

Minnesota meat packers demand access in plant to union reps

BY JULIAN SANTANA

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota, February 25—“This only strengthens our resolve to win the right in our new contract to have our representatives come into the plant—not once a month—but whenever we want them to,” says the latest issue of the *Workers’ Voice*. The newsletter, put out by workers at the Dakota Premium Foods slaughterhouse here, is referring to the bosses’ refusal to allow three union representatives to enter the plant’s cafeteria the day before.

“It’s a tactic to keep us from reaching all our members,” said United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789 representative Rafael Espinosa.

According to the union contract, which is expired but remains binding until a new agreement is approved, union representatives have the right to enter the plant and talk to their members once a month. Management allowed Espinosa, Doug Mork, and Miguel Gutiérrez to meet with them about grievances and walk through the plant, but not to enter the cafeteria. It’s only in the cafeteria during the lunch breaks where the union reps could have talked to workers.

“They know they lost and the mem-
Continued on page 3

National Assembly elects Cuban leadership

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL AND BEN O’SHAUGHNESSY

HAVANA, February 25—The 614 deputies newly elected to Cuba’s parliament, the National Assembly of People’s Power, elected a 31-member Council of State yesterday. The new National Assembly, elected every five years on the basis of territory, was chosen in Cuba’s January 20 general elections.

Under the Cuban constitution, the Council of State, elected from among the members of the National Assembly, acts with the powers of the Assembly between sessions and executes its resolutions and decisions.

The National Assembly elected Raúl Castro, 76, to be president of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, the country’s head of state and head of government. He has been the country’s first vice president since 1976 and minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces since 1959. José Ramón Machado, another longtime leader of the revolution, was elected first vice president.

Six days earlier, in a step that surprised few people here, President Fidel Castro announced that for health reasons he would “neither aspire to nor accept the positions of President of the Council of State and Commander-in-Chief.” He noted that he had shouldered

Continued on page 6

‘We want citizenship so we can vote for you!’

Workers at Houston meat plant welcome Róger Calero, Socialist Workers presidential candidate



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president (right), talks to a worker at a shift change outside the Tyson Foods plant in Houston February 15.

BY AMANDA ULMAN AND STEVE WARSHELL

HOUSTON—“We want citizenship so that we can vote for you guys and what you represent,” a meat packer at the Tyson Foods plant here told Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero.

Calero was campaigning at the plant gate as part of a February 14–17 tour stop. While in Houston, he campaigned with Texas Socialist Workers candidates at the University of Houston, at house meetings and speaking

engagements, and elsewhere. Calero was interviewed by the Spanish-language weekly *La Voz*.

More than a dozen Tyson workers stopped their cars to talk with Calero and take copies of the Socialist Workers campaign platform.

One worker told him, “I saw you in 2004 at the last plant I worked at. I support you this time too!”

“My mother’s workplace was raided by the immigration cops,” Jennifer Gutierrez, 25, who was passing by the

Continued on page 7

Kosova ‘independence’ includes continued NATO occupation

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Kosova’s national legislature issued a “Declaration of Independence” February 17. The document welcomed the presence of the thousands of NATO and UN troops that have occupied Kosova since 1999.

While declaring Kosova “an independent and sovereign state,” the national legislature accepted governance by a European Union “rule of law mission” that will include up to 2,000 cops and judges. The declaration presented no deadline for the foreign troops or EU administrators to cease running Kosovar affairs.

Washington and most countries in the European Union quickly recognized Kosova’s “independence,” while the governments of Spain, Greece, and Cyprus, as well as Serbia, Russia, Romania, and Slovakia opposed the move.

Kosova, 90 percent of whose 2 million people are ethnic Albanians, was formerly a province of Yugoslavia. When working people carried out a socialist revolution there in the 1940s, Kosovars won recognition of their language and cultural rights. To help overcome a leg-

acy of national oppression that had left Kosova the most economically backward part of the country, additional state resources were allocated for its development. In 1974, Kosova was granted regional autonomy.

Fraternal relations of class solidarity prevailed among working people of Yugoslavia’s several different ethnic groups in the early years after the revolution. But as the Stalinist-led government relied more and more on capitalist market methods, conditions worsened for working people, especially Kosovars.

Stalinist regimes throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The bureaucracy in Yugoslavia was no exception. Rival factions of the ruling bureaucrats began scrambling for control of the nation’s resources as they sought to integrate Yugoslavia into the world capitalist economy. They often invoked reactionary nationalist appeals to win support. Yugoslavia was broken up into several republics. Kosova remained a region under control of the Serbian

Continued on page 9

North Carolina: Black farmers discuss fight vs. discrimination

BY SAM MANUEL

WHITAKERS, North Carolina—Black farmers continue to face racial discrimination in loans and other services at offices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). That was the view of many attending the 10th annual meeting of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), held here February 15–17.

Farmers, faculty and researchers from historically Black agricultural colleges, environmental advocates, and officials of the USDA’s civil rights office were among the more than 60 participants. About a dozen were farmers.

“Ten years after the *Pigford* Consent Decree, farmers are still having to deal with the same old people who are continuing the same old discrimination at the USDA,” BFAA president Gary Grant told the *Militant*. Grant’s family is currently fighting an effort by the USDA to evict them from their

land because of an outstanding contested debt of \$54,000. The government claims that with interest the debt has risen to nearly \$200,000.

In 1999 a federal judge approved a settlement of a class-action suit against racist discrimination in loans and other

Continued on page 3

Also Inside:

‘Support our troops’ slogan concession to prowar campaign 2

Pact could lead to deportation of thousands of Vietnamese 3

Suits challenge restrictions in Florida on travel to Cuba 4

Workers in Connecticut protest attacks on immigrants, union 5

Berkeley, California, gov't states opposition to war, support for U.S. troops

BY CHAUNCEY K. ROBINSON

BERKELEY, California, February 13—The Berkeley City Council voted today to rescind an earlier decision to send a letter telling recruiters for the U.S. Marines that they were “unwelcome intruders.” While the council wouldn't issue an apology to the Marine Corps, it expressed its “respect and support” for U.S. troops.

The council also upheld a decision to allow antiwar organization Code Pink to have a designated parking space in front of the military recruitment office every Wednesday and to operate a loud speaker.

The city council voted January 29 to tell marine recruiters they were unwelcome in the city of Berkeley. Antiwar activists, on the one hand, and supporters of Washington's wars abroad, on the other, began organizing in favor of or against the decision. More than 25,000 e-mails were sent to the city council on the topic.

Ten U.S. senators threatened to cut federal funding to Berkeley in retaliation. Senator Jim DeMint, a South Carolina Republican, began drafting legislation to cut \$2.1 million from funding for city programs, including two involving public school lunches. He proposed transferring the money to the Marines.

An estimated 2,000 anti- and prowar protestors faced off outside Berkeley City Hall, starting the evening of January 11 and continuing through tonight. More than 100 cops dressed in riot gear moved in and arrested four people.

Some 100 speakers addressed the city council meeting. Signs and T-shirts inside the hall reflected opposing viewpoints on the war. Some signs read, “Berkeley Says No to War,” while others read, “City Council—Shame on You.” One speaker called the city council's original decision “courageous and gutsy.” Another, Debbie Parrish, whose son is serving in Iraq, said, “It's despicable what you said about our military.”

After meeting for more than four hours, the city council voted 7-2 not to send the letter to the military recruiters. The council members issued a statement saying that they “recognize the recruiter's right to locate in our city and the right of others to protest or support their presence.”



Prowar and antiwar demonstrators face off at Berkeley City Hall February 13 as city council meets to rescind earlier decision to tell Marine recruiters they were “unwelcome intruders.”

‘Support our troops’ slogan is concession to Washington’s prowar propaganda

BY LEA SHERMAN

The city council in Berkeley, California, rescinded a decision to send a letter to the Marine Corps Recruiting Station telling the recruiters they were “unwel-

AS I SEE IT

come intruders.”

The council adopted a resolution February 13 to “publicly differentiate between the city's documented opposition to the unjust and illegal war in Iraq and

our respect and support for those serving in the armed forces.” The resolution said, “We deeply respect and support the men and women in our armed forces.”

Advancing such a position is a disorienting concession to the U.S. government's patriotic prowar propaganda. It strengthens Washington's ability to wage war.

The U.S. government is escalating its war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is pushing ahead on other fronts in its “global war on terror”—from Iraq to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa. More wars are on the horizon, fueled by the intensified competition between the U.S. rulers and their counterparts in Europe, Asia, and the Pacific.

This is a decades-long perspective for U.S. imperialism, one that requires political and economic concessions from the U.S. working class. That's why Washington is today trying to re-legitimize its “war on terror.” The aim is to convince workers and farmers in the United States to be pliant allies in the government's bloody wars of conquest, wars in which working people are used as cannon fodder.

The government's recent decision to charge six prisoners in connection with the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, after holding these men without charges for five years, is part of this. Increasing cop patrols in subways is, too. It's all aimed at convincing us that “we Americans” have a common enemy, and therefore a stake in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

But there is no such thing as “we Americans.” The United States is a class-divided country. Working people have no interests in common with the employing class.

U.S. troops are not “our armed forces.” The army is *theirs*; the soldiers are the troops of the imperialist state. While in their big majority soldiers are from *our* class, they are part of *their* military.

As Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in California's 8th District, I reach out to workers and farmers in uniform. I campaign among GIs and encourage them to exercise their constitutional rights as citizen-soldiers to discuss the issues facing working people

Continued on page 3

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New York City protest against arrest of Puerto Rican independence fighter Avelino González Claudio February 11.

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Black land loss summit

Continued from front page

services. The suit against the USDA was brought by North Carolina farmer Timothy Pigford on behalf of Black farmers. In the settlement, the government agreed to give each farmer who could provide evidence of discrimination between 1981 and 1996 a \$50,000 tax-exempt payment, debt forgiveness, and preferential treatment on future loan applications.

Farmers' organizations leading the fight to defend land and the right to farm rejected the consent decree as inadequate. Even so, the judge approved it on April 14, 1999. The judge also appointed a monitor to review farmers' complaints and appeals of denied claims.

Speaking at a panel on the status of *Pigford*, Stephen Carpenter, senior council for the monitor's office, said that of the 22,500 farmers who filed for compensation, around 14,000 were approved by a court-appointed arbitrator. Another 65,000 claims were denied because they failed to meet the Oct. 12, 1999, filing deadline. "*Pigford* is just about over," Carpenter said.

News reports that a pending bill in Congress would reopen *Pigford* are misleading, Carpenter told the meeting. He said that if the bill is passed it is not certain that the 65,000 late claims will be treated as a class. The bill provides \$100 million for the late claims to be considered, but the claimants may have to pay their own attorneys' fees, Carpenter said.

"If they see you coming, and you're Black, the answer is still no!" said hog farmer Eddie Wise. "We're still facing the same old people, none of them were punished or removed."

After losing one farm because the USDA refused to provide him a loan, Wise described how he has continued to face obstacles.

In 1993 Wise and his wife applied for a loan to purchase a 106-acre hog farm. Wise said that at first the county loan officer didn't let him know that the farm had been earmarked for minority farmers. Then officials tried to reappraise the farm to increase the value, but the value actually dropped. Lastly, a white farmer who wanted the farm paid a Black woman to apply for him. She was one of the final two applicants whose names were drawn from a hat. "We won the draw," Wise said with a smile.

Wise continues to face resistance from the county loan office, which is now demanding that he provide a production history going back three years and a production plan for the new farm.

Mavis Hill is fighting attempts by speculators to buy up land she inherited along with other family members. She explained that in many cases older farmers don't leave a will explaining how the property is to be divided upon their death. "Some of us want to keep the farm and others want to sell," Hill said.

Land speculators will approach family members until they find one who will sell part interest in the land. Then they try to get a court to force a sale of the entire property. "My sister grows watermelons on part of the land," said Hill, "and we plan to stay."



Militant/Sam Manuel

Meeting of 10th annual Black Land Loss Summit February 16 in Whitakers, North Carolina. At podium on left is Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association.

Vietnamese in Seattle discuss pact that could lead to deportation of thousands

BY EDWIN FRUIT

SEATTLE—A February 17 Vietnamese American community meeting here discussed a new agreement between Washington and Hanoi enabling the U.S. government to deport Vietnamese nationals back to Vietnam.

The January 22 agreement lasts for five years.

Natalie Newton, an activist in the Asian community, chaired the meeting of 30 people. She explained relations between the U.S. and Vietnamese governments over the last decade. She said the agreement is one way in which the United States is trying to dominate Vietnam economically and politically.

Immigration attorney Jay Stansell said that 8,000 Vietnamese in the United States could now face deportation, including 1,500 immediately. Deportation orders stem from entering the country illegally, overstaying a visa, or being convicted of a crime—even if the person already served jail time.

Stansell said the new agreement applies only to those who came to the United States after 1995, when diplomatic relations between the two countries were normalized. But another 6,200 Vietnamese nationals have received final notices and face deportation to a third country. An estimated 1.5 million Vietnamese Americans live in the United States.

Stansell said a similar agreement was reached with Cambodia in 2002 and so far 170 people have been deported to that country, while 2,000 more are awaiting deportation.

"If someone violated the law, paid for it with jail time, and is now married with kids and a job they shouldn't have to go back to Vietnam," said community activist Hao Nguyen.

Maru Villalpando, an organizer with Washington Community Action Network, spoke of the effects of deportations on the Latino community. She explained how the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement operates: stopping people at gas stations, breaking into homes, raiding workplaces, and carting people off to jail without access to friends, family, or legal counsel.

"I oppose the U.S. government's attempts to deport Vietnamese, or any foreign-born workers," Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party candidate for the U.S. Congress in Washington's 7th

District, said during the discussion period. "The U.S. government has no moral authority to call anyone a criminal given its record of brutality against the Vietnamese people."

Martin urged those present to join ac-

tions on May Day demanding an end to raids and deportations.

After the meeting, Newton said she wants to organize more meetings on this issue and link up with other immigrant groups facing threats of deportation.

Minnesota meat packers

Continued from front page

bers won the union," said Espinosa. "This is aimed not only at the contract negotiations but everything. They don't want the workers to be represented."

Since the workers defeated a company-backed union decertification election a month ago management has launched an all-out offensive. Unionists have filed more than a dozen grievances against the company, including many over workers who have been fired.

The big majority of the fired workers are Black and newer on the job. Some workers have commented how this fits into the bosses' efforts to divide workers along racial and national lines and weaken the union.

Solomon Thomas-El, a worker who is Black, was fired a second time after being harassed and taken to the office several times in one week. Thomas was es-

pecially hated by the bosses because he won his job back a few weeks ago after using the union to prove racist discrimination against him by a supervisor. This victory was featured in an earlier *Workers' Voice* and applauded by a number of workers at Dakota.

To better stand up to the company assault, the unionists have increased the number of shop stewards on the floor. Several were chosen at a recent union meeting. Workers are also putting together a negotiating committee that will start meeting with the company on February 29 to discuss a new contract. Unionists will be discussing the issues they want to put on the bargaining table at their next meeting.

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

Berkeley city council decision

Continued from page 2

today with their fellow servicemen and women.

In my campaign I explain why working people—both in and out of uniform—must break with the bipartisan war party in Washington, the Democrats and Republicans. I point to the necessity of working people having a political party of our own—a labor party based on fighting unions that will struggle in the broad interests of toiling humanity not just in the United States but around the world.

If elected, I would never vote one cent for war appropriations. I would work with a socialist caucus in Congress to introduce legislation for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and everywhere else they are stationed.

I would use the office to build support for struggles that can be emu-

lated by working people, youth, and others wanting to end the imperialist war. The union victory and contract fight at the Dakota Premium Foods slaughterhouse in Minnesota is one example. The protests by Micro Solutions Enterprises workers in Van Nuys, California, who refuse to be intimidated by immigration raids, are another. These actions objectively weaken the government's ability to prosecute its wars, because the workers are refusing to subordinate their interests to those of the bosses.

It is along this road—not by bending to prowar propaganda about "our troops"—that a movement capable of taking political power out of the hands of the ruling class will be built in this country. Only by establishing a workers and farmers government and disarming the war makers once and for all can we end their ability to carry out imperialist war.

— CALENDAR —

FLORIDA

Miami

Defend the Freedom to Travel to Cuba. Car caravan protesting the restrictions on travel to Cuba, beginning at SW 84th Ave. and SW 8th St., passing in front of Versailles Restaurant, to downtown Miami. Sat., March 8. 10 a.m. Sponsored by Organization of Christian Women, Alianza Mariana. Tel: (305) 643-5481. E-mail: alianzam@bellsouth.net.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Midwest Convention in Defense of Immigrants' Rights. Organize against raids in neighborhoods and workplaces, No Match letters, and voided driver's licenses! Sat., March 8. 10 a.m. Continues Sun., March 9. Rudy Lozano Library, Radio Arte, Casa Michoacán, 1800 S Blue Island, Pilsen. Tel: (888) 344-6432.

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Women and the Cuban Revolution Today. Representatives of the Federation of Cuban Women will speak on the gains made in the fight for women's equality in Cuba and the challenges they face today. Fri., March 7, 7 p.m. Location to be announced. Tel: (718) 687-7867.

Bush probes AFRICOM base on Africa tour

BY SAM MANUEL

President George Bush wrapped up a visit to five African countries February 21. The trip was aimed in part at laying the groundwork to establish a military base in an African country for Washington's African Command (AFRICOM). The command was created in 2007 to oversee operations by U.S. armed forces in Africa.

During the tour, Bush and leaders of African countries allied to Washington repeatedly denied that there are any plans to establish such a base in Africa for now. AFRICOM is currently headquartered in Germany.

"We do not contemplate adding new bases," said Bush, speaking in Liberia's capital, Monrovia. But "that doesn't mean we won't develop some kind of office somewhere in Africa. We haven't made our minds up."

During the six-day visit to Benin, Tanzania, Ghana, Rwanda, and Libe-

ria, Bush promised billions of dollars to fight HIV/AIDS and various tropical diseases.

AFRICOM's head, Gen. William Ward, said AFRICOM had modified the way it puts across its message, focusing on "added value" and security assistance. Ward said there is a perception that "the Americans are invading," according to a Radio Netherlands report.

Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia has been the only African head of state to offer to host a base for AFRICOM. During his tour stop in Liberia, Bush visited a camp partially funded by Washington where a new Liberian army is being trained. In 2003 Washington deployed 200 of some 2,000 marines positioned in ships off Liberia's coast to aid 3,200 African troops in intervening in Liberia's civil war and overthrowing the government of Charles Taylor.

Since 2003 the U.S. government has



Officers and soldiers of U.S. Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa camp at Lemonier, Djibouti, December 11. The base will be transferred to AFRICOM's command later this year.

spent \$750 million training the Liberian military. Bush pledged to continue to support the training as part of the "war on terror."

Bush also pledged to work to lift Liberia's debt burden and to provide one million text books and 10,000 desks for students by the start of the new school year.

Stop in Ghana

Ghana is another country being considered as a location for AFRICOM. Gabby Otchere-Darko, an aide to the ruling party's presidential candidate, said African leaders shouldn't reject AFRICOM out of hand because it could bring benefits. But according to AP, Ghana's president John Kufuor told Bush in private, "You're not going to build any bases in Ghana."

The West African nation was the first recipient of a Millennium Challenge grant, a Bush administration fund supposedly designed to fight poverty in Africa. Ghana received \$547 million over five years to expand crop markets. Washington has built a brand new embassy—its largest in Africa—in Accra, Ghana's capital.

New oil reserves were discovered off Ghana's coast last year. The London-

based Tullow Oil company estimates the reserves at between 170 million and 1.38 billion barrels. At the lower end, that would mean 45,000 barrels per day for 10 years. West Africa is expected to account for 25 percent of U.S. oil imports within the next decade.

In Tanzania, Bush signed a \$698 million aid package. He also urged the U.S. Congress to double funds to fight AIDS and to support a new campaign against malaria.

The Nigerian and South African governments have led opposition to an AFRICOM base in Africa and were not on the tour schedule. However, the Nigerian military conducted joint air force and naval exercises with the U.S. military on February 23, according to the Lagos-based *Nation* newspaper.

Meanwhile, a U.S. military base in Djibouti currently run by the U.S. Central Command will be transferred to AFRICOM later this year. The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa base has 1,800 soldiers. Its area of responsibility includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen. Comoros, Mauritius, and Madagascar are described as "areas of interest" on the task force's web site.

Miami: Cuban Americans demand U.S. lift travel controls

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

MIAMI—A February 19 meeting here called "The Family Separated: A Conference to Demand the Lifting of Federal Restrictions on Family Travel and Remittances to Cuba" was packed by 200 people, the overwhelming majority of them Cuban Americans.

Washington has restricted travel by U.S. residents to Cuba for decades. In 2004, the U.S. government tightened restrictions on trips by Cuban Americans to the island, limiting visits to once every three years to see immediate family members. Washington also limited remittances to Cuba to \$300 per quarter. Prior to these restrictions, Cuban Americans were permitted to visit close relatives once a year.

The event was hosted by the liberal research group Center for International Policy (CIP) and the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights. While some speakers expressed disagreement with the Cuban Revolution, the panel reflected a broadening opposition among Cuban Americans to U.S. government restrictions on travel, remittances, and other exchanges with Cuba.

"I came here from Cuba because I dreamt of a better life," said panelist Sgt. Carlos Lazo, a combat medic in the National Guard who was deployed to Iraq. "My son was gravely ill in the hospital, and the U.S. government denied me permission to visit him in Cuba."

CIP director Wayne Smith, a former chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, was a panelist. He said "the Cuban government doesn't always allow freedom of expression" and he argued that the U.S. government's travel restrictions are "inhumane."

"If a Cuban American had recently visited a mother or father in Cuba but was told two months later that the mother or father was dying, there is no way to return and be at the bedside. Rather, they could only go back again in three years—and visit the grave," he said.

Panelist Marlene Arzola, a Cuban American, said that "the U.S. government is violating the fundamental

rights of its citizens by restricting the rights of families with these laws."

The meeting also reflected tactical debates between leading capitalist politicians in Florida over how best to advance Washington's interests vis-à-vis the socialist revolution 90 miles from its shores. Several speakers encouraged voting for Democratic Party candidates who they said would ease travel and trade restrictions.

Three well-known Cuban American Republican members of Congress are being challenged in the November elections. Raul Martinez, a Cuban American Democrat and former mayor of Hialeah, is running against Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart. Joe Garcia, chair of the Miami-Dade County Democratic Party and former director of the Cuban American National Foundation, is challenging Representative Mario Diaz-Balart. Annette Taddeo, a Colombian-born business executive and a Democrat, is running against Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

All three challengers support the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba. They have tactical differences with the incumbents over how best to get rid of the Cuban government. The challengers campaign for easing restrictions on travel and remittances. The incumbents are strong opponents of any relations with Cuba.

"The Congressional elections are an opportunity to show that the right-wing doesn't have the same influence it did," said panelist Francisco Aruca, director of Radio Progreso.

Margaret Trowe, Socialist Workers candidate for Congress in Florida's 3rd Congressional District, presented a different opinion during the discussion period. She pointed out that Washington's hostility toward Cuba goes back to the victory of the revolution in 1959.

"The embargo and travel ban are deeply in the interests of the ruling class," she said. "The attacks against Cuba over the years have been carried out by both Democratic and Republican Party administrations."

Lawsuits challenge Florida restrictions on travel to Cuba

BY OMARI MUSA

MIAMI, February 23—The Florida Board of Governors, which administers state universities and community colleges, filed suit last month against aspects of the "Travel to Terrorist States Act." The measure prohibits the use of federal, state, and non-state funds for research travel to Iran, Cuba, Sudan, Syria, and north Korea, countries on the State Department's "state sponsors of terrorism" list.

The act was initiated by Miami-area state representative David Rivera and passed by the legislature in May 2006. It was signed into law by then-governor John E. Bush.

The Board of Governors' lawsuit is the second legal challenge to the act. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed suit challenging the constitutionality of the law on behalf of the Florida International University Faculty Senate and professors at several other state universities in June 2006. "The primary effect of this legislation is to deny Americans information about other parts of the world," said Howard Simon, executive director of the Florida ACLU, in a news release.

Prominent plaintiffs in the ACLU suit include Carmen Diana Deere, direc-

tor of the University of Florida's Center for Latin American Studies, and Noel Smith, curator of Latin American and Caribbean Art at the University of South Florida.

"These professors saw this law as a restriction on their ability to meet their obligation as professors in their fields," said Bill Edmonds, director of communications for the Board of Governors. While Edmonds said the board doesn't completely agree with the ACLU, "We are agreeing that the court needs to look at the issue of non-state dollars." Edmonds said the Board of Governors also "asked the court to look at the question of [whether] the legislature overstepped its authority."

A ruling on the ACLU suit is expected in March.

For further reading

Our History Is Still Being Written

The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution
By Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong
—\$20



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ON THE PICKET LINE

Montreal oil workers fight 3-month lockout

MONTREAL, Quebec—Some 260 members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), Local 175, have maintained around-the-clock picket lines here since being locked out by Petro-Canada in November.

The unionists are fighting the company's attempt to impose a six-year contract and to eliminate the full-time union safety representative. The CEP is also resisting Petro-Canada's moves to push through a contract that is inferior for workers in Quebec than in the west of Canada.

In December, 50 workers protested at the Jacques-Cartier Bridge to draw attention to their fight. The action exposed the fact that Petro-Canada is operating the refinery under dangerous conditions. Managers have been rotating through 12-hour shifts to keep the refinery operating with some 130 administrative workers.

—Beverly Bernardo

Grocery workers strike in Long Island, New York

As contract negotiations remained deadlocked, workers in the meat

and seafood departments at seven King Kullen supermarkets on New York's Long Island walked off the job February 17 and picketed in four-hour shifts before returning to work. Workers at five other supermarkets returned to work that day after walking out the previous day.

The 371 meat and seafood handlers represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 342 have been working without a contract since October 31. They work at 51 stores owned by King Kullen.

Workers are protesting company attacks on pensions and medical coverage, as well as a two-tier wage system and the removal of protections from layoffs.

—Ved Dookhun



Militant/Beverly Bernardo

Locked out members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union Local 175 picket February 16 outside Petro-Canada in Montreal, Quebec.

Workers in Connecticut organize against attacks on immigrants, union

BY LAURA GARZA

Working people in Connecticut have been responding to a series of attacks against immigrant workers in recent weeks.

More than 3,000 rallied in Danbury

February 6 to protest a proposal for local police to cooperate with immigration authorities. Buses from Hartford and New Haven brought people to the action, and several high school students participated. Many local businesses owned by immigrants shut down in solidarity.

Also protesting were members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1199. On January 24 two agents from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) guarded the doors of 1199's office in Hartford while three agents went inside. They arrested Miriem Kamtengeni, a union worker, and took union files.

The Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund hosted a meeting February 21 to respond to this attack on the unions by the government. Funds to aid in Kamtengeni's defense are being requested. Checks should be made out to her husband, Evance Kamtengeni, and mailed to: SEIU/1199, c/o Steve Thornton, 77 Huyshope Ave., Hartford, CT 06106.

Anti-immigrant measures

The day of the Danbury protest, the city council there approved the proposal for local cops to enforce immigration laws under section 287(g) of the 1996

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. That section authorizes federal immigration officials to enter into agreements with state and local cops to enforce immigration laws. Danbury is the first city in Connecticut to request such authorization and training for local police.

Danbury has a population of about 90,000 with an estimated 10,000 undocumented workers. Some 34 percent of its residents are foreign-born, the highest percentage of any city in Connecticut. Mayor Mark Boughton has been pushing anti-immigrant measures, from the recently passed resolution to a city ordinance prohibiting more than 25 people to gather without a permit. That law was aimed against immigrant day laborers who congregate on street corners waiting for work.

In September 2006, Danbury police organized a sting operation where an undercover cop posing as a potential employer lured 11 day laborers into a van. He then drove to a site where ICE agents arrested the workers. Two were deported. On February 4 a federal judge denied a request to stop deportation proceedings against the remaining nine workers. Lawyers plan to appeal the ruling.

Toronto school board approves 'Afrocentric' school proposal

BY MARK GRIEVE AND JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Working people here are discussing a January 29 decision by Toronto District School Board trustees to set up an alternative school with an Afrocentric curriculum as a pilot project they claim will help keep Black students in school.

According to the *Globe and Mail*, 40 percent of Black students do not complete high school, compared with 25 percent of students overall.

The school board voted 11–9 in favor of the Afrocentric school and set the opening date for September 2009.

"We're opening ourselves up for real change in the system," said trustee Michael Coteau after the vote.

"Black school is segregation," said Loreen Small. She was one of 20 speakers who addressed the trustees during the discussion. About 200 people packed the meeting. "It's not right," Small said.

Small is the mother of Jordan Manners, a 15-year-old student who was shot and killed in the hallway of C.W. Jeffreys Collegiate Institute last May. Politicians used the killing to generate hysteria about "Black-on-Black" violence in the school system.

A poll found 82 percent of people in Toronto oppose the Afrocentric school decision, while just 14 percent support it.

Ontario Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty has said he won't provide extra funding for the pilot project. "Instead of separating schools and making them only for Blacks, they should fight to put Black history in all the schools," Junior Varciana, a worker at a Chrysler casting plant who is Black, told the *Militant*.

"I don't agree" with establishing separate Black schools, George Brown, a young butcher who is Black, told the *Militant*. "Black heritage and

culture should be taught to everyone."

"If you implement this course on a mass scale you get back to a school system divided by the color of your skin," said Michel Prairie, a leader of the Communist League, in a February 9 public talk. "It's in the interests of the working class to fight for a single, secular, public school system."

"We support affirmative action measures, like hiring more Black teachers, to overcome the inequalities inherited from centuries of discrimination," added Prairie.

Susan Berman, Annette Kouri, and Katy LeRougetel contributed to this article.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 11, 1983

It has been publicly exposed that the Reagan administration had plans under way in 1981 to overthrow the government of Grenada. A key role in the plan was assigned to the CIA.

A Caribbean island with a Black, English-speaking population of 110,000, Grenada was the scene of a victorious popular revolution in 1979. The dictatorship of Eric Gairy was ended and a government established representing the interests of Grenada's workers and farmers.

The Washington Post reported February 27 on the plans to "destabilize" the Grenadian government.

The paper reported, "the CIA developed plans in the summer of 1981 to cause economic difficulty for Grenada in hopes of undermining the political control of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop."



March 10, 1958

The AFL-CIO, representing some 15 million organized workers, is the largest labor movement in the world. The depression, into which America is sinking, calls for the actual exercise of that power by the united labor movement.

Unemployment has reached crisis proportions. Already a large section of the membership of every union is composed of laid-off workers. The unions should form unemployed committees to fight their jobless members' grievances.

It is already apparent that the corporations are taking advantage of the slump to launch an antilabor offensive. For labor to register gains in the face of the impending employer offensive calls for an overall coordinated wage struggle by the entire working class.



March 10, 1933

WE WANT TO KNOW: When will the Comintern make clear its position? When will it stop playing hide-and-seek with the crisis in Germany?

Europe and consequently the world, is at an historical turning point. In the hands of the Comintern still lie those instruments which enable it to influence decisively the direction of this turn. The express speed of the Fascist advance in Germany has left but little time in which to act. But time is still left.

A terrific historical responsibility weighs upon the Comintern leadership. If it fails to do its duty, it will itself be inundated under the overwhelming catastrophe which its own blunders are now serving to prepare in Germany.

Elections in Cuba

Continued from front page

those responsibilities since the adoption of Cuba's current constitution in 1976, and prior to that time had been prime minister for nearly 18 years.

In July 2006 Castro was hospitalized for intestinal surgery and asked to be relieved on a provisional basis from his active responsibilities in the Cuban state, government, and Communist Party. He delegated his duties as president, commander-in-chief, and first secretary of the party's Central Committee to Raúl Castro, first vice president of the Council of State and Ministers. Other Cuban government leaders assumed responsibilities for the country's health, energy, and educational programs, which Fidel had directly headed. (Castro's July 31, 2006, statement was printed in the August 14 issue of the *Militant* that year and is available online at www.themilitant.com/2006/7030/703060.html.)

In his February 18 announcement, Fidel Castro referred several times to the "precarious state" of his health. In a message three days later, he noted that the process of selection of the new leadership in Cuba had "left me exhausted." Many workers here have expressed the opinion that Castro's decision was correct, since his health no longer allowed him to continue as president and commander-in-chief. They are relieved that the most important leadership responsibilities of the state, government, and party will be shouldered by those with the health and energy to do so.

The first act of the February 24 National Assembly session was the swearing in of the deputies to that body. There had been significant renewal of the membership of the assembly in the countrywide elections in January. Nearly two-thirds of the 614 legislators were elected for the first time. Some 83 percent of the deputies were born after the 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution or were younger than 10 years old at the time.

Thirty-six deputies are 30 years or younger, and the average age of the legislators is 49. Eighteen-year-old Liaena Hernández, a university student currently serving in the military's border brigade in Guantánamo, eastern Cuba, conducted the swearing-in ceremony. The voting age in this country is 16. Cubans can be elected to local and provincial legislatures at the age of 16 and to

the National Assembly at 18.

About 35 percent of the deputies are Black or mestizo, up from 33 percent in the assembly elected in 2003 and 28 percent in 1998. Some 43 percent are women, a 7 percent increase in relation to the outgoing assembly. Cuba is one of the countries with the highest percentage of female parliamentary members: the corresponding world figure is 17.7 percent; 20.3 percent for western, central, and eastern Europe; and 16.8 percent in the current U.S. Congress.

Members of Cuba's parliament, who are elected to a five-year term, receive no salary. They continue to work their existing jobs, which range from members of the armed forces to plant managers, university students, scientific researchers, workers, farmers, and leaders of unions and other mass organizations.

In addition, nearly half of the deputies had been previously elected in their local districts to the municipal assemblies of People's Power, and will continue to serve in that capacity.

The National Assembly held a secret-ballot election for officers of the parliament and for the 31 members of the Council of State, 13 of whom are new to that body. Ricardo Alarcón and Jaime Crombet were reelected president and vice president of the Assembly, respectively, and Miriam Brito was elected secretary of that body.

The new first vice president of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, José Ramón Machado, was a combatant in the war against the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. A doctor by profession, he headed the medical department of the Rebel Army's Second Eastern Front, helping establish hospitals and clinics in that region. He later served as Cuba's health minister. He has been a member of the Council of State since 1976 and has served as organizational secretary of the Cuban Communist Party since 1974.

Of the other five vice presidents of the Council of State, the National Assembly reelected Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida; Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé, Cuba's minister of the interior; Carlos Lage, secretary of the Council of Ministers; and Esteban Lazo, a member of the Central Committee secretariat of the Cuban Communist Party. The Assembly also for the first time elected Julio Casas a vice president



Above: AP/Javier Galeano; Inset: Granma
Above: Raúl Castro, left, newly elected president of Cuba's Council of State and Council of Ministers, at February 24 meeting of Cuba's National Assembly. Next to Castro, from left, are vice presidents Juan Almeida, José Ramón Machado (first vice president), and Abelardo Colomé. Back row, from left, new Council of State members Iris Betancourt, Julio Martínez, Surina Acosta. Inset, Machado, left, then-minister of public health, with Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara at a meeting of medical students in 1960.



of the Council of State; Casas had been a member of the Council of State elected in 2003. José Miyar was reelected the secretary of the Council of State.

The National Assembly approved a proposal by Raúl Castro to prepare changes to the Council of Ministers, the top government body, over the course of 2008 and to act on them at the regular National Assembly meeting scheduled for December. The Assembly, at its February meeting, did elect Casas as minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), replacing Raúl Castro. Casas, vice minister of the FAR since 1990, was a combatant in the Rebel Army, fought in the 1961 battle at the Bay of Pigs, and carried out an internationalist combat mission in Ethiopia. He is a Hero of the Republic of Cuba and has held numerous top responsibilities in the FAR, including being in charge of the numerous factories, farms, and other economic enterprises managed by the armed forces.

Speech by Raúl Castro

In his report to the closing session of the National Assembly meeting, Castro said changes were needed in the structure of the government to make it more effective in responding to the country's needs. In the 1970s, he noted, Cuba had institutionalized its current governing structures. This included the establishment of People's Power legislative bodies at the local, provincial, and national levels.

Subsequently, he said, "in 1994, the most critical moment of the Special Period, considerable adjustments were made, leading to the reduction and merging of institutions as well as the redistribution of tasks previously entrusted to some of them. These changes, however, were undertaken with the rush imposed by the necessity to quickly adapt to a radically different, very hostile, and extremely dangerous setting."

The Special Period refers to the sharp economic crisis precipitated in the early 1990s when Cuba abruptly lost most of its aid from and favorable trade relations with the Soviet bloc countries.

Today, Castro said, "a more compact and operational structure is required, with a smaller number of institutions under the central state administration and a better distribution of their func-

tions. This will enable us to reduce the enormous number of meetings," rules, regulations, and red tape.

As Raúl Castro indicated, the questions he was addressing are part of a decades-long continuity of the revolutionary leadership in Cuba fighting to bring the structures of the state, government, party, and mass organizations into harmony with shifting objective circumstances and class needs of Cuba's workers and farmers, including with their proletarian internationalist commitment to aid struggles by other toilers across the Americas and around the world. They have learned in practice that overstructuring is the enemy of revolutionary centralist functioning and of what the Argentine-Cuban leader of the revolution, Ernesto Che Guevara, called "politicizing the ministry" in a 1964 talk to Cuban youth.

Che, at that time, pointed to steps the leadership was taking, and that young revolutionists had to help lead, to overcome "indifference" within government ministries and transform them from "a nest of nit-picking bureaucrats and bores." Revolutionaries must organize their institutions "to pursue a more human relationship, one could say, a relationship less directed through bureaucratic red tape."

In his closing report to the Assembly, Raúl Castro reiterated arguments he had made in a public speech in Camagüey last July 26. "The massive support enjoyed by the revolution demands from us that we question everything in order to improve on it," Castro said. He added that "there is no reason to fear disagreements in a society like ours" and that "debate and criticism within socialism" is necessary.

The new president pointed to some of the principal concerns that have been raised in the wide-ranging discussions that have taken place across the island since his July 26 speech. He said that in the coming weeks and months the government will start reviewing and eliminating some of the economic "prohibitions and regulations" instituted during the Special Period—designed to prevent the emergence of new inequalities under those conditions—that no longer serve the purpose for which they were

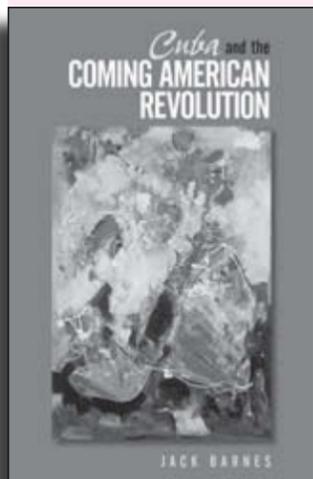
Continued on page 8

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U.S. socialist candidate solidarizes with Canada antideportation struggle

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—"The struggle by Laibar Singh to remain in Canada free of harassment is an important example of what working people are capable of when we decide to fight," said Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers candidate for vice president of the United States, at a February 24 meeting here.

"Two different times hundreds of East Indians and others mobilized to prevent his deportation to India," she said. Kennedy pointed to a December 10 mobilization at the airport that surrounded the cab delivering Singh to the plane that would have deported him, and a January 27 rally in front of a Sikh temple where he is taking sanctuary.

Kennedy was invited to Vancouver by supporters of the *Militant* newspaper in response to rightist threats against them and defenders of Singh.

The previous weekend a rightist from a group called "Deport Laibar Singh Immediately" harassed people staffing a Communist League literature table in

a working-class district here. The racist took photos of the table and posted them on a Facebook website aimed at inciting violence against East Indians. Postings on the blog's open forum say that another Hitler is needed to get rid of East Indians, adding vile comments such as "Send the rag head back home or shoot him in the head."

The blog has photos of the Communist League literature table with signs that read, "Stop The Deportation of Laibar Singh! Defend Immigrant Rights!" and "Read about the Socialist Candidate in the U.S. Elections." Below the photos is the suggestion that people visit the literature table and "give them a piece of your mind." A photo of a white woman kicking over a bus full of brown-skinned people fleeing for their lives.

Singh, a construction worker, entered Canada in 2003 and applied for refugee status. In 2005 he suffered a stroke that left him a paraplegic. The Canadian government issued a deportation order against him last July despite his health, his pending legal appeals, and wide-



Militant/Dan Grant

Alyson Kennedy, second from right, campaigns in Vancouver, British Columbia, February 23. A week earlier, rightists had threatened socialists at the site over their support for Laibar Singh, a Punjabi immigrant fighting deportation to India.

spread support for his right to stay in Canada.

The Canadian Labour Congress, British Columbia Hospital Employees Union, Vancouver and District Labour Council, BC Coalition of People With Disabilities, and others have supported Singh's fight. A petition of more than 40,000 signatures was presented in parliament in his defense.

Since then, the big business media and federal government have intensified a racist campaign against the East Indian Punjabi community, Singh, and his supporters.

The meeting to hear Kennedy was part of a series of activities with the U.S.

socialist over the weekend.

"I would like to congratulate you for what you are doing," said an older man of Punjabi descent as he shook Kennedy's hand. "It's so important to have a party to represent the workers and the poor. The work you are doing is so important." The man bought a subscription to the *Militant* and a copy of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*.

"Tell me what I can do to help you" and "What can I do to help Laibar Singh?" were among the comments from people who passed by the campaign table.

Other comments reflected a polarization "He lied to get into the country," said one passerby. "He should be kicked out."

The same ultrarightist from the week before tried to disrupt the public meeting for Kennedy but was refused entry. After taking a few photos outside the meeting hall he left.

Socialist presidential candidate meets with workers, students in Philadelphia

BY ELLEN BERMAN AND JANET POST

PHILADELPHIA—During a February 17–19 tour of the Philadelphia area, Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero met with students, garment workers, meat packers, and others.

The Latino Student Association at Temple University sponsored a meeting for him on campus. A garment worker in Norristown and a meat packer in Allentown, who was involved in efforts to win a union at his plant, hosted meetings in their homes for Calero, as well.

In Norristown, the discussion centered on the question of how immigrant workers can win legal status. "In Norristown, when an immigration raid happens, people call to warn each other and you don't see any Mexicans on the streets for about three days," said Francisco, a mechanic who attended the house meeting. Calero said this was "an example of workers figuring out a way to respond collectively to attacks by the authorities."

"Many Hispanics join the army hoping to get residency," said Eddie, a construction worker in Norristown. "Then they die, and they don't get anything."

Eddie's comments weren't the only ones about the war. Questions were asked at all three meetings about the war in Iraq, including if Calero would pull the troops out.

Calero said that as commander in chief of the armed forces he would immediately withdraw all troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, Europe, Korea, and anywhere else they are stationed.

Another worker asked if ending the war would fix the recession. Calero explained how the unfolding financial crisis increases the competition among



Temple News

Róger Calero (right) speaks at Temple University meeting in Philadelphia February 18. At left is Temple student Gordon Barnes, who chaired and helped organize the meeting.

rival imperialist powers, resulting in more wars.

Speaking at a February 17 Militant Labor Forum, Calero said that when Democratic Party presidential candidate Barack Obama spoke at the General Motors plant in Janesville, Wisconsin, he had blamed the capitalist economic crisis on "a failure of leadership and imagination in Washington" and said that it was "not an inevitable part of the business cycle."

Calero said, "But it is an inevitable part of the business cycle and the normal workings of the class-divided capitalist system. The rulers are in denial about the depth of the economic crisis. There is a failure of leadership under capitalism whether it is Bush, Clinton, McCain, or Obama."

"When I first registered to vote, I didn't choose any political party, but someone checked 'Republican' on the

form," said Nidia Manzueta, a school worker, at the Allentown meeting. "When they called me to help campaign, I went. But then I found out that the Republican Party was the party of the rich. What do you do when you have a choice between two candidates, but neither one of them really represents what you want?"

Calero talked about the need for a labor party that can fight in the interests of workers and farmers. He invited Manzueta to participate in winning support for the Socialist Workers campaign, including efforts to get SWP candidates on the ballot.

"With pleasure," Manzueta responded.

While in Philadelphia, Calero was interviewed by the *Philadelphia Daily News*, *Al Día*, and MTV. The *Temple News* covered the event at Temple University.

Calero in Texas

Continued from front page

the plant, told Calero. "They came in without warning and treated everyone like dirt. You had to prove you had permission to be here before they would leave you alone."

Calero explained how the bosses use raids to break the confidence of all workers, including native-born and immigrants with papers.

Gutierrez agreed, "This has got to stop."

"When elected chief executive," the SWP candidate said, "my first act will be to legalize all undocumented immigrants."

Gutierrez invited the candidates to speak with her mother and her coworkers about the raid.

Calero and his supporters also talked to dozens of students during a class break at the University of Houston. "What would you do about the economy?" one student asked. "How can we get more jobs?"

"As president, I would implement a massive program of useful public works to provide jobs at union-scale wages for millions," said Calero. "With socialists leading the Department of Labor we would shorten the workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work around."

"When Congress was discussing the Economic Stimulus Act they were talking amongst themselves about how to stimulate the economy," he said. "But workers bear the brunt of the deepening economic crisis, and there was not a single representative of working people in the room as this act was being discussed."

'Cuba will never return to the slave barracks'

Below is an excerpt from *How Far We Slaves Have Come!*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. The book contains speeches given by African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, central leader of the Cuban Revolution, at a rally in Matanzas, Cuba, on July 26, 1991. The excerpt below is from the speech by Castro. Copyright ©1991 Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FIDEL CASTRO

But above all, we have our dignity and our independence, our bravery and our heroism, even in the difficult times in which we live—and we will have them even if times become yet more difficult. . . .

What are they going to tell us about? About that society of racial discrimination? Where in some provincial capitals whites walked on one side and Blacks on the other, on different streets, or on different paths in the park. I don't remember whether it was in Santa Clara or Villa Clara where these things went on; I can imagine the exclusive spots here. It took different forms.

What are they going to tell us about? About discrimination? About prostitu-



Juventud Rebelde

Thousands of Angolans welcome Cuban internationalist troops in 1981. "If we fought 14,000 kilometers away" in Angola, says Fidel Castro, then in Cuba, "we will fight even harder."

tion and all the vices of that society? About barefoot children begging and not attending school? About illiteracy? About women working as domestic servants and in open or de facto prostitution? [Shouts of "No!"] They better not come to us with stories about their capitalism, their market economies, and all that madness, because we already know about that, and I think we remember it quite well. . . .

Before the revolution women made up only 10 percent of the work force and now they are 40 percent. And not only that. But those women facing discrimination, without any future other than the one I mentioned, that of domestic work, of open or de facto prostitution—because sometimes they chose her for a particular job to serve as a lure or an attraction for shoppers—those women now constitute about 60 percent of the technical work force of Matanzas. [Applause] Thus, the bulk of the trained minds in this province are women.

How far we slaves have come! [Applause]

Who wants to return to the days of the slave barracks? [Shouts of "No one!"] And how will they force us to return there? With the threat of hunger perhaps, with a tighter blockade, with imperialist triumphalism following the disasters that have occurred in Eastern Europe? [Shouts of "No!"] What can they threaten us with, we the descendants of Ma-

ceo and Martí, of Máximo Gómez and Agramonte, of Che and Camilo, of Abel Santamaría and Frank País? [Prolonged applause] With the threat of famine, blockades, wars? [Shouts of "No!"] We can never experience a tighter blockade and more suffering than what our ancestors suffered, because today we are

owners of the land; now it belongs only to the people. Today we are owners of the factories; now they belong only to the people. The people own the means of production and everything else. And we will solve our problems, we will solve them however we must. But we will never return to the slave barracks! [Shouts and applause]

They may threaten us with their sophisticated weapons. Perhaps they don't believe they are dealing with a courageous and intelligent people that knows how to fight. And if we fought fourteen thousand kilometers away—however far it was—if we got into the trap at Cuito Cuanavale that the enemies had created and that turned into a trap for them, then here, on our coasts, in our countryside, in our mountains, in our cities, in our canefields, in our ricefields, in our swamps, we will fight as we fought at Cuito Cuanavale. [Applause] We will fight even harder than we fought at Cuito Cuanavale, and we will resist for more years than we resisted in Angola, until victory. [Prolonged applause]

Cuba's National Assembly

Continued from page 6

instituted. He emphasized that the government's priority "will be to meet the basic needs of the population." One challenge he said will be addressed is the dual currency established as a temporary measure in 1994. Cubans receive their income in pesos and are guaranteed certain basic necessities, heavily subsidized, through the *libreta*, or ration book. But since the Special Period, only a small number of items have been available through the *libreta*, and in quantities that are either far below most families' needs or greatly exceed them. Raúl Castro called the current rationing system "irrational and unsustainable."

At the same time, many items essential to working people such as cooking oil, shampoo, and toothpaste are available only at close to world market prices, and can only be bought using a second currency known as the "convert-

ible peso." In order to purchase these items, Cubans must exchange the pesos in which their wages are paid for these "convertible pesos," and since the current exchange rate is roughly 25 Cuban pesos for one "convertible peso," these goods are largely unattainable for a very large percentage of Cubans.

Castro dismissed the latest calls by U.S. officials for a "transition" in Cuba to "democracy"—that is, as always, moving toward "free enterprise," toward dog-eat-dog capitalism—as a precondition for lifting the five-decade-long U.S. trade embargo and for normalization of relations.

"How little they know our people, so proud of their sovereignty and independence," he said.

Yes, how little the U.S. rulers can understand a genuine popular revolution, a socialist revolution—as they've not been able to do regarding the Cuban Revolution for more than half a century.

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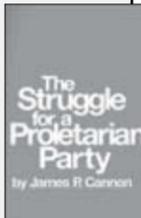
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U.S. missile shield: a deadly weapon

When the Pentagon used its antiballistic missile weapons system to shoot down a spy satellite February 20, Washington was not motivated by concern over toxic fuel falling from space into a populated area.

By downing a school-bus sized object flying 17,000 miles-per-hour 130 miles above the earth, Washington demonstrated its capacity to shoot down ballistic missiles and satellites in high orbit.

As U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates announced in a news conference after the shootdown, "the question of whether those [antiballistic missile] capabilities work has been settled."

Capitalist politicians, military officials, and the big-business press present the antiballistic missile system as a defensive tool aimed at reducing the threat of nuclear war.

This is false. It is a deadly weapon directed at the oppressed and exploited of the world. It is aimed at establishing Washington's ability to use nuclear weapons unchecked.

The first targets of the antiballistic missile weapons

program are governments in the semicolonial world who have the capacity to develop ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads. At the top of this list are the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran.

U.S. imperialism holds the world's largest arsenal of nuclear weapons. That stockpile stands at more than 4,000 weapons today, enough to destroy the world many times over.

The U.S. rulers are developing their antiballistic missile technology as they carry out deadly military assaults around the world. Tens of thousands of occupation troops are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars promise to spread, as U.S. imperialism deepens its "war on terrorism."

In 1945, the wealthy rulers of the United States did not hesitate to use nuclear bombs against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki within weeks of the first successful atomic bomb test.

There is no more stark example than this barbaric act of what nuclear first-strike capacity in the hands of U.S. imperialism means for humanity.

Pentagon shoots down spy satellite

BY PAUL PEDERSON

A missile launched from a U.S. warship February 20 destroyed a satellite traveling 17,000 miles per hour more than 130 miles above the earth's surface. It was the highest-altitude strike ever by the Pentagon's SM-3 missile, a key component of Washington's antiballistic missile weapons system.

The test is a registration of the U.S. government's progress in developing a missile "defense" system aimed at enabling Washington to use its arsenal of more than 4,000 nuclear weapons without reprisal. According to the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, Washington "by late 2004 fielded a system that provides a limited defense capability to intercept and destroy a ballistic missile launched from North Korea or Iran."

Washington has worked closely with Tokyo in extending its antiballistic missile system to Japan and the region around the Korean peninsula.

On February 4, a U.S. Navy warship equipped with AEGIS antiballistic missile technology docked at the port of Haifa in Israel. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that this system "could be deployed in the region in the event of an Iranian missile attack against Israel." Israel is currently the only state with a nuclear arsenal in the Middle East, with an estimated 80 strategic nuclear weapons, according to the Federation of American Scientists.

The Pentagon began modifying the SM-3 missile and three Navy warships in January in preparation for the satellite shootdown. The missile has been used in a number of successful tests since 2002, shooting down short- or medium-range ballistic missiles. This is the first time it has been used against a satellite.

U.S. officials denied they were using the shootdown

to test the weapons program. They claimed that, due to a computer failure, the satellite was falling out of orbit toward earth and its fuel tank posed a potential threat should it make it through the atmosphere and land in a populated area.

But after the shootdown, U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates told the press, "people remember a time some years ago when missile defense was extremely controversial and there were a lot of people who questioned whether it would work or not. . . . I believe a side benefit of yesterday's action was to underscore that the money that Congress has been voting for this has resulted in a very real capability."

The Chinese and Russian governments criticized the action. The Russian defense ministry said Washington "is trying to use the accident with its satellite to test its national anti-missile defense system's capability to destroy other countries' satellites."

"Demonstrably, we do have an [anti-satellite] capability now," David Mosher, a defense and space expert for Rand Corp., told the *Washington Post*. "Anyone who followed national missile defense issues knew we've had that inherent ability for some time. But now it's real, and we can expect there will be consequences."

"It shows that our missile defense programs are not just missile defense programs," Victoria Samson, a research analyst at the Center for Defense Information, told the *Post*. "They're also anti-satellite programs."

"It certainly would seem that protecting people against a hazardous fuel was not what this was really about," Geoffrey Forden, a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology told the *Post*. Forden said that there was virtually no chance that the satellite's fuel tank would have remained intact upon entering the earth's atmosphere.

LETTERS

Tax rebate

In your February 25 article on the government stimulus package, you correctly point out that most workers will get little, if anything, and whole categories of workers are excluded. Among those who won't receive benefits are many eligible recipients of Social Security and disabled veterans. If an individual received over \$3,000 from Social Security or Veterans Benefits in 2007, he or she is eligible for a \$300 rebate. Pensioners with little if any taxable income do not normally file federal income tax returns. Rather than the government simply sending them a rebate check, however, they must file a 2007 income tax return in order to get the \$300.

Many pensioners will never real-

ize they have to file. Even if they find out about the rebate and the filing requirement, many will be unable to fill out returns or will buy filing "assistance" from for-profit tax preparers who will take most of the money.

The IRS estimates that 10 to 20 million people who normally do not file tax returns will have to file this year in order to receive the rebate.

Bob Braxton
Atlanta, Georgia

Cuban elections

With the decision of Fidel Castro to not seek re-election as president of the Council of State, the capitalist media has taken a special interest in Cuba (a truly socialist nation

which has been the subject of many recent articles in the *Militant*). With nothing but propaganda coming from these "news" sources, I think many working people would be interested in getting the Cuban side of the story. *Granma*, the Cuban Communist Party's official newspaper, can be read at <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu>.

Walter Smolarek
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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

Kosova

Continued from front page government.

In 1989 Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic revoked Kosova's autonomy and imposed emergency rule, which lasted for 10 years. In 1999 he launched a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" that killed up to 12,000 people and expelled 1 million, mostly Albanians. After fomenting ethnic violence in Yugoslavia for years, Washington and European imperialist powers intervened. In 1999 NATO bombed Belgrade, Serbia's capital, for 78 days straight, forced Serbian troops out of Kosova, and seized control of the region. NATO forces occupy Kosova to this day.

Belgrade reacts to declaration

In response to the declaration by Kosova's national legislature, the Serbian government organized a rally in Belgrade February 21, closing down schools and offering free train rides to boost attendance.

"Serbia has annulled and will annul every act of the illegal and fictitious state created on its territory by the use of force," Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica told the crowd of 200,000. Following the rally several hundred Serbs attacked and partially burned the U.S. embassy before Serbian police intervened. The embassies of Britain, Germany, Turkey, Croatia, and Bosnia were also vandalized. Washington announced it was temporarily evacuating most diplomatic personnel from Belgrade. The European Union suspended talks on EU membership with the Serbian regime.

The "declaration of independence" was welcomed by the three leading U.S. presidential contenders, Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, and Republican John McCain. "Kosova's independence is a unique situation," said Obama. "It is in no way a precedent for anyone else in the region or around the world."

Meanwhile, in predominantly-Serbian northern Kosova, several hundred Serbs set fire to two UN border posts February 19. Slobodan Samarzdic, the Serbian government minister for Kosova, said the assault "might not be pleasant but it is legitimate." He added that Belgrade plans to "take over the customs in northern Kosova."

"The security of Kosova is a guarantee of NATO and no one can attack. Everything is under control," Kosova prime minister Hashim Thaci told the Associated Press.

Fight for self-determination

That high opinion of the foreign occupation is not unanimous among working people in Kosova. The group Vetevendosje (Self-Determination) opposes the imperialist-imposed plan and the ongoing occupation of Kosova, while fighting for self-determination.

"Lack of self-determination and self-rule enables international companies to buy very cheap our publicly and socially owned enterprises in the process of privatization, but also to control our natural resources and shape the fiscal policy," Albin Kurti, 33, a leader of the group, told the *Militant* via e-mail.

Kurti said the EU-run government "will have immunity from Kosova's law" and Belgrade will retain some control over majority Serb areas.

"Kosova didn't really need a UN mission here," he continued, "but our own seat in the UN. Likewise, we don't need an EU mission to rule over us, but Kosova's inclusion into the EU as an independent, sovereign state."

Kurti called for "strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, non-violent protests, and demonstrations. . . . for self-determination for the people of Kosova, for civil rights and freedoms, for equality and prosperity."

Kurti was arrested a year ago, after a demonstration for self-determination in which two students were killed by UN police and 80 wounded. He was jailed for five months then placed under house arrest for another five and a half months. He still faces charges of "leading a crowd that committed a criminal offense."

THE TRUTH ABOUT YUGOSLAVIA



by Argiris Malapanis and George Fyson
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