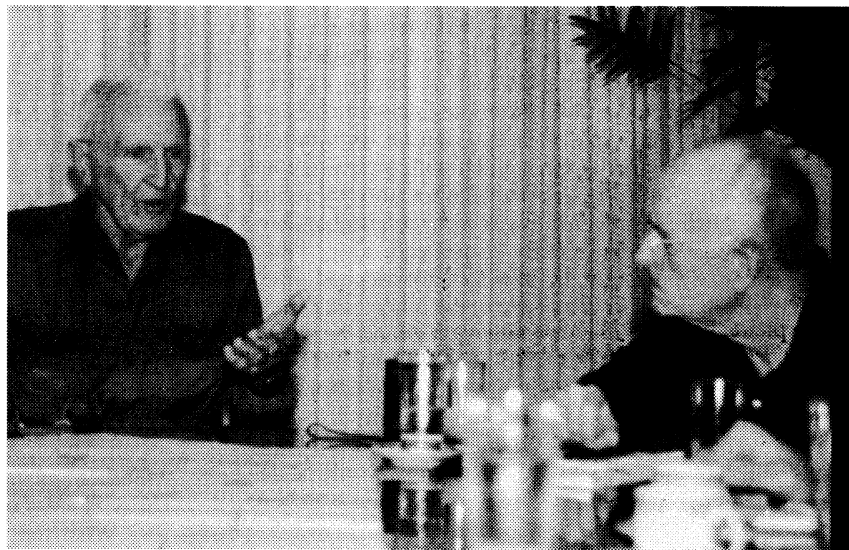
The FAR was the first to make these rectifications. With Raúl's leadership capacity, his capacity as a statesman, and his energy and firmness in putting forward ideas, he carried out genuine transformations in the FAR. The FAR today is largely self-sufficient, with the exception of sugar and salt, producing 80 to 90 percent of everything it consumes. It cultivates land and raises livestock. And the FAR pays for what it buys — it doesn't simply have land that it tills with fertilizer, fuel, and fodder it is given. It implements rigorous methods and economic controls.

The FAR has shown in practice the levels of efficiency that can be attained. The Youth Army of Labor, made up of young people called up for service, has shown that it is a highly productive and efficient force.

In other words, the army, the armed forces, sets an example. When I use the word "army," it is because the Rebel Army was the soul, the seed, the nucleus around which all the various armed institutions were created in Cuba. It has shown that *si se puede* — "it can be done" — as Raúl says. There are some people, when faced with difficulties — those without initiative — who say, "No, it can't be done." Raúl has shown that, "yes, it can be done." And he began preaching this by example.

That's the way things are with the armed forces. The armed forces continue to provide training, maintaining their capacity for combat — I would say they have increased it. At the same time, they are producing, feeding themselves, and in some cases providing something additional for the state.

I, of course, don't see the Special Period as a consequence of rectification. But I do see it as linked to rectification, in the effort to find the methods, to find the correct course to follow, to find solutions that the country needs to emerge victorious.



Militant/Martin Koppel

José Ramón Fernández (left) and Jack Barnes during interview.

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CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

From New York to Indonesia, from Los Angeles to Australia Workers Are Fighting Back. Speakers: Ollie Bivins, member of United Auto Workers at Boeing in Long Beach, just back from a visit to the UAW picket lines in Flint, Michigan; José Morales; airport worker, leader of the organizing committee of the Service Employees International Union Local 1877; Susan Carroll and Marty Jackson, members, International Association of Machinists at Northwest Airlines; Mark Friedman, Socialist Workers Party and member of International Association of Machinists at Northwest Airlines. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Dinner: \$5. (213) 380-9460.

FLORIDA

Miami

Union Fightbacks Deepen. Auto Workers at GM and Puerto Rican Phone Workers Lead the Way. Speaker: Kay Sedam, Socialist Workers candidate for Miami-Dade County Commission, District 2, and member United Transportation Union Local 1138; Ernie Mailhot, eyewitness report back from Puerto Rican phone workers strike; SWP candidate for governor of Florida, member of International Association of Machinists Local 1126. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m. 137 NE 54th St. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish and French. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

GEORGIA

Atlanta

The Fight for Black Rights Today. Speaker: Maurice Williams, *Militant* staff writer. Fri., July 17, 7 p.m. 230 Auburn Ave. (Corner of Butler). Donation: \$4. Tel: (404) 577-7976.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

The Fight for Independence in Puerto Rico. Speaker: Verónica Poses, Young Socialists National Committee. Sat., July 18, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. (At Division stop on CTA Blue Line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Public Education Under Attack. Oppose Attempts to Overturn Bilingual Education, Re-segregate Schools, and Privatize Education. Speakers: Marilyn Segal, Citizens For Public Schools, Elena Tate, Young Socialists; and Juan González, Immigrant Rights Project. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m. 780 Massachusetts Ave. (corner Tremont). Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MICHIGAN

Detroit

Support the UAW Flint Strike. Speaker: John Sarge, Socialist Workers candidate for Congress

in the 14th District. Fri. July 17, 7 p.m.

John Coltrane and the Revolution in Jazz in the 1960s. Speaker: Michael Baumann, Pathfinder Press editor. Fri., July 24, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m.

Both events to be held at 7414 Woodward Ave. Donation: \$4. Dinner: \$5. Tel: (313) 875-0100.

MINNESOTA

St. Paul

The Fight for Puerto Rican Independence Heats Up. Speakers: Rafael Ortiz, National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners; Heather Wood, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress, 4th CD, member of Young Socialists, and United Steelworkers of America Local 7263. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m.

The Japanese Recession and the Fall of the Yen — What It Means for Workers. Fri., July 24, 7:30 p.m.

Both events to be held at 2490 University Ave. (near Hwy. 280). Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

NEW YORK

Brooklyn

General Strike in Puerto Rico: An Eyewitness Report Back. Speaker: Rose Ana Berbeo, Socialist Workers candidate for Senate; and Francisco Sánchez, report on the half-million strong general strike in support of striking telephone workers. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m. 59 4th

Avenue (near Bergen St.). Donation: \$4. Tel: (718) 399-7257.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

Upsurge in Indonesia: An Eyewitness Account. Speaker: Naomi Craine, editor of the *Militant* newspaper, recently returned from a reporting trip to Indonesia. Sat., July 18, 7:30 p.m. 1906 South Street (at 19th). Donation: \$4. Tel: (215) 546-8218.

WASHINGTON

Seattle

The Fight to Raise the Minimum Wage. Speaker: Jeff Powers, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress 7th Congressional District, and member of the United Transportation Union Local 845. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m. 1405 E. Madison. Tel: (206) 323-1755.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

Puerto Rico: 100 Years Fighting U.S. Imperialism. Fri., July 17, 7 p.m.

150 Years of The Communist Manifesto. Speaker: Lars Ericson, Communist League. Fri., July 24, 7 p.m.

Both events to be held at 199 High Street. Donation: \$3. Tel: (03) 365-6055.

Auto workers at GM enter 5th week of strike

Continued from front page

UAW” and offering discounts to strikers. And drivers along both Dort Highway and Bristol Road make conversations difficult on the picket lines because of the blare of car and truck horns. The picket lines, nine at Delphi East and two at the Metal Fabrication Center on Bristol road, are well staffed around the clock. Strikers are assigned four hours of picket duty a week but many spend extra hours there.

Strike attracts fighting workers

The strikes continue to draw workers looking to fight back against their bosses from around the country. Two workers from St. Louis spent the Fourth of July holiday on the picket line. Gary Lomax and his wife Cheryl dropped off a letter of support from UAW Local 136 at Chrysler’s St. Louis North Assembly plant. Two days earlier members of UAW Local 36 at Ford’s Wixom Assembly Plant near Detroit delivered \$1,372 collected from workers there in the days before their vacation shut down.

In describing his five hours walking the picket line, Lomax said, “I felt like it was a real honor. This is where it all started, this is where it needs to stop.” Flint was the site of key battles in the fight to forge the auto workers union, including the 1936–37 “sit-down” strike at General Motors.

The current battle began June 5, when 3,400 members of UAW Local 659 walked

out of GM’s Flint Metal Fabrication Center over health and safety issues, outsourcing, subcontracting, and working conditions. The members of UAW Local 651 walked out at Delphi East June 11 over similar issues. By the beginning of the annual two-week vacation shutdown June 29, the auto maker has shuttered 26 of its 29 North American assembly plants and sections of over 100 parts plants. This is the 10th strike at GM facilities over the last two years against the company’s productivity drive.

GM tries to resume production

Reports began hitting the press July 2 that GM is looking for independent auto parts makers to supply the reopening of up to 10 assembly plants by early August. *USA Today* reports that the GM wants to resume production of trucks, sport utility vehicles, and cars, which have been disrupted by the strikes. This may be difficult because many parts suppliers are running near capacity due to the sales boom for auto makers in North America.

In another move designed to pit workers idled by the strike and strikers against each other, GM vice president Donald Hackworth, in what has become a weekly recorded update to salaried employees, revived its threat to cut off the remaining health-care benefits for laid-off workers in the United States.

GM also has filed challenges to unemployment benefits for the nearly 120,000 UAW members laid off during the strike. GM filed

similar petitions in 1996 during the 17-day strike at its parts plant in Dayton, Ohio, and every state but Texas rejected GM’s challenge. The UAW has therefore already decided to pay strike benefits to the 1,400 members of the union in Texas.

International competition in a world market that suffers from a crisis of over production contributes to GM’s demands for productivity increases.” The value of the yen accelerates the downsizing that GM needs to do,” by making Japanese imports cheaper the July 7 *Wall Street Journal* quoted Davis Littman, chief economist at Comerica Inc., a major bank in Detroit. He told the newspaper that GM had pledged to reduce its work force to 200,000 by now and hasn’t. “The market is very unforgiving for not meeting targets,” he said.

Peregrine Acquisitions announced July 7 that it plans to close two of the five plants it bought from GM in 1996. The two plants, located here and in Livonia, Michigan, employ more than 1,500 UAW members. It also announced that it plans to sell a factory, purchased in the same deal in Windsor, Ontario, that employs 1,100 members of the Canadian Auto Workers.

The decision by union officials to allow more than 200 workers at the Delphi East Complex to return to work to make non-GM parts is a hotly debated issue on the picket lines along Dort Road where those workers enter the plant. While some work-

ers argue that the fight is only against GM and it is correct for the union to protect other customers, many others think that the union allowing anyone to cross the picket line weakens the strike. A worker with 20 years in the complex, who asked not to be identified, explained, “The company called me to come to work. But I won’t cross a picket line. We’re stronger if we all stand together.” She went on, “You know that GM will do anything they can to get what they want. They have lied to us repeatedly. Why should we believe them when they say they are only making parts for other companies? They’re still getting paid for them.”

John Sarge is a member of the UAW Local 900 in Wayne, Michigan, and the Socialist Workers candidate for Congress in the 14th District.

—CALENDAR—

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Casa de Las Américas invites you to commemorate July 26. Celebrate the revolutionary Cuban holiday marking the 45th anniversary of the attack led by Fidel Castro against the Moncada garrison. Sat., July 25, 8 p.m. Dinner and dance. Casa de las Américas. 104 West 14th St., 3rd Floor. Donation: \$15.00. For more information, call (212) 675-2584.

TEXAS

Houston

Socialists Educational Weekend. Fri., July 17 & Sat., July 18.
Working-Class resistance and lessons from WWII and the Korean War. Speaker: Tom Leonard, longtime trade union activist and leader of the Socialist Workers Party. **The Origins of Racism.** Speaker: Patti Iiyama, SWP candidate for congress, 25th Congressional District; member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) Local 4-227, active in defense of local members locked out at Crown Central Petroleum. **What is imperialism?** Speaker: Jerry Freiwirth, Socialist Workers Party, member OCAW Local 4-367. Pathfinder Bookstores, 6969 Gulf Freeway, Suite 380. For more information, call (713) 847-0704

WASHINGTON, D.C.

July 26th Celebration. Speakers from the Cuban Interests Section; D.C. Hands Off Cuba Coalition; singer Luci Murphy. Sun., July 26, 3:50 p.m. Brookland Cup of Dreams Coffee House. 3629 12th St. N.E. For more information, call (202) 452-5966.

BRITAIN

Manchester

Pathfinder Bookshop Celebrates the Publication of Black Music, White Business and Jazz Revolution of the 1960s. Speakers: Audrey Hall, Freelance Producer/Presenter-Radio and TV; Cheryl Martin, Poet, Playwright, and Jazz Vocalist; Kevin Davy, Jazz Musician; and Cliff Williams, Pathfinder Bookshop. Sat., July 18, 7 p.m. Pathfinder bookshop, First floor, 60 Shudehill. For more information, call 0161-839-1766.

Anheuser-Busch workers vote on contract, again

Continued from front page

of the U.S. beer market.

Teamster officials brought an outside mediator into the contract talks after the April rejection of the Anheuser-Busch proposal the company has called its “final” offer. These talks lasted two days. The IBT officials agreed to put the pact to a second vote even though no substantial improvements had been made. The 50-member IBT negotiating team decided to urge rejection of the pact. Rank-and-file voting is by mail, and complete results are expected between the end of July and mid-August.

Nearly 2,000 workers are represented by four IBT locals in the brewing, bottling, and shipping operations in St. Louis. Maintenance workers are represented by three additional unions. Their contracts have also expired, but negotiations are waiting on the outcome of the Teamster talks.

Workers here view the demand for forced overtime, the gutting of seniority rights in job selection, and the contracting out of union work as among the most important issues in dispute. Anheuser-Busch already imposes forced overtime at other breweries.

Bill Metzler, a bottler with two years in the plant, explained the fight to preserve seniority rights. “They say they want ‘the right person for the right job’ but they really want to choose based on favoritism and be able to take punitive action against workers they don’t like.”

The company proposal identifies for the first time several job classifications as “non-core,” or not central to the production of beer, including carton making, dumping waste beer, and washing trucks. These jobs would be contracted out without union protection, and workers believe the company will move to expand the definition of “non-core” work.

Deep differences already exist in the pay gotten by workers at the brewery. Teamster member John Schaefer said, “I worked on a crew one weekend where I was getting regular pay at time and a half, a weekend worker got full pay but no overtime and no benefits, and a seasonal worker was getting about 60 percent of regular pay, and no benefits.”

The company is seeking to expand the use of “seasonal” workers, who are limited to 1,000 hours of work in the summer months.

New hires in line for permanent jobs are currently brought on as “apprentices” — in reality a two-tier wage system where they start at 70 percent of regular pay. After two years they reach full pay. These workers face a six-week probationary period now which would increase to six months under the Anheuser-Busch proposal. The bosses have also demanded a cut in the number of breaks workers get during their shift from four to two.

The company seeks a five-year agreement, up from four years in the last pact, and three-year terms before that. Anheuser-Busch has threatened to close breweries in Merrimack, New Hampshire, and Fairfield, California, if

their “final” offer is not accepted. Teamster Charlie Conway said, “This is probably just a threat, but if we accept the forced overtime, they’ll do it for sure.”

Many workers here are angry at the dragged out contract talks. An apprentice who works in the warehouse and asked that his name not be used said, “We said we wanted to strike with that vote of 78 percent,” against the contract in April. “I get tired of people asking if we’re going on strike.” Teamster locals at Anheuser-Busch breweries in Baldwinsville, New York, and Williamsburg, Virginia, appealed to IBT officials to not vote a second time on the pact. This was overruled.

After the night shift July 2, some 40 Anheuser-Busch workers gathered at the Filling Station tavern a few blocks from the plant to conduct their own, impromptu boycott of the company’s beer, joined by Postal workers, Boilermakers, and Teamsters from other nearby workplaces.

Tuesday is T-shirt day in the plant: workers sport union shirts that read “We’re fighting for a better future.”

The last strike by Teamsters at Anheuser-Busch lasted 92 days in 1976.

Ray Parsons is a member of the United Steelworkers of America Local 310 in Des Moines; Alyson Kennedy is a member of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union in Chicago.

Puerto Rico strike helps all labor

The two-day general strike in Puerto Rico was a tremendous success that dealt a blow to the colonial government's attempts to run roughshod over the deepening working-class opposition to the sale of their national patrimony. This labor action strengthened solidarity among working people and converged with the struggle for national sovereignty, as thousands of unionists, students, and others declared, "Puerto Rico is not for sale!"

The strike — the first of this magnitude since the 1930s — is part of a broader development in world politics today. The GM strike and other labor battles highlight the growing determination by working people around the world to fight the bosses' assaults on their unions and the capitalist governments' demands for austerity.

The half-million workers who joined the strike to oppose the pro-statehood administration selling the state-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Company expressed indignation at the U.S. bosses' and other capitalist investors' attempts to steal their country's most profitable assets. The strike also reflected the obstacle the Puerto Rican government faces in trying to impose the will of its imperial masters in Washington.

Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony, a fact that U.S. capitalist politicians and the big-business media try to evade. It is a country ruled by the U.S. government, which tramples on the rights of Puerto Rican citizens and uses the island as a launching pad for military aggression abroad. The Puerto Rican colonial government has no rights to make

its own laws, decide its own foreign relations, or control its own economic affairs.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the struggle against Yankee domination, when Washington seized this Caribbean island after uprisings from peasants and slaves severely weakened the Spanish colonial forces.

On July 25 Puerto Rican fighters are planning an event in Guánica, Puerto Rico, marking the site where the invading U.S. forces landed 100 years ago. Independence fighters note that this is the first time in years activists have organized a single pro-independence action on this historic date.

In the United States, supporters of the fight for Puerto Rican independence should go all out to build the July 25 actions taking place in New York, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. to call for independence and demand Washington release 15 *independentistas* held in U.S. jails whose only crime was opposition to being under the boot of U.S. colonial domination. It is especially important to build these actions among workers involved in strikes and other labor battles. The fight against the sale of the phone company underscores the fact that the fight for self-determination in Puerto Rican is intertwined with the struggle of the working class against the same enemy class that workers confront in the United States.

We should demand:

Free the Puerto Rican political prisoners!

Independence for Puerto Rico!

Puerto Rico: 'free political prisoners'

Continued from Page 3

onstrators marched a few blocks over to the main picket lines at the Puerto Rico Telephone Co., where the protest swelled from 400 to nearly 1,000.

Angel Ramos, 32, a striker and member of the Independent Union of Telephone Workers (UIET), said, "I'm glad to see people here from groups demanding the release of the political prisoners." His assignment is to help guard one of the entrances to the phone company to prevent supervisory personnel from coming in. He said strikers had received "incredible support" from all kinds of individuals and organizations who join them on the picket lines.

One such individual was his friend Jeffrey Rodríguez, 21, a student at the Technical College who met Angel on the picket lines. "I come here every night. That's usually when the phone company tries to slip supervisory personnel in."

Later that day, in the southern city of Ponce, unions organized a fund-raising radiothon to support the telephone strikers. In the southwestern town of Sabana Grande, the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) Youth took part in an action naming a street after the pro-independence leader and hero Pedro Albizu Campos. The PIP Youth publicized a pro-independence conference it is sponsoring in July

Meanwhile, the July 4 PNP rally drew 2,000 people. The pro-government *San Juan Star* remarked that "the crowd was noticeably smaller than last year's turnout of 7,000 people, police said."

Addressing a crowd waving U.S. flags, Gov. Rosselló argued for Puerto Rico becoming the 51st U.S. state. He described the island as "a colony of the [U.S.] nation that has not had a real opportunity to exercise its self-determination and has not achieved the full extent of self-rule." The solution to this colonial status, he said, is statehood, "a status we have earned after 100 years of shared history," referring to the century since the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898.

The PIP, National Hostosiano Congress, Federation of Pro-Independence Youth (FUPI), and other pro-independence organizations are building a united event on July 25 to mark 100 years of resistance to U.S. colonial rule. The action will take place in the southern city of Guánica, the site where the invading U.S. forces landed. This is the first time in years there will be a single pro-independence action; in the past, groups had held separate events.

FUPI is sponsoring a pro-independence youth walk crossing Puerto Rico from July 14 to 24. The youth will start in Vieques, where fishermen will take them to the main island. They will stop in different towns along the way, and end up in Guánica on the eve of July 25.

U.S. gov't tightens travel to Cuba

Continued from Page 16

has denied licenses to a number of people requesting permission to travel to Cuba, or has held up issuing them until after the planned departure date. One recent incident involved more than 60 would-be participants in the 10th Conference of North American and Cuban Philosophers and Social Scientists, June 12–26 in Havana, Cuba.

"This is the 10th conference and in previous years we never had trouble going," said Cliff DuRand, who is the North American coordinator of the annual event. Participants have applied for licenses since it became a requirement five years ago. This time, as in previous years, professors, students, and others applied for an academic license, which requires the applicant to prove the trip is within their field of research and will involve sharing information with a Cuban colleague.

"They played a bureaucratic trick to deny people the right to travel," DuRand said. The U.S. treasury department rejected the request on the basis that the applications did not comply with the guidelines for an entirely different type of license, issued in cases where an international organization, based neither in Cuba nor the United States, calls a meeting in Cuba.

Professors and others outraged by the denial put pressure on the government through telephone calls and a letter-writing campaign. The Treasury Department reversed 58 of the 61 denials, but the licenses arrived the day the conference was scheduled to begin. Many of the participants had bought nonrefundable airline tickets. While some were not able to attend due to the postponement, most went on the trip. "We had to scurry around to make new arrangements," recanted DuRand. "But after having to do battle to get the licenses it made people more determined to go. The government's moves backfired with us."

In another example, at the end of March 175 professors

across the country — members and supporters of the Southwest Council on Latin American Studies (SCOLAS) — were denied licenses just 10 days before departure to a conference in Cuba that they received government approval for the previous fall. U.S. officials claimed that SCOLAS members in the United States participated in the decision to hold the meeting in Cuba — a supposedly prohibited act when applying for the international conference licenses, according to U.S. officials. Conference organizers estimated that at least 150 of the rejected applicants could have applied for an academic license if they had been informed of the rejection earlier.

Thirty Columbia School of Public Health physicians applied for licenses seven weeks prior to their planned departure to Cuba scheduled for June 10, but received no reply. Protest calls were put in and the day before the trip the government issued licenses. The physicians went ahead with the trip.

CORRECTION

The photo caption on page 15 of *Militant* no. 27 dated July 13 incorrectly stated that members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) currently on strike against Rockwell Collins in Newport Beach, California, returned to work June 12. The IBEW members at Rockwell Collins' Coralville, Iowa, facility returned to work June 12 after a 12-day strike.

In the same issue, several actions in New York to build the July 25 pro-independence action at the United Nations should have read July instead of June.

Hundreds rally to protest attack on farmworkers

Continued from front page

Hernández continued. "They told us to get out of the fields, to stop working. The supervisor halted the group and took them to the side of the road. Then another group of contras, this time around 30 came and the supervisor couldn't hold them off. They grabbed picked boxes and threw them away."

"Workers tried to use some of the last boxes they had but the group aggressively came back, took the full boxes and threw them on the ground. They said, 'We can pay you for the boxes.' But the union supporters told them only the boss can pay us. Then they went into the fields where we were picking," Hernández said. "They grabbed boxes from the workers. A couple of co-workers got close and they attacked them. The puncher was punching the last box and they threw it at his head. They got one union supporter and had him on the ground. The cops finally stopped it but they gave one supporter a real beating."

Union supporters Sandra Rocha, Efrén Vargas, and Ramon Gallegos were hospitalized from the attack, Rosalinda Guillen, director of the UFW's strawberry organizing, told the press. The cops made one arrest.

Coastal Berry is California's largest strawberry grower, employing some 1,500 workers at peak season. The UFW is trying to organize California's 20,000 strawberry pickers, centering in the Watsonville and Salinas area.

UFW organizer Guillen said antiunion supervisors are trying to prevent a bargaining election where workers would decide if they want to be represented by the UFW. "We were very close to a vote until this happened. They are trying to intimidate new employees," Guillen said.

Union supporter Hernández told the *Militant*, "Last year when the union organizers would come into the fields they would yell and try not to let them in. The contras try to force the other workers to be with them. A lot support the union but they [the thugs] try to scare them."

UFW president Arturo Rodríguez issued a statement demanding that Coastal Berry owner David Gladstone act "quickly and decisively against those who planned and participated in today's attack and disruptions — plus anyone else who resorts to violence or violates state law by harassing or threatening workers who seek to organize."

The union has held three rallies in response to the attack. The July 2 rally was attended by some 300 union backers, the big majority farm workers or their families. The rally, held at the front gate of Coastal Berry's cooler facility where the picked fruit is stored for shipping, followed a march by 80 Coastal Berry workers from the UFW offices a half mile away.

The rally attracted a layer of trade unionists and activists from area campuses who had seen television footage of the attack the previous day. A larger rally was held on July 7 with several UFW backers explaining that they won't be intimidated by the thug attacks. Members of the Teamsters Union, Service Employees International Union, and other unions participated in the event.

As the *Militant* goes to press, Coast Berry has removed known UFW supporters from the Silliman Ranch and has them working by themselves in another field.

Norton Sandler is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

SWP, Greens win round in Florida ballot rights case

BY JANET POST

MIAMI — On July 7 the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit unanimously reversed a 1997 ruling by U.S. district judge K. Michael Moore granting summary judgment for the Florida secretary of state Sandra Mortham in a case brought by the Florida Socialist Workers Election Campaign and the Florida Green Party, which effects all small parties.

The parties are challenging the constitutionality of a Florida elections statute that requires no less than a \$10,000 state bond and no less than a \$5,000 county bond in each of Florida's 67 counties to be recognized as a minor political party. "The State's bond requirement discriminates against working-class candidates and all minor parties without funds to purchase bonds, thereby undemocratically restricting access to the ballot," explained Ernest Mailhot, Socialist Workers candidate for governor of Florida.

The case will now go back to the District Court for a ruling on the merits. Attorney for the parties Randall C. Berg Jr., of the Florida Justice Institute in Miami, said, "Yesterday's decision vindicates the right of all minor political parties to challenge threats made by the State that restrict a party's ability to present differing points of view to the voters, the cornerstone of a free and democratic society."

Paperworkers in Canada vote to continue strike

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

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers

nounced that two of its five struck plants in Quebec, the Wayagamack plant in Trois-Rivières and the plant in Chandler, might be shut down permanently if the strike continues. The union locals then held two meetings and the strike continues. Lucien Poitras, with 30 years in the

fusing voluntary overtime. These actions have resulted in a drop in profits for Northwest. In June, financial analysts estimate NWA lost as much as \$60 million.

In Minneapolis-St. Paul — the site of Northwest's corporate headquarters — winning back the jobs of nine workers fired in the course of this labor dispute remains a priority for the Machinists. IAM member Jeff Jones, a cleaner at Northwest there, reports, "Many workers here are wearing buttons that say 'Vote No' in view of the company's stance against reinstating the fired workers and out of conviction that we deserve more and could get more than the company is offering."

Meanwhile, the Airline Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) campaigning in Atlanta, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and elsewhere to represent mechanics and cleaners at Northwest has sought to link dissatisfaction with the contract proposal to dissatisfaction with the IAM. AMFA is an outfit that seeks to organize aircraft mechanics away from the IAM's multi-job airline group to its own narrower-based and craft-oriented job trust setup.

Negotiations between Northwest and the Airline Pilots Professional Association (ALPA) and the Teamsters Union organized -Flight Attendants drag on with no progress announced.

UK rail workers hold second work stoppage

LONDON — "All of our workmates are out here," said John O'Connor, a track maintainer on picket duty near Wimbledon rail station in London. He picketed every morning of the June 29 - July 3 strike by 9,000 track and signal workers organized by the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT).

Also picketing was Richard Garde, a track maintainer and assistant secretary of the Wimbledon RMT branch. He said, "The media has tried to twist the issues in this strike as though we're out for a pay rise, but really it's about conditions and terms of work." Their employers, who bought into the formerly state-run rail network in February 1996, have put forward a "restructuring" package. On the surface it looks like a pay rise, but in return there are cuts in overtime payments and benefits. "It's a pay cut really," O'Connor said.

The first phase of the strike, June 19-22, mainly hit special engineering projects to renew and repair track and signalling equipment. This time major disruption was averted by bosses along with temporary contractors and some strike breakers covering repairs.

Machinists at Northwest discuss contract offer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Some 27,000 members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) who work at Northwest Airlines will vote on a proposed contract settlement July 29.

A tentative agreement between Northwest and the IAM was announced June 16 after 20 months of government-mediated negotiations.

Press reports have touted the contract as an "industry leader" with "milestone" gains for workers, pointing to a few proposals: a 14 percent pay raise over five years; five "highlights" are a 14 percent pay raise over four years; a 50 percent increase in pension benefits; a signing bonus; a "no-layoff" clause if Northwest merges with other airlines; and a doubling of pay premiums for licensed mechanics to \$1.50 per hour for each of two job-related license held.

Many Machinists, however, point to the shortcomings of this contract proposal, which if accepted would expire in 2002. After giving back \$897 million in concessions in the previous contract, this offer would mean that raises in base pay between 1991 and 2002 would average just 1.5 percent a year. The "no layoff" clause applies only to full-time workers on the payroll before Oct. 1, 1996. Some 1,500 full-time workers and numerous part-time workers would not be covered.

Among concessions sought by Northwest is the right to work part-time employees up to 31 hours per week, just one shift shy of full-time status, without medical insurance or any other benefits except for premium pay for five holidays a year.

There are ongoing discussions among mechanics, ground operations workers, and ticket agents about whether more could be won with continued resistance. Since the contract expired in October 1996 machinists have organized many forms of protest including periodic "work to rule" campaigns and re-

ON THE PICKET LINE

around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

SHAWINIGAN, Quebec — The conflict is heating up between 4,600 members of the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers union (CEP) in eastern Canada and Abitibi Consolidated, the world's biggest newsprint producer. Workers at four plants in Ontario, five in Quebec, and two in Newfoundland went on strike June 15 against an attempt by the company to impose negotiations plant by plant as opposed to company-wide.

"If we end up negotiating plant by plant, we're finished," said Réjean Bourbeau, from the Laurentide plant in Grand-Mère, Quebec. "We have to stick together, that's the way we'll win," said Guy Arsenault, from the Iroquois Falls plant in Ontario. This sentiment is broadly reflected among pickets.

On June 22 workers in Ontario reaffirmed their fight by voting 96.4 percent in favor of the strike. The second vote had been imposed by the Ontario Labour Relations Board at the request of the company. The support for the strike expressed in this vote lessens the impact of the second section of the Labour Board ruling, which forces the union to negotiate plant by plant in Ontario. The union has appealed this ruling. However, "because of provincial legislation, the unions are willing to abide by the law and to take as long as it takes to get a fair settlement," said Denis Bertrand, president of the CEP Local 109 in Iroquois Falls.

At the Iroquois Falls union meeting June 21, workers learned about an attempt by the company to get contractors to finish off a new landfill site. The next morning roughly 100 workers mobilized to stop the contractors at two plant gates. The contractors respected the picket lines, as do members of three other unions who work at the Iroquois Falls plant.

On June 26 the company an-

Black farmers win round against U.S. agricultural dept.

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

ATLANTA — Black farmers have won a round in their \$2.5 billion class action suit charging the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) with racial discrimination. The lawsuit — *Pigford et al. vs. Glickman* — asserts that between 1983 and 1997 the USDA failed to investigate hundreds of discrimination complaints resulting in foreclosures, bankruptcies, and other serious economic problems.

The Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), the group that has been organizing actions to call national attention to this fight, intensified its protests when the U.S. justice department ruled that a two-year statute of limitation

had expired, leaving many of the 2,500 plaintiffs with no legal recourse. On June 25 the House of Representatives voted to waive the statute of limitation provision. The waiver still must be approved the Senate and signed into law by President William Clinton.

Obie Beal, a plaintiff in the suit from Montezuma, Georgia, said, "I had a contract with the local frozen food company to grow squash, I had farm experience — but these weren't good enough reasons to give me the loans I needed to farm successfully." He was denied two loans from 1987 to 1990.

At the July 11-16 convention of the NAACP in Atlanta, the farmers will speak at a plenary session on

July 15 entitled "A Journey — A Challenge — A Commitment: In Support of America's Black Farmers." Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, John Boyd, president of the National Black Farmers Association, Ralph Paige, executive director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Kweisi Mfume, president of the NAACP, and Dan Glickman, secretary of the USDA, will address the session, followed by a question and answer period.

Arlene Rubinstein is a member of the International Association of Machinists in Atlanta. She is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the 4th C.D.

Hotel and Restaurant Workers rally for contract in San Francisco



Militant/Cathleen Gutekanst

More than 350 members of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Local 2 and their supporters rallied June 24 at the Marriott Hotel in San Francisco. The union has signed up hundreds of workers, winning an election in June. The local is still fighting for a contract on par with the city-wide industry.

INS arrests farm workers following union vote

PHILADELPHIA — Some 30 agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and 10 Pennsylvania State Troopers staged an early morning raid on the Blue Mountain Mushroom Company in Reading, Pennsylvania, June 19.

The cops interviewed all of the approximately 100 workers on site and arrested 76 workers who could not produce documents. Forty-one workers were taken to the York County Prison, the Berks County Prison, and the Berks County Youth Center. The others were released pending further legal proceedings because of "health problems or small children to care for," according to immigration cops.

The Immigration department told the *Reading Eagle/Times* that the raid was "prompted by two anonymous complaints." But a press statement released June 23 by the Mushroom Workers Council of Reading in support of the Blue Mountain Workers Committee blasted the raid "as retaliation against workers in their effort to organize."

The Workers Committee at Blue Mountain had recently won a union representation election by an 80-to-40 vote. They were waiting for the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board to compel the owners of the plant to negotiate a contract with union organizers.

The Farmworkers Support Committee (CATA) denounced the INS raid in a press release, saying it "will have a chilling effect on workers' will to act collectively, and represents how a government agency can be used to break workers' struggles while favoring employers' abusive policies toward their workers."

Sweden: union official forced to resign for strike

GOTHENBURG, Sweden — Workers at the FIX factory here took strike action June 24-26 over wages. FIX produces locks and security systems, and the nearly 200 workers are members of the Metalworkers union. At the plant gate, workers explained what happened. "In the local negotiations the company wanted to give much more to some than to others," Bruno Bran, a spokesperson for the strikers, said. "We wanted to secure a general raise for everyone of 2.50 kroner [35 cents] and a smaller sum for additional individual raises. The company wanted it the other way around." Workers said they receive well below the average wage of

metalworkers in the region. To put pressure on negotiations between the company and the union, workers sat down for three hours on June 24, two hours the following day, and all day June 26. "I've worked here for 23 years and we've never had a strike before," Bran said.

After the first strike day in Gotenburg, workers at another plant in the same group of companies, ASSA, in the town of Eskilstuna, 150 kilometers east of Stockholm, also went out on strike for half a day. On June 26 the workers at the plant in Eskilstuna voted to accept a slightly improved agreement between the company and the local.

These were wild-cat strikes. Due to antiunion legislation in Sweden, industrial action of any kind is prohibited once central negotiations between the different national union federations and their respective employer federations are closed. Local negotiations take place under an "obligation of work peace." The company threatened to sue the workers in labor court and have them fined. This legislation also makes it illegal for union locals to lead or support a strike. If they do, fines are heavy.

On June 29 workers assembled at 7:00 a.m. to discuss their next move. They were then informed that negotiations had been taken out of the hands of the local and taken over by the Metalworkers union and Industry federation, the employers' organization, nationally. Two days later, these bodies agreed on a settlement. Wages will be set according to the company's original bid. FIX workers will put in extra hours to compensate for the time lost to the strikes. And the chairman of the union local was forced to resign at the company's insistence. The union chairman "has been too passive in trying to get his members back to production," said company chairman Stellan Svensson. "Our confidence in him is undermined and it would have affected the other members if he hadn't resigned."

Michel Dugré, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees in Montreal; Katy LeRougetel and Guy Tremblay, members of the United Steelworkers of America in Toronto; Mary Martin, a member of the IAM in Washington, D.C.; Shellia Kennedy and Pete Clifford, members of the RMT in London; Pete Seidman, a member of the United Auto Workers in Newark, Delaware; and Lars Erlandsson and Anita Östling in Stockholm contributed to this column.

Ireland: fighters face rightist marches

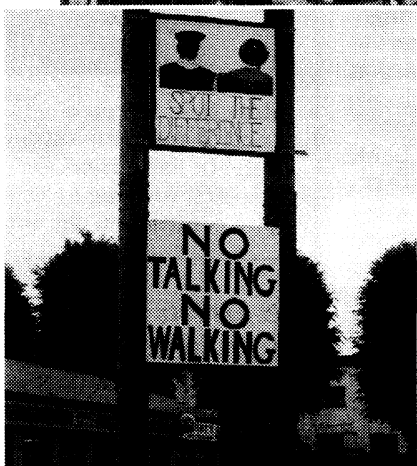
BY JAMES NEIL
AND ANNE HOWIE

PORTADOWN, Northern Ireland — Residents of the nationalist Garvaghy Road area of this town in the north of Ireland remain under siege by British troops, police, and rightist thugs as they organize to ensure the sectarian Orange Order's Drumcree march is not forced through their community against their will.

The Parades Commission, a body set up by the British government to rule on "contentious" Orange marches, decided to re-route the supremacist march away from Garvaghy Road. Orange Order leaders, however, pledged to defy the legally binding ruling, by staying in Drumcree for "365 days," if that is what it takes. Following the Parades Commission's decision, pro-British Loyalists had set fire to 11 Catholic churches, burning two of them completely to the ground, as a way of intimidating the nationalist population and threatening further violence if the march was not let through.

London has sent 1,800 more troops into the British-occupied six counties of Northern Ireland, bringing the total to nearly 18,000. The Drumcree parade has been one of the most contentious parades that take place over the "marching season" every year in the north of Ireland. These marches are aimed at reinforcing the second-class status of Catholics and upholding British rule.

In 1995 residents of the Garvaghy Road agreed to let the march pass after gaining agreement from Orange Lodge leaders that it would do so in silence. When the march came to the bottom of the road, however, its leaders, including David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), danced and jeered, denying they had made any agreement with the residents. In 1996 in the face of residents' determination to halt it, Orangemen were involved in a five-day standoff with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) after the march was banned. Following rioting by Loyalists across the North,



Left: Militant/Anne Howie

Above, rightist Orange Order members amass July 5 outside predominantly Catholic area of Garvaghy Road in Portadown, Northern Ireland, hoping to march through and intimidate nationalist community. Left, a residents' sign answers the Orange Order refusal to negotiate the parade route.

the RUC cops violently forced the march through the nationalist area, claiming that it was the only way to restore order. In 1997, after the newly elected Labour government assured residents they would be consulted and informed of the British government's decision on whether the parade could proceed, massive security forces moved into the Garvaghy Road at 3:00 a.m. on the day of the march, forcing residents from their streets to secure the route for the Orangemen.

"No Talk; No Walk" reads a big sign today on Garvaghy Road. Residents have never called for the march to be banned, but demanded that the Orange Order negotiate with the local residents over the route. The

Orange Order, however, has refused to discuss with residents, claiming it has a "right" to proceed through the 95 percent Catholic community. The Orange Order is a rightist organization that holds sectarian and triumphalist marches through Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.

Troops barricade Garvaghy Road

By July 4 Garvaghy Road had been blocked in by the British army and RUC police with barbed wire and police vehicles, checkpoints were stationed on roads leading into Portadown, and Nationalist residents were in a state of siege, not able to easily leave their area and return. The army dug deep trenches and then sealed the area

with barbed wire, blocking Garvaghy Road with a 25-foot steel barrier. While the thousands of troops and RUC members were brought in, residents were prepared to defend themselves.

Many people from other parts of the North went to Portadown July 3-4 to show their solidarity with the residents, including supporters from Derry, Bellaghy, and Belfast. Young people from Paris and Dublin also arrived to show their solidarity. Local residents provided accommodation. International observers from Canada and the United States were invited by the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition and the Lower Ormeau Road Concerned Community.

Residents prepare for defense

The Drumcree community center is the central point from which the residents are organizing the defense of their community, running a radio station for the duration of the standoff to provide news for the community and as a method of mobilizing.

On July 5 upwards of 6,000 Orangemen and their female supporters marched through Portadown, passing near Garvaghy Road toward Drumcree church. Orange Order leaders had said the parade would be silent as it passed a Catholic church on the outward route, but observers reported that some participants danced and jumped up and down, mimicking the murder of Robert Hamill, a Catholic man kicked to death last year in Portadown by Loyalists. They taunted watching nationalists, saying "What about Robert Hamill?" and laughing.

After their service at the church they attempted to go down the small road that leads to Garvaghy Road but were unable to, staying throughout the day as more Orangemen and others arrived. The surrounding fields filled up with cars as tents were erected along with Union Jack flags. At around midnight rightist DUP leader Ian Paisley arrived at the scene.

Since that night, supporters of the Orange Order have mounted pickets, marches, and protests across the North. Arterial roads have been blocked by sit-down protests or by torched vehicles, and loyalists have fought battles with the RUC, particularly in Belfast. Surprise Orange parades have also attempted to march into other nationalist areas; attacks on Catholics have started to escalate. The siege of Garvaghy Road was stepped up July 6 when Loyalists gathered at the bottom of the road, the one exit residents could use.

So far the British government has stated its intention to uphold the Parades Commission decision. Prime Minister Anthony Blair provoked fury from Garvaghy Road residents, however, when he said the Orange Order's actions had been a "responsible" attempt to resolve the situation.

The crisis facing the Unionist political parties is also reflected in the increasingly untenable position of UUP leader David Trimble, first minister of the newly-elected Northern Ireland Assembly. Trimble is a member of the Orange Order, but is considered a "traitor" by the more rightist elements in Unionism for participating in the Assembly beside the 18 elected Sinn Féin representatives. Sinn Féin is the party leading the fight to rid Northern Ireland of British rule.

On July 6 the Parades Commission announced that the Orange Order would be allowed to march July 13 through Belfast's Lower Ormeau Road, a small Nationalist area. Residents there have vowed to protest the triumphalist parade.

Residents have set up a special fax line and appealed for messages of solidarity to be sent to the nationalist residents of Garvaghy Road. The fax number is (44) 1762 392898.

Northern Irish Aid Committee and the Irish Parades Emergency Committee, two Irish solidarity organizations in the United States, have called for demonstrations across the country on July 11, in support of the nationalist residents of Garvaghy Road, the Lower Ormeau Road, and all nationalist communities in the north of Ireland who face the rightist marches.

U.S. gov't tightens rules on travel to Cuba

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

NEW YORK — The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) amended its restrictions on travel to Cuba May 11, making it more difficult for some U.S. residents to legally go there. The government will now presume that people visiting Cuba from the United States as fully hosted guests — whose expenses while in Cuba are covered by Cubans or other non-U.S. citizens — are guilty of violating U.S. law.

This dovetails with increasing attempts by the Clinton administration this year to deny or hold up applications by U.S. residents for licenses to travel to that Caribbean island.

These developments were discussed at the June 6 meeting here of the National Network on Cuba (NNOC), a coalition of national and local organizations that actively oppose Washington's economic war on Cuba. The Network decided to distribute more information on U.S. government restrictions of travel to Cuba and encourage its affiliates to secure collaboration with attorneys in each locality who can quickly provide legal help, when needed.

According to the Treasury Department the new OFAC regulations are designed "to establish a presumption that persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction who have traveled to Cuba without the authority of a general or specific license have engaged in prohibited travel related transactions."

Gabor Rona, a lawyer at the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCRI), gave a presentation to the NNOC meeting about the regulations. In a later interview, he explained, "The embargo does not prohibit travel to Cuba, but it *does* prohibit spend-

ing money in Cuba." This makes travel to Cuba very difficult. "But there are exceptions," Rona noted. "You can request a license from the [U.S.] government that permits you to spend money. In addition to licenses, there is fully hosted travel, which is consistent with restrictions because you spend no money."

But the Treasury Department's amendment, "shifts the burden of producing evidence" onto the traveler. "Anyone who goes to Cuba without a license now is assumed to have spent money," Rona said.

The new regulations state: "The presumption may be rebutted by a statement signed by the traveler providing specific supporting documentation that no transactions were engaged in by the traveler or on the traveler's behalf by any other person subject to U.S. jurisdiction, or that the traveler was fully sponsored or fully hosted by a third party not subject to jurisdiction of the United States...."

"This statement shall describe the circumstances of the travel and explain how it was possible to avoid entering into travel-related transactions such as payments for meals, lodging, transportation, bunkering of vessels or aircraft, visas, entry or exit fees, and gratuities."

While OFAC claims this move is not putting "the ultimate burden of proof" on the traveler, the government can take "appropriate enforcement action... where the traveler is unable to provide sufficient evidence" that they spent no money in Cuba. The government agency justifies this breach of the presumption of innocence by arguing that it is a "practical impossibility for OFAC to prove" that a person on a trip to Cuba broke any laws.

The government claims it's hard to get proof that travelers may be paying airport taxes, transportation fees, and other expenses. Washington also complains that the Cuban government does not allow U.S. federal agents to enter Cuba, making it difficult to enforce U.S. laws there.

"It is easy to prove something did happen — through evidence, witnesses, etc. — but it is much harder to prove something did not happen," Rona stated. Furthermore, "it is a violation of due process to make someone prove that something did not happen. How much proof is enough! At what point does it become an abuse of government power?" According to Rona, the enforcement of the law is arbitrary and discriminatory, leaving open harassment of individuals based on inconsequential questions like political beliefs, nationality, and sex. "One of the main reasons the government has clamped down is because so many people have been able to meet requirements for fully hosted travel," Rona said. "Now people who want to go will have to make a considerably bigger effort to compile proof of innocence."

Rona, representing the Center for Constitutional Rights, said, "We will challenge every single case with as much ammunition as we can gather." A video and a six-page publication that spells out the regulations and provides advice to Cuba travelers will be available soon from CCRI. For more information contact the Center for Constitutional Rights at (212) 614-6464.

The NNOC will also be distributing this video and encouraging its affiliates to use it.

In the past several months, Washington

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