

Thousands turn out in Australia protests against massacre of Jews

BY BOB AIKEN
SYDNEY — Over 18,000 Jews and substantial numbers of supporters outraged by the murderous assault at Bondi Beach a week earlier came out for a vigil Dec. 21 hosted by the Chabad of Bondi. Two Jew-hating Islamist gunmen had carried out a cold-

EDITORIAL:
Join the fight against Jew-hatred, defend Israel as a refuge for Jews
— see page 10

blooded attack on a celebration there organized by Chabad to mark the start of the Jewish Hanukkah festival, killing 15 and wounding 40.
The gathering began with a minute of silence — part of a nationwide observance to honor those killed. Similar events were held throughout the country.
The attackers used high-powered rifles and shotguns to kill as many Jews as they could. They also threw homemade bombs into the park, which would have caused extensive carnage had they ex-

Continued on page 6

Rallies against gov't, economic crisis spread across Iran

BY SETH GALINSKY
Tens of thousands of small merchants — battered by the plummeting value of the national currency — closed up their shops and took to the streets in rolling protests that began in several bazaars in Tehran Dec. 28. They were joined by other working people. By the fifth day the protests had spread to at least 21 cities as well as to a dozen university campuses.
The protests come amid long-simmering opposition among workers, farmers and middle-class layers to the reactionary capitalist regime that rules Iran and to the consequences of its deadly wars, including attacks on Israel.
Over the last year there have been weekly protests by retirees demanding adequate pensions, by oil workers demanding an end to the exploitative use of contractors and many other actions. Unions issued calls for an end to the deportation of Afghani immigrants. Prisoners carry out weekly hunger strikes against the death penalty. Working farmers have protested government policies that sink them deeper in debt.
“The bazaar, tradespeople, producers

Continued on page 7

Sky Chefs workers protest at airports across US in 7-year-long contract fight



Militant/Ved Dookhun
Members of UNITE HERE Local 274 picket in Philadelphia Dec. 20, part of actions at several U.S. airports in fight for new contract with Sky Chefs to improve wages, health care, safety.

BY VED DOOKHUN
PHILADELPHIA — Over 250 LSG Sky Chefs workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 274, joined other UNITE HERE unionists in a spirited and loud protest rally at the airport here Dec. 20. It was part of a series of similar actions in Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Seattle in a fight for a new

contract, which began in 2018. The workers prepare, load and deliver in-flight food and beverages for major airlines like American.
Key issues include higher wages and better, more affordable health care. And Sky Chefs bosses are implementing a new catering “protocol,” cutting to just one person the long-

Continued on page 3

Protest Washington's blockade on Venezuela!

Move deepens US rulers' economic war on Cuba



U.S. Attorney General's Office

U.S. troops seize tanker carrying Venezuelan oil off country's coast in Dec. 10 raid. Washington is ramping up its naval blockade of Venezuela, denying delivery of sorely needed oil to Cuba.

BY RÓGER CALERO
The U.S. government escalated its military attacks against Venezuela Dec. 16, announcing it had put in place “a total and complete blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers” entering and leaving the country. Since then U.S. naval forces have seized two tankers loaded with crude as they sailed from Venezuela, and tried to intercept another on its way to pick up oil.
“Venezuela is completely surrounded

by the largest armada ever assembled in the history of South America,” wrote President Donald Trump, announcing the new assault on the country's sovereignty aimed at ousting Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.
These attacks are having a chilling effect on vessel owners who are afraid their tankers will be seized by Washington. In the meantime, Venezuela's oil customers, including Chinese re-

Continued on page 4

Workers in Russia face disaster from effects of Putin's invasion of Ukraine

BY ROY LANDERSEN
Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against the people of Ukraine is having disastrous consequences for workers in uniform, with Russian casu-

alties growing at the highest rate since the invasion began nearly four years ago. Moscow continues its murderous bombardment of Ukrainian cities but is failing to crush the determination of working people there to defend their country's national sovereignty.
Moscow launched a massive drone and missile attack against Kyiv Dec. 26. Two people were killed, 32 were injured and over a third of the capital lost power and heat.

Continued on page 6

Ábrego García makes gains in fight for rights of immigrants

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN
GREENBELT, Md. — On Dec. 22, the Department of Justice moved yet again to try and put Kilmar Ábrego García back behind bars. They were unsuccessful. However, the government's vindictive prosecution of the 30-year-old construction apprentice continues, despite court rulings that his March 12 arrest by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents violated a standing court order and

Continued on page 2

Inside

- Starbucks workers strike across country for higher pay, benefits 2
- Let Cuba Play! Stop US rulers' ban on visas for Cuban athletes 4
- Socialist Workers Party campaigns against Jew-hatred 5
- Workers face growing economic crisis as bosses go all-in for AI 5
- Mangione and the left's love of political violence 10

Ábrego García fight makes gains

Continued from front page
his ensuing deportation back to El Salvador was illegal, lacking a valid removal order.

On Dec. 11, Ábrego García, a member of SMART union Local 100, was freed from immigration detention after U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis in Maryland ordered the government to release him. She issued a restraining order barring ICE from any further efforts to imprison him until and unless she changed her mind.

As Ábrego García, approached the courtroom door Dec. 22, hand in hand with his wife, Jennifer Vasquez Sura, the 50 of us lined up to attend the hearing and support him broke into applause. Outside the hearing over 100 more supporters rallied in his defense. Many carried signs saying “Stand with Kilmar Ábrego García SMART,” given out by his union, which helped build the rally.

Filing into the packed courtroom with him were his brother César and mother Cecilia, as well as members of CASA, the immigration group that defends him. Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, his attorney, brought his two children.

Throughout the one-hour hearing, Judge Xinis repeatedly grilled Justice Department attorney Ernesto Molina. He repeatedly said he was unable to tell the court what the government planned to do next if authorities arrested Ábrego García again.

“Once again, I’m making a finding that these representations, which are misrepresentations, are in bad faith,” Xinis told Molina.

“Yet again for the seventh or eighth time, the government employed the tactic of sending an attorney into court

who feigned ignorance as to what the government’s plan is,” Sandoval-Moshenberg told a cheering crowd after the hearing. Xinis said she will now decide whether or not to make her restraining order permanent.

“This decision means Kilmar gets to sleep in his own bed, without the fear of being separated from his family and community in the middle of the night,” CASA leader Lydia Walther-Rodriguez said. “No one should have to bear the weight and anguish of a family separation, at any random moment, just for demanding their constitutional rights.”

Fight for immigrant workers’ rights

Ábrego García’s fight is a flashpoint in the broader battle for the rights of undocumented workers and unity of the working class. The Trump administration seized and deported him to the notorious CECOT mega prison in El Salvador where he was beaten and tortured. His deportation violated an explicit 2019 court order prohibiting the government from doing so, because he and his family faced threats from violent gangs there.

Facing mounting public pressure and a direct order from the Supreme Court, the government brought him back to the U.S., but only after they had filed criminal charges of “human smuggling” in Tennessee. Ábrego García has steadfastly denied these charges and argues that prosecutors are vindictively and criminally targeting him. Judge Waverly Crenshaw Jr., who is in charge of this case, has said he tends to agree with this.

The judge had set a trial date, but has now cancelled it. Instead, he will preside over an evidentiary hearing



Reuters/Evelyn Hockstein; inset, AP Photo/Stephanie Scarbrough
Kilmar Ábrego García, center, outside U.S. District Court hearing in Greenbelt, Maryland, Dec. 22 along with, from left, his mother, Cecilia, and wife Jennifer Vasquez Sura. Inset, more than 100 supporters rallied there in his defense, some carrying signs from SMART, his union.

Jan. 28 where Justice Department witnesses will be questioned about their vindictive prosecution. The reason for this became clear Dec. 30 when the judge released a series of letters from top officials in the Department of Justice pressing Tennessee prosecutors to go after Ábrego García. All along they have denied this was true.

While at home, Ábrego García has to wear two electronic tracking de-

vices, one on each leg. One is there as a condition of his parole in the government’s frame-up criminal case against him in Tennessee and the other was put there by ICE.

Still he managed to take the moral high ground, recording a TikTok video where he lip syncs “Himno de Victoria,” (Hymn of Victory), a biblical song of triumph. It has been viewed by millions.

Starbucks workers strike across country for higher pay, benefits

BY EDWIN FRUIT

ROSEVILLE, Minn. — Members of Starbucks Workers United mounted a lively strike picket line in front of the Starbucks here Dec. 24. They’re part of 4,500 Starbucks workers on strike across the country since Nov. 13 in a fight for a union contract. Roseville is a suburb of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Bex, a barista at the Starbucks in Chanhassen, another Twin Cities suburb, said most of the strikers would go back to work on Dec. 29, but some, like those in Washington state who are able to get unemployment compensation, will continue picketing.

They’re fighting for a union contract that guarantees higher pay, more hours

that assure them benefits, as well as resolution of hundreds of outstanding unfair labor practice charges.

“At the end of last week, the union informed us that partners at 166 of the 215 coffeehouses on their strike list would like to unconditionally return to work,” Starbucks management announced, “meaning they are ready to return under the current terms of their employment.”

Workers at 560 of more than 17,000 Starbucks stores are currently unionized.

Alex, the picket line captain, thanked Socialist Workers Party members for coming out in solidarity during the strike.

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THE MILITANT

Support growing protests by workers in Iran

Protests in Iran spread as opposition among working people grows against reactionary regime’s support to Hamas and war against Israel, the plunging value of the currency, rising prices and political repression. Follow these unfolding developments in the ‘Militant.’



Thousands of oil and gas workers march Dec. 9 for higher wages, job safety in Iran.

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Sky Chefs workers protest

Continued from front page

standing two-person crews — a truck driver and spotter — that cater the planes. These new and dangerous cuts have already been implemented in Seattle, San Francisco and Minneapolis.

In Minneapolis one worker was pinned against a plane as he attempted to stop the delivery truck from rolling forward, crushing his arm and leg.

“Not having a spotter, this is very dangerous,” NeNe Diallo, a UNITE HERE Local 274 shop steward, said at the Philadelphia rally. “They haven’t tried that here yet.”

The protests also targeted American Airlines. Workers explained the airlines profit from their labor and need to take responsibility for their safety. “The accountability for workers’ safety does not lie with Sky Chefs alone,” UNITE HERE National President Gwen Mills said in a statement about the protests. “American Airlines must take responsibility for what its contractors do.”

American boasted a record revenue of \$13.7 billion in 2025. LSG Sky Chefs is an international company based in Germany and operates in 49 countries. It reported \$2.8 billion in revenue in 2023.

Workers joined the action in solidarity from all across the region. Delegations of UNITE HERE hotel workers came from New York, New Jersey, Baltimore and Connecticut. A busload of union hotel workers came from Washington, D.C. Philadelphia elected officials and union leaders addressed the rally.

The reason Sky Chefs bosses have been able to drag the negotiations out for seven years is that the airlines and their contractors are considered “essential” workers and are covered by the notorious Railway Labor Act. This anti-labor law imposes years of arbitration, mediation boards and other legal obstacles to the right to strike.

In 2024 airline caterers at Sky Chefs’ main competitor, Gate Gourmet, finally were able to vote to strike after eight years of stalled negotiations. The strike threat helped force important concessions from the bosses that led to a new contract. They won higher pay

and a new, union health care plan.

Gate Gourmet workers are represented by a coalition of unions, including UNITE HERE; Teamsters; Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers; and the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union.

Sky Chefs workers protest the Grinch

MIAMI — At a demonstration at the Miami International Airport Dec. 19, UNITE HERE Local 355 mobilized 75 union members who work here and at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood airport to highlight their fight for a decent contract at Sky Chefs. The action had a holiday atmosphere, with signs reflecting the demands of the bosses, depicted as the Grinch, such as “More work, less pay, low wages now” and “Health care is for wimps.”

“Sky Chefs and American Airlines are not giving anything,” Patrick Volcin, a local UNITE HERE organizer, said. “We’ll keep up the fight until we get a good contract like the one Gate Gourmet workers got last year.”

Sonja Toledo, a union leader who has worked at Sky Chefs for over 20 years, said, “We are fighting for a dignified salary. No one can live on \$14.50 an hour. The same is true for all the other airport workers here.

“We work with love, but also with sacrifice, through illness and sore muscles,” she added. “We need health insurance and respect as human beings.”

The union local is also in the middle of negotiations for contracts for other workers at the Miami airport, as well as for workers at the Miami Convention Center. Some of those workers joined the protest.

“The bosses always look to take care of themselves by paying us less,” Eliana Varela, an airport worker here for six years, told the *Militant*.

“The most important issue for us is fair pay and respect,” Robert Woder, a cashier at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood airport, said. “We’re here to serve. We’re the front-line people.”

He pointed to government attacks on immigrant workers today and the impact it has on them. “It affects so many



Militant/Ray Parsons

UNITE HERE members, who have been fighting for a contract at Sky Chefs since 2018 picketed at U.S. airports in December over wages, health care, safety. Above, Local 11 in Los Angeles.

of our co-workers who also have family members in their home countries who are trying to survive,” he said.

— Rachele Fruit

Workers picket Ebenezer ‘Sky Chef’ Scrooge

SAN FRANCISCO — Sky Chefs workers made a lot of noise as they and their supporters chanted, picketed and rallied Dec. 19 at the airport here. Their signs said, “It’s our turn,” signifying they are demanding wages and benefits like those won in 2024 by workers at Gate Gourmet.

One of the pickets, Nathaniel Barquedano, was part of the Gate Gourmet fight. Now he works at Sky Chefs. “It’s not right that some are making less than others, doing the same work,” he told the *Militant*.

The workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 2, passed out a flyer explaining safety is a key issue. The bosses are moving to cut the number of workers on delivery trucks from two to one.

A high point of the picket was a skit featuring a visit by Ebenezer “Sky Chef” Scrooge to the picket line, defending his right to put his profits ahead of workers’ pay and safety. He claimed workers didn’t deserve benefits and should be grateful to have any job at all. He was roundly

booed and answered with chants demanding a contract.

— Betsey Stone

Sky Chefs, Flying Food Group workers protest at LAX

LOS ANGELES — Over 50 UNITE HERE Local 11 members staged a lively protest outside two of the terminals at Los Angeles International Airport Dec. 17 about contract fights at two airline catering companies here. Workers at Sky Chefs prepare and deliver onboard meals for American Airlines, and catering workers at Flying Food Group service a number of international airlines.

Workers from restaurants and retail stores inside the airport also joined the protest.

— Ray Parsons

Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 8, 2001

Working people and all defenders of democratic rights have a stake in joining the fight led by the NAACP to defend voting rights. The NAACP says it has 486 separate reports of problems faced by U.S.-born Blacks, Haitians and other members of oppressed nationalities, mostly working people.

Winning and extending the right to vote has been a hard-fought struggle by working people since the founding of the U.S. The fight for universal suffrage has strengthened the working class.

The violations are only part of the efforts to disenfranchise working people. In addition, a growing number of states deny all voting rights for people convicted of felony offenses — including those who have already served out their sentences. In Florida and Alabama, for example, 31 percent of all Black men are permanently barred from voting because of felony convictions.



January 16, 1976

PITTSBURGH — Almost all members of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers are continuing their strike, now in its sixth week, in defiance of a court injunction issued Jan. 3. “Let me state unequivocally,” PFT President Albert Finjunction said in response to the court order, “that the strike will not end as a result of this. It will only end when we have negotiated and ratified new contracts.”

In a show of strength and solidarity, some 1,800 teachers walked the picket lines in nine-degree weather starting at seven o’clock this morning. Three thousand gathered for a rally later in the morning.

The PFT is seeking salary increases, a limited cost-of-living escalator clause, a guarantee against layoffs and a limit on class size. The teachers have won support on the picket lines from students, parents groups and other unions.



January 8, 1951

The “great debate” over foreign policy is without precedent in Twentieth Century America. The American people feel the nation drifting rudderless in a swift tide toward military and economic disasters.

Under the impact of the Korean defeat, the American people — who previously left such matters to the professionals in the business of settling world policy — have entered the debate. They want no global war which augurs only a calamitous future of indefinite duration and little hope of ultimate success.

As American workers break the bonds which tie them to the bankrupt political machines of the old capitalist parties, they will forge new bonds of solidarity with the oppressed of all lands. Together they will find the only real solution to the crisis into which our country and theirs have been plunged — the program of world socialism.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Oakland

Attacks on Farmworkers, Punjabi Truckers and Others: Labor’s Stakes in Pushing Back Anti-Immigrant Drive. Speaker: Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., Jan. 11. Refreshments, 5:30 p.m.; program, 6 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Celebrate the Cuban Revolution and Its Internationalist Solidarity in Africa. Speaker: David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Jan. 10, 7 p.m. Donation \$5. 4750 S. Pulaski Road. Tel.: (312) 792-6160.

NEW YORK

New York

Celebrate the 67th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution! Speaker: Mary-Alice Waters, Socialist Workers Party National Committee. Sun., Jan. 11. Reception, 2 p.m.; program, 3 p.m.. Donation: \$10. 307 W. 36th St., 13th Floor. Tel.: (646) 434-8117.

Let Cuba Play! Stop US rulers' ban on visas for Cuban athletes

BY JANET POST

The U.S. government's denial of visas for Cuban athletes leading to the 2028 Summer Olympics and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles is being challenged by the Let Cuba Play! campaign.

As part of its economic and political war against Cuba, Washington has denied visas to nearly 100 Cuban athletes, coaches and officials since early 2025. This includes blocking their participation in qualifying matches, not inviting them to the World Baseball Classic this March and banning Cuban Olympic Committee officials from attending regional meetings in Miami and Puerto Rico.

The Cuban men's basketball team was prevented from competing in the International Basketball Association AmeriCup Olympic qualifier in Puerto Rico last February. "Cuba does not ask for privileges," the Cuban Baseball and Softball Federation said. Its athletes "will not bow to political exclusions."

"We know there are many people throughout the world that support solidarity among its peoples," José Luis Bos Rodríguez, a former Cuban baseball player, coach, and former manager of the Cazadores de Artemisa team, told the *Militant* by phone from Cuba Dec. 25.

"Cuban athletes and ballplayers face unjust discrimination," he said. "It's well known that the governments have differences, but the people are not responsible for them. We say let them play, whether it's for the Olympic Games or the World Baseball Classic."

Let Cuba Play! encourages anyone who supports the right of Cuban athletes to compete to get out the word about the campaign. Join in urging the International Olympic Committee to push back against all efforts to close the games to any of the world's athletes. Information on getting involved can be found at www.letcubaplay.com.

Why the ban on Cuba?

The U.S. imperialists "are afraid of our victories and intend to convert a sports event into a battlefield against our revolution," President Fidel Castro told Cuban athletes leaving for the Central American and Caribbean

Games in Jamaica in 1961. "They will try to create for it and our athletes the greatest difficulties."

After the overthrow of the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, Castro, and the revolutionary government he led, organized workers and peasants to overturn capitalist rule. Athletics, which prior to the revolution had been controlled by the wealthy for profits, was transformed. Access to playing sports was opened to all, a move joyfully welcomed by working people of all ages.

Physical education became part of the school curriculum and tens of thousands of teachers were trained. Sports facilities were built throughout the country.

Unlike in the U.S. and other capitalist nations, Cuban sports are not profit-driven. Athletes are not paid huge salaries or enriched by corporate endorse-

Protest Washington's blockade on Venezuela!

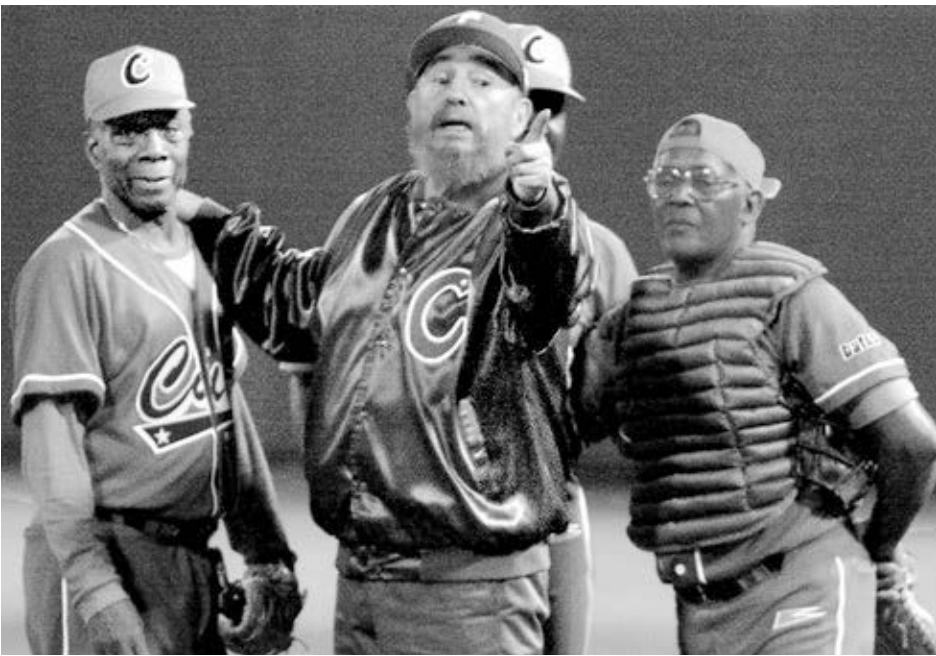
Continued from front page

finers, are demanding steeper discounts, robbing the country of much-needed revenue.

At the moment, the U.S. military has at least 12 warships, including an aircraft carrier, and some 15,000 troops deployed in the region. The Pentagon moved additional special-operations aircraft and troops to Puerto Rico Dec. 22. Trump claimed Dec. 29 the CIA had carried out drone strikes on a port, saying it was used by a narcotics gang. If confirmed, that would represent a further escalation in Washington's military campaign.

Blockades, even partial ones, are an act of war. In October 1962, during what is known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, President John F. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade against Cuba and placed U.S. armed forces on nuclear alert as it assembled an invasion force of 90,000 troops primed for an assault against Cuba. Washington's invasion plans were stayed by the mobilization of millions of armed Cuban workers and farmers ready to face the invaders, and to defend conquests they made through their socialist revolution.

For over six decades the U.S. rulers



AP Photo/Jose Goitia

Cuban baseball exhibition game in Havana, 1999. President Fidel Castro managed the team.

ments. Cubans can attend a game or tournament for free or at a tiny cost.

Cuba has opened its doors to training athletes from other countries and sent thousands of coaches and trainers

to dozens of underdeveloped countries. Join in the campaign!

Tom Headley in Washington, D.C., contributed to this article.

have maintained a relentless economic and political war against Cuba aimed at overturning its revolutionary government. The current escalation against Venezuela is aimed both at removing the Maduro government and cutting off Cuba's main supply of oil, dealing devastating blows to its energy supplies and revenue sources.

Rights of oppressed nations

Trump said Dec. 16 the blockade will continue until the Venezuelan government returns "all the oil, land, and other assets that they previously stole from us."

The U.S. rulers' claim to ownership of Venezuela's oil and other resources tramples on the right of sovereign states and peoples to dispose freely of their natural resources, a principle central to the struggles for self-determination of colonial peoples during the 1900s and to the unresolved battles for economic and political independence from imperialist domination today.

Venezuela holds the world's largest known oil reserves. Since oil was discovered there in the 1920s it was developed and controlled by U.S. firms that syphoned the country's oil wealth into their own coffers, leaving only a

fraction of the revenue for Venezuela. In 1976 Caracas nationalized the oil industry, taking control of the assets of Exxon, Shell and Chevron. That, however, did not mean the U.S. companies ceased plundering the country's wealth and enjoying immense preferential treatment from subservient Venezuelan governments.

With the election of Hugo Chávez as president in 1998, the Venezuelan government sought to gain greater control over the industry and the state-owned Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. — PDVSA — whose management remained deeply tied to the former U.S. owners.

When oil bosses tried to bring down the Chávez government by organizing a lockout at the country's refineries in late 2002, workers responded by restarting production and joining together to defend the plants from bosses' sabotage. The lockout failed.

A series of restructuring measures in 2007 eventually led to the renationalization of assets of foreign firms, with Caracas offering to pay them book value compensation, which they rejected, demanding billions more. Chevron is currently the only major U.S. company that profits dearly from its operations in Venezuela through a special license from the U.S. Treasury Department. Others have withdrawn due to punitive sanctions by Washington.

"We don't owe anything to anybody," Maduro said Dec. 23, "to the contrary, they're the ones who owe us."

Through a confrontation with the Maduro government the U.S. capitalist rulers are reasserting their dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Their course, as outlined in the Trump administration's National Security Strategy released early in December, is aimed at denying other powers, especially Beijing, control over the region's vast wealth.

Over decades China's state capitalist rulers have been advancing their influence in the region. Economic and political relations with Venezuela have occupied a central place in that strategy. By seizing China-bound oil tankers off of Venezuela's coast, Washington is sending a warning toward Beijing in the longer-term global power struggle for control of resources, maritime routes and influence.

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Workers face growing economic crisis as bosses go all-in for AI

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

“U.S. economy grows at fastest pace in two years,” the BBC headlined a year-end report Dec. 23. *Forbes* followed suit, with a Dec. 28 article, “Strong GDP And Rising Profits Set Up A Resilient US Economy for 2026.”

President Donald Trump chimed in with a Dec. 17 speech, saying, “We’re poised for an economic boom the likes of which the world has never seen.”

But this up, up and away enthusiasm ignores the sharply class-divided reality between the ruling rich — which the capitalist media and the White House serve — and the working class.

These claims, based on averaging all “people” together, aim to hide the fact the top 10% of households today account for nearly half of all consumer spending. And workers know all too well where that leaves us.

Let’s just look at some of the facts. Prices for the basics working-class families need — from groceries to electricity, rent, child care, transportation, health care and more — have risen at least 25% over the past half decade, under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

At the same time, full-time jobs with decent pay and benefits are increasingly hard to get. Over the past year, bosses have shown the door to more than 1 million workers. And for those still on the job, the bosses are pushing punishing speedup.

The official U.S. unemployment rate rose to 4.6% in November, the highest in more than four years. But if you include the 5.5 million people working part-time hours because they want, but cannot get, a full-time job, or are only “marginally attached to the labor force,” the rate is 8.7%. The jobless rate for Blacks rose to 8.3% in November and for youth under 20 it shot up to 16.3%. And these figures don’t include the millions of “discouraged” workers the government doesn’t bother to count.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Dec. 17 that real average hourly earnings for all workers with a job increased just 0.8% over the past 12 months. That’s well below the pace at which prices are rising. According to November’s Consumer Price Index, over the past year coffee is up 18.8%; steaks, 14.7%; motor-vehicle repairs, 9.7%; utility gas service, 9.1%; electricity, 6.9%; day care, 4.7%; and the list goes on.

Rising health care costs

Health care costs are also going through the roof. Among those hardest hit are older workers and those no longer part of the labor force, many of whom need quality care but can’t afford it. “Spending on at-home elder care shot up 7 percent from August to September, the largest monthly increase on record,” the *Washington Post* said Dec. 7. “From September 2024 to September 2025, home health care surged 12 percent.”

At the same time, the government cut Medicare funding for care by home health agencies by \$220 million for 2026. It’s the fourth consecutive year of such cuts.

And insurance company bosses are celebrating the New Year by increasing monthly premiums for health care coverage, in some cases by astronomical amounts. Ellen Allen, head of West

Virginians for Affordable Healthcare, told the *Financial Times* she had been paying \$487.50 a month. But she’s now got a new health care plan, with lousier coverage, and is being charged \$1,967.50 a month. She’s one of nearly 22 million people facing rate increases under the Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare.

Since 2020 the price of new cars and trucks in the U.S. increased 33%, with the average price of a new car now over \$50,000. More workers getting cars, including used cars, find themselves saddled with big, high-interest loans and steeped in debt. In the third quarter of 2025 these debts totaled \$1.66 trillion.

Class-divided system

The tiny minority who make up the obscenely wealthy folk of the U.S., a subset of whom comprise the capitalist ruling class, along with their upper-middle-class hangers-on, don’t confront any of these problems. They live in an entirely different class reality, one we hardly ever see, except on the society page or at something like the Met Gala in New York. They spend tens of millions of dollars, and in some cases hundreds of millions, on private luxury housing, places you find advertised in the Luxury Homes section of the *Wall Street Journal*.

They skip the lines at the airport, flying in private jets; stay at specialized villas you couldn’t get into; are chauffeured everywhere they go; dine in restaurants you’d be barred from if you had to ask what the food cost; and entertain in pri-

Socialist Workers Party campaigns against Jew-hatred

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

Since the Jew-hating massacre at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, Dec. 14, members of the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada and the U.K. have stepped up their campaigning, explaining the stakes for the labor movement and all working people in combating Jew-hatred and pogroms wherever they take place.

At the center of the party’s campaigning is going door to door in working-class neighborhoods. Party members also join strike picket lines and union rallies, demonstrations against attacks on immigrants and protests against Washington’s blockade of Venezuela and Cuba.

They explain that as the capitalist crisis deepens and the rulers accelerate their march toward a third world war, the need for workers to break with the capitalist parties and fight to take political power into their own hands is sharply posed.

In Arlington, Texas, SWP members Hilda Cuzco and Gerardo Sánchez campaigned in a Walmart parking lot Dec. 20. Lisa Reddix got a copy of the *Militant* when she saw the article condemning the pogrom in Australia. “I’m interested in what’s going on and I feel there must be a change for the hard-working people,” she told Cuzco.

“What’s in the newspaper got my interest,” Bernita Dowell told Cuzco and Sánchez when they showed her the *Militant*. She said she was interested “in the book on the history of the Jewish people,” pointing to *The Fight*



Google Earth

Speculators are putting massive amounts of capital into building huge AI data centers, consuming large amounts of power. So little housing for workers is built, and our electric bills soar.

vate salons. Even hospital wards they go to are private, hidden from view, free from worry about seeing you and yours.

They further enrich themselves by participating in a private invitation-only stock market just for the wealthy, like a \$40 billion offering by OpenAI made available only to them. “The dynamic is exacerbating the wealth disparity in the U.S.,” crowed the *Wall Street Journal*, “as the growth in the net worth of the richest Americans is far outpacing all other income groups.”

Huge amounts of capital are being invested in AI infrastructure and the massive data centers that suck up large amounts of power — helping boost your utility bills — in hopes of reaping a profit bonanza and reinvigorating their crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The so-called Magnificent Seven tech companies — Google parent Al-

phabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia and Tesla — are expected to spend more than \$300 billion on AI in 2025 alone, reports Reuters, with this climbing to \$500 billion in 2026. However, with all the big bucks pouring into this speculative orgy, even its participants admit it might all just go bust. Even if that’s how it turns out, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Meta who is worth some \$227 billion today, told the *Financial Times* you’ve still got to get in the game. “If we end up mispending a couple of hundred billion dollars, I think that is going to be very unfortunate.” But if you don’t try, you’ll never come out on top.

The only other problem is the profit-driven run after building data centers means the capital to build affordable housing for working people has virtually disappeared.

Against Jew-Hatred and Pogroms in the Imperialist Epoch: Stakes for the International Working Class.

She said she was concerned about rising Jew-hatred “because I’m Black, and I can relate to injustice due to color or religion.” She decided not to get the book now, but handed Sánchez \$20, saying, “I want to donate to help somebody who is interested in a book or wants to subscribe to the paper.”

In Fort Worth the next day, SWP member Alyson Kennedy met a construction worker as she campaigned door to door. He knew about the massacre of Jews in Australia and the stepped-up threats by Washington against Venezuela. He bought a *Militant* subscription.

In Hialeah west of Miami, SWP members met a retired couple from Honduras when they campaigned at a parking lot. They listened with interest as party members explained what can be done to fight Jew-hatred. They drove off, but came back 10 minutes later and donated \$5.

“The U.S. imperialists are crazy,” a worker, originally from Cuba, told SWP member Laura Anderson, pointing to their stepped-up war moves against Venezuela. He donated \$5 and bought a *Militant* containing the introduction to *Cuba and the Independence War in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: The Fall of the Last Colonial Empire in Africa* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters.

The book, available Jan. 1, is a first-hand account by Cuban revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke of one of the most important anti-imperialist struggles that swept the globe after World War II. It

brings to life Cuba’s internationalist aid to the revolutionary struggle led by Amílcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau.

In Minneapolis Dec. 20 many of the participants at a march in defense of immigrant rights warmed up inside the Karmell Mall, including SWP members Mary Martin and Joanne Murphy. They found an interest in the *Militant* and books by party leaders.

“I am here to stand up for my neighbors who are being targeted by ICE,” Carolyn Belle, who is Jewish, told Martin and Murphy. She got a copy of the *Militant*, telling the SWP members she was glad to see the paper’s coverage of protests against the slaughter in Australia, as well as an article on a protest called by the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 9 demanding a halt to Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents using post office property to organize arrests of immigrants in Minneapolis.

At a coffee shop in the mall, Abdi, who had participated in the march, looked through the *Militant* and told Martin that something had to be done to stop the killing of Jews.

Originally from Somalia, he agreed with Martin and Murphy when they explained the defeat of Hamas was necessary for Jews, Arabs and other working people in the region to advance their common class interests. The discussion was cut short when his boss showed up. Abdi asked the SWP campaigners to come back another day with *The Fight Against Jew-Hatred and Pogroms in the Imperialist Epoch* for him to purchase.

Thousands turn out in Australia

Continued from front page
ploded. Another bomb was also found in their car, along with homemade Islamic State flags.

Thousands had come to the Bondi Pavilion during the week after the massacre to show solidarity and lay flowers at a rapidly expanding memorial.

After 14,500 people registered to attend the vigil, held in an enclosed park area, thousands more showed up to watch the event on a big screen nearby. It was a solemn event as well as a show of defiance against Jew-hatred.

Many were angry at the federal Labor Party government, which has presided over a surge in antisemitism in Australia since Hamas’ deadly pogrom killed 1,200 Jews and others in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was booed by sections of the crowd when he was introduced, and organizers declined his offer to speak.

“How, after two years of escalating antisemitism and warnings from the Jewish community” could the attack still take place? New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies President David Ossip told the crowd. “Because whilst we are all in shock, and deeply sad, we are not surprised.”

Albanese and other government leaders had demonized Israel for the devastation and deaths in Gaza, which was ruled and used as a shield by Hamas. And they downplayed the growing acts of antisemitism, helping encourage the normalization of Jew-hatred.

Organizers reported the police ignored a request to assign stronger protection for the Dec. 14 Hanukkah event at Bondi Beach, despite increased threats against Jews.

New government attacks

The Labor Party government in New South Wales responded to the Bondi shootings by ramming through legislation that undermines the right to free speech and to protest. It gives police the power to refuse permits for protests for up to three months after they declare there is a threat of a “terror” incident. The NSW police commissioner immediately banned all public assemblies across most of Sydney for two weeks.

The state government imposed additional restrictions on gun ownership. It outlawed the display of “terrorist” symbols and said it would toughen “hate speech” laws in the new year, a blow to free speech.

On the federal level, the first statement by Albanese the evening of the massacre did not even mention that Jews were the target.

He said Canberra would tighten restrictions on gun ownership, and announced new measures increasing penalties on “hate speech” and tightening the country’s immigration laws. He also said the government will step up its power to target “those who spread hate, division and radicalization.”

At the same time, Albanese has rejected calls by Jewish groups for a federal Royal Commission of Inquiry into the attack.

Jew-hatred continues to fester. A rabbi’s car adorned with Hanukkah decorations was torched in a Melbourne driveway Christmas morning. His wife and three children were evacuated from the house after the car erupted into flames just yards from their bedroom. Graffiti attacking Jews and Israel continues to appear throughout Australian cities.

The federally funded film financier Screen Australia has told Jewish filmmakers to tone down Jewish themes in their funding applications, the media reported. Meanwhile, British actor Khalid Abdalla, an opponent of Israel’s right to exist, has been chosen to headline the Sydney Festival in January with a performance exploring “the violence in Gaza.”

Workers in Russia face disaster from Putin’s Ukraine war

Continued from front page

For the last two weeks of December, Odesa, the largest port in Ukraine, was pounded by Russian drones and missiles in the worst shelling of the city since the war began. Docks and power stations were targeted with at least nine people killed.

President Donald Trump is pushing the U.S. rulers’ own interests as he tries to broker concessions from Kyiv to convince Moscow to end its war. Washington’s National Security Strategy, published in November, says its goal is to “reestablish strategic stability with Russia,” to open opportunities for profits and expanded influence. The U.S. rulers seek to tear Moscow away from its close ties to Beijing.

Putin’s regime would welcome a normalization of relations with Washington but remains determined to fight on to conquer more of Ukraine.

In 2025, Moscow suffered just under 400,000 casualties, the most in any year of the war. Yet Moscow’s forces only seized 1% more of Ukraine’s territory, without gaining any strategic objective.

“I would never have signed a contract if I’d known what it’s like out



AP photo/Mark Baker

Over 18,000 Jews and supporters attend memorial Dec. 21 at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, honoring the 15 killed and dozens wounded in Jew-hating pogrom there the week before.

Members of the Communist League in Sydney built and joined the Dec. 21 vigil at Bondi Beach, widely distributing a statement by the League condemning the Dec. 14 pogrom there and pointing to a working-class road to fight Jew-hatred.

They organized a special Militant Labour Forum the evening before to discuss how the capitalist rulers use Jew-hatred to appeal to middle-class

layers facing disaster as the crisis of their system deepens. The rulers then target Jews, the unions and communists. Rising antisemitism today reflects what is coming, unless workers and the unions organize and respond.

“The fight against Jew-hatred and defence of Israel as a refuge for Jews is a life-or-death question for the working class everywhere,” the Communist League statement says.

there. Our television is lying to us,” Fyodor, a soldier from Siberia, told the *Washington Post*. He was on a bus of wounded Russian soldiers in Olkhovodka, south of Moscow. He didn’t give his full name to avoid repercussions for criticizing the war.

Fyodor had his lower leg blown off by a mine two days before as the remnants of his unit advanced on Lyman in Ukraine. He was one of just 10 people left of the 110-strong unit he joined two years ago. Losing his leg “means that I can finally go home — alive,” he said.

“We’re fighting for fields that we cannot even take,” soldier Kirill added.

Moscow currently controls about 75% of the Donetsk province, and around 99% of neighboring Luhansk in the Donbas region. The Kremlin is demanding Kyiv’s surrender of the rest. “Either we liberate these territories by force of arms or Ukrainian troops leave,” threatened Putin. The Kremlin boasts of its short-lived battlefield gains as it tries to tilt any proposed settlement of the war further in its favor.

Russian commanders have been throwing troops into suicidal attacks to capture the ruined city of Pokrovsk.

They are using a meat processing plant behind the lines to store the dead bodies of Russian soldiers because of the unprecedented number of casualties.

Business has boomed for Russia’s funeral industry. Prices for coffins have almost doubled in the past year, while the cost of gravedigging has risen. Profits for the top five burial companies rocketed in 2024 over the previous year.

Youth in Russia oppose Putin’s war

At home, the Kremlin keeps tightening its repression, hoping to stifle and break opponents of its war.

Members of the band Stoptime, Diana Loginova, known as Naoko, and Alexander Orlov, were quietly released from detention Nov. 23. They had been arrested in St. Petersburg in October for performing songs in opposition to Putin’s regime and its war to an enthusiastic crowd and many online followers.

Musicians in cities across Russia publicly performed similar songs in solidarity with them. Some were also charged as police moved to shut down dissent.

After their release, the Stoptime duo fled to Yerevan, Armenia, where they resumed performing the same songs that got them arrested. In December, Naoko performed in Lithuania in a trio with Noize MC and singer Monetchka, whose songs she was arrested for singing in Russia.

Yegor Balazeikina is one of hundreds of youth arrested for protesting the war. “Stoptime was singing what so many people already had on the tip of their tongues,” his mother, Tatiana Balazeikina, told the *Post* Dec. 30. “The only way for this state to remain what it is, is to cut off all these signs of dissent right at the root.”

“These young people, who essentially have nothing to lose except their freedom, are very dangerous,” she said. “And if those young people are not only capable of thinking but can also sing what they think ... that’s an even bigger threat.”

NZ march protests Jew-hating massacre in Australia

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Four hundred people rallied and marched here Dec. 21 against the massacre one week earlier of Jews celebrating the first day of Hanukkah at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. Speakers condemned the rise in Jew-hatred and the growing normalization of attacks on Jews in New Zealand, Australia and around the world. The action was sponsored by the NZ Jewish Council and NZ Against Hamas.

“The Hamas-led genocidal invasion of Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, began a new phase in the war against the Jewish people,” Jewish Council President Juliet Moses told the crowd. “There is no ceasefire in this war. It is com-

ing from the far left, the far right and radical Islamists,” that has culminated in “murder in Boulder, Colorado, and Washington, D.C.; at a Manchester synagogue; and now murder at a Hanukkah celebration on Bondi Beach.”

Moses criticized “elites and institutions,” including “academics, NGOs, activist journalists, city councils, unions, professional organizations,” as well as politicians who “take Hamas at its word about everything, except its intent to destroy Israel.”

Lucy Rogers, founder of NZ Against Hamas, said she organized counterprotests at anti-Israel rallies here “every week for two years. Not once did I ever hear the Palestine Solidarity Network

call on Hamas to release the hostages.”

Rogers’ press release about the action was headlined, “Never Again Is Now — Auckland March Against Jew Hatred.” In New Zealand, it said, “the two years before the Hamas attacks, there were no recorded anti-Semitic assaults, but there’ve been 15 in the two years since.”

Other speakers included representatives of the Israel Institute of New Zealand, the Beth Shalom Progressive Community and the Indigenous Embassy of Jerusalem. Tawhiri Matea Littlejohn, from the Tai Tokerau iwi (Maori tribe) of the north, read out the names of the 15 people gunned down on Bondi Beach.

The rally was followed by a march with chants of “Jewish lives matter!”

Rallies against gov't, economic crisis spread across Iran

Continued from front page and drivers are all victims of wrong decisions, unregulated increases in costs, heavy tolls, high fuel prices, unfair commissions and other pressures," the nationwide Association of Truckers and Drivers Unions said in a solidarity statement. "The unity of the bazaar and the drivers is the only way out of this situation, and we declare our full support for the bazaar and the people."

An 11-day strike by truckers at the end of May spread to every one of Iran's 31 provinces. "We are the voice of a weary nation that demands justice," their association said.

Inflation and the declining value of the rial — which has lost some 40% of its value since the 12-day war between Tehran and Israel in June — triggered the current actions.

"If we close our shops, our profit is greater than when we sell goods," one shopkeeper told IranWire, "because tomorrow we won't be able to buy anything at today's prices."

"We have no choice but to keep selling to be able to pay the rent," another protesting merchant told the government-funded Iranian Labour News Agency, "but the problem is that after the sale, due to the constant price fluctuations, we no longer have the ability to buy and replace the goods we sold."

U.S. sanctions, Tehran's war moves

The capitalist economic crisis in Iran has been accelerated by stepped-up U.S. economic and financial sanctions on Tehran and the impact of the regime's increased war spending. It is trying to rebuild its armory and that of its allied forces, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, and advance its goal of destroying Israel and eliminating the Jews, after being dealt blows by Israel in last summer's 12-day war.

Just two weeks before the protests began, the government sharply increased the price of gasoline for many people. Drivers can still purchase their quota of gas at a subsidized rate of about 4 cents a liter. The first 100 liters above the quota costs double that price. Any purchase over that will now cost nearly double again.

Many workers in Iran make \$150 a month or less, while basic necessities cost \$430.

As the protests spread, demonstrators



Free Union of Iranian Workers

Merchants and supporters march in Tehran Dec. 29, second day of protests against impact of capitalist crisis, inflation, drop in value of currency. Some marchers chanted, "Death to the dictator," and "Not for Gaza, nor Lebanon, I sacrifice my life for Iran," a sign of growing opposition to regime's military moves in the region, attacks on Israel.

also chanted "Death to the dictator"; "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid, we are all together"; and "Not for Gaza nor Lebanon, I sacrifice my life for Iran," a reflection of growing opposition to the regime's use of military power to try to extend its counterrevolutionary influence in the region.

"People's livelihoods are my daily concern," claimed President Masoud Pezeshkian in a Dec. 30 statement, one indication of the regime's worries the protests could spark wider actions. He instructed the minister of the interior to meet with representatives of the merchants to discuss their "rightful demands."

Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani told a press conference that same day that "we emphasize the right to peaceful assembly, which is recognized in the constitution."

Clashes with police, regime's thugs

But in fact the police, special units of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij paramilitary thugs at-

tacked many demonstrators with water cannons, clubs, tear gas and live ammunition. At times protesters fought back and more than once forced the security forces to retreat.

One sign of the deepening hatred for the regime was the decision of some individual cops not to face the protesters. An official of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps issued a call through Iran's Channel One TV to "officers and personnel who have been negligent in carrying out their duties to confront the disturbances and who have gone absent or fled."

He warned that "abandoning one's post or going into hiding during unrest is tantamount to desertion in wartime."

A product of counterrevolution

The regime in Tehran claims that it is the continuation of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. That was a deepgoing, modern, popular upheaval that overthrew the bloody dictatorship of the hated, U.S.-backed shah of Iran.

In fact, the regime heading the Islam-

ic Republic is the result of a counterrevolution — consolidated by 1983 — that pushed back the workers, farmers, women and oppressed nationalities who carried out the Iranian Revolution.

Over the last decade working people have stepped up their resistance to the regime. In December 2017 and into 2018, working-class protests swept some 90 cities and towns across the country. Those protests were fueled by opposition to working people being used as cannon fodder in the regime's military adventures in Lebanon, Syria and beyond aimed at the destruction of Israel, as well as against the indignities of capitalist exploitation.

Thousands took to the streets to protest the death in Tehran of Zhina Amini, a young Kurdish

woman, after her arrest in September 2022 by the "morality" police for violating the regime's reactionary dress code. The regime's thugs killed hundreds of protesters. Since 2023 Baluchis and other oppressed nationalities have joined actions against government repression.

Today, more and more women appear in public without the mandatory hijab. The regime has largely backed off on enforcement, fearful of provoking bigger actions amid its deep crisis.

At the same time, the regime has stepped up use of the death penalty. Some 1,500 executions took place in Iran in 2025 — just up to the start of December — compared to 972 in 2024.

But the regime's use of its iron fist has not succeeded in stopping resistance. More protests and strikes take place almost every day. Just in the last week there have been strikes at the Zarshouran gold mine in West Azerbaijan province, the Middle East Sugar Agro-Industry Company in Khuzestan and railway lines in Lorestan, Zagros and Andimeshk.

US-imposed ceasefire in Gaza has resolved nothing

BY SETH GALINSKY

Nearly three months since the Donald Trump administration imposed a ceasefire on Israel and Hamas in Gaza, nothing there has been resolved. Hamas, though seriously weakened by over two years of Israel's blows, is reimposing its dictatorship over the people of Gaza, murdering or torturing any that get in their way.

The vast majority of Gazans still live in the 47% of the territory Hamas controls. Hamas' goal is to continue using the Palestinians as "martyrs" as it carries out future massacres against Jews and Israel.

Israel — pressured by Washington not to launch new offensives to dismantle Hamas — maintains control over 53% of Gazan land, making occasional forays against Hamas thugs and continuing to destroy the Tehran-backed groups' tunnel system.

On Christmas Eve Hamas released, "Our Narrative ... Al-Aqsa Flood. Two Years of Steadfastness and the Will for Liberation."

"Al-Aqsa Flood" is what Hamas named its Oct. 7, 2023, anti-Jewish pogrom, which killed 1,200 Jews and others, including Palestinians who worked with them, and wounding thousands more. Dozens of women were raped, murdered and their bodies mutilated.

In "Our Narrative," Hamas calls the pogrom "a historic, pivotal stage in the journey of our cause," while cynically claiming that charges its thugs targeted civilians, raped women and killed children are "lies and fallacies." Hundreds of eyewitness testimonies and videos of their brutality show otherwise.

This reporter has personally seen videos posted by Hamas on its own internet sites showing its death squads torturing and murdering an immigrant African worker. Another shows them brutally beating an Arab worker from a kibbutz who they later killed.

There are videos from numerous sources — including GoPro cameras used by Hamas to film on Oct. 7 — that show its thugs gunning down unarmed Jewish civilians at the Nova music festival and at the kibbutzim they attacked.

Many of those taken hostage by Hamas have been speaking out about the conditions they faced. Romi Gonen, who spent 471 days captive in Gaza, recently described the multiple sexual assaults she suffered by the Jew-hating thugs.

No less a lie is Hamas' claim that most Palestinians in Gaza support Hamas and its actions on Oct. 7. It of course makes no mention of the thousands of Palestinians who took to the streets of Gaza last year to demand "Hamas out, out!"

Through its actions, Hamas makes clear that it has no intention of disarming, despite claiming it accepted the Trump "peace plan." Its leaders feel things are going their way.

Nonetheless, the Trump administration continues to proclaim its goal of forcing Hamas and Israel to move to "phase II" — the formation of a "technocratic" government in Gaza, imposition of a "Board of Peace" headed by Trump to be overall in charge, the disarmament of Hamas, the arrival of a multinational peace-keeping force and further withdrawals of Israeli troops.

Washington has floated the possibility of involving troops from Turkey and Pakistan. But the regimes of these two countries are outspoken opponents of Israel's right to defend itself as a refuge for Jews. Israel has vetoed the presence of Turkish or Pakistani troops in Gaza. So far the U.S. rulers have no other proposals.

The U.S. administration says it has plans for rebuilding Gaza in ways that will generate profits and advance Washington's interests. Drafted by Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, two top White House aides, the \$112.1 billion "Project Sunrise" is being shopped around to government officials and potential investors.



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Víctor Dreke: revolutionary leader, author of firsthand account of Cuba's solidarity in Africa

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

“Our participation in the liberation struggles in Africa and other parts of the world made the Cuban people stronger,” says revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke in his newly published firsthand account, *Cuba and the Independence War in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: The Fall of the Last Colonial Empire in Africa*.

The Dec. 15 issue of the Militant featured the introduction by Mary-Alice Waters to Cuba and the Independence War in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: The Fall of the Last Colonial Empire in Africa, released by Pathfinder Press Jan. 1. We asked Martín Koppel, co-editor of the book along with Waters, to prepare this article so our readers can learn more about the book's author, Cuban revolutionary leader Víctor Dreke.

Dreke tells the story of a little-known but decisive chapter in the struggles of working people and the oppressed. Published by Pathfinder Press, the book was released Jan. 1, the 67th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban revolutionary war led by Fidel Castro, which overthrew the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and opened the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

Cuba's internationalist actions “reinforced the values of our socialist revolution that we continue to defend today,” Dreke explains. “Those not willing to fight for the freedom of others will never be able to fight for their own,” he says, citing Castro's words in 1976 saluting the Cuban volunteers who had just helped their Angolan brothers and sisters defeat an invasion by the South African apartheid regime.

Dreke — Commander Moja, as he is known in Africa — brings to life the popular struggle that in 1974-75 not only won independence for the West African nations of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, but hastened the liberation of Angola and Mozambique, bringing down the entire Portuguese colonial empire — the final one to stain the African continent.

That victory also led to the downfall of a decadeslong dictatorship



Left, Sagua la Grande, Cuba, May 1956. Víctor Dreke (bottom left) and other youth opposed to Batista dictatorship honor Antonio Guiteras, revolutionary leader murdered in 1935. Above, One of military units, under Dreke's command, that in early 1960s combed Escambray Mountains of central Cuba to crush U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary bands. The bandits terrorized peasants, aiming to reimpose a capitalist regime beholden to U.S. imperialism.

in Portugal itself, triggering a mass revolutionary upsurge of workers and peasants there.

Dreke tells us in vivid detail how, between 1966 and 1974, hundreds of Cuban volunteers — including himself — contributed to these history-changing events. The interview with him is followed by a chapter with reflections by several other Cubans who fought for Guinea-Bissau's independence or helped lead that internationalist mission.

Two decades in the making

This new book has been two decades in the making. It came out of work on an earlier interview with Dreke published by Pathfinder, *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*. There he recounts his decadeslong involvement in Cuba's revolutionary movement — how he and thousands like him were transformed from courageous but inexperienced rebel youth into seasoned working-class revolutionists.

In that book, a couple of pages are devoted to his participation in Cuba's sup-

port to the independence war in Guinea-Bissau. But interest by readers in learning more about that story prompted further rounds of interviews.

In late 1966, Castro asked Dreke to head the Cuban combat mission in Guinea-Bissau. In the final chapter to the new book, another leading participant in that mission, Alfonso Pérez Morales, known by his nom de guerre Pina, poses the question, “Why Dreke?”

His answer is: “Fidel chose Dreke because he needed an experienced military commander, someone who had led troops in combat and demonstrated his ability to make decisions in a complex guerrilla war being fought on three fronts.

“Second, he wanted someone who was familiar with the thinking of our country's top leadership and was able to transmit that to, and work with, Guinean leaders like Amílcar Cabral,” the central leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), which led the liberation war.

“And third, Fidel wanted someone who had been through the mission in the Congo.” In that country, 130 Cuban internationalists led by Ernesto Che Guevara had fought in 1965 alongside followers of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of an independent Congo, who had been assassinated in 1961 by a brutal U.S.-backed regime. Dreke was second-in-command of the Cuban column there.

Pina explained that Castro told Dreke to take with him to Guinea-Bissau “the best *compañeros* who had fought with him in the Congo.”

As Dreke noted in *From the Escambray to the Congo*, Che's assessment was that the Congo mission “was a failure” — a bitter outcome with a potentially lasting demoralizing impact on Cuba's internationalist volunteers. Dreke said he believed that if Guevara had lived to see subsequent victories in Africa, he would have altered his initial balance sheet. Some who went through the Congo experience, including Dreke

himself, “later went on to participate in the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau,” Angola, and other countries.

Joins revolutionary movement

Víctor Dreke was born in 1937 into a working-class family in Sagua la Grande, in the central province of Las Villas (today Villa Clara). He began his political activity at age 15, joining protests against the March 1952 military coup by Fulgencio Batista. As a high school student he was involved in support to a historic 1955 strike by 200,000 sugar workers in Las Villas.

That year Fidel Castro and other revolutionaries founded the July 26 Movement to lead a mass struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship. Dreke joined it, heading an underground cell in Sagua that carried out sabotage actions against the tyranny.

By early 1958, sought by Batista's police, Dreke left town and joined a guerrilla front in the Escambray Mountains led by the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate. He took part in several battles

against Batista's army and was wounded in combat. When the Rebel Army, headed by Fidel Castro, sent a reinforcement column led by Che Guevara to Las Villas province, the Directorate placed its forces under Guevara's command.

In the final days of December 1958, the Rebel Army captured the key city of Santa Clara. In *From the Escambray to the Congo*, Dreke describes how “the entire people came out in the streets and joined us, acting as the incipient militias” that after the January 1959 victory were organized to defend the revolution. That experience deepened Dreke's confidence in the capacity of working people to transform society and themselves — as millions in Cuba did over the following years.

In the culminating hours of the battle of Santa Clara, Dreke was second-in-command of a Rebel Army unit that forced the surrender of the heavily armed Squadron 31 of the dictatorship's Rural Guard.

Early years of revolution

After Batista and his leading henchmen fled the country on Jan. 1, 1959, the movement led by Castro mobilized workers and farmers to defend their new government against Cuban capitalists and big landowners, backed by U.S.



Conakry, Guinea, 1967. Amílcar Cabral (far left) and other leaders of Guinea-Bissau independence movement attend event at Cuban Embassy. Dreke (center) was head of the Cuban volunteer combatants aiding the fighters against Portuguese rule. Cubans played a decisive role in that struggle, which won independence in 1974 and brought down the entire Portuguese colonial empire.

imperialism. As those battles unfolded, they overturned capitalist rule and carried through the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

Millions joined the efforts that wiped out illiteracy, implemented a land reform in the interests of plantation workers and small farmers, enforced new laws barring racist discrimination, integrated women into political and economic life, and built housing, schools and child care centers through volunteer work brigades.

During these years, Cuba's revolutionary leadership entrusted Dreke with important responsibilities. In early 1959 he served as a prosecutor in the revolutionary tribunals that brought to trial the torturers and murderers of the former Batista regime.

As a Rebel Army officer he also helped carry out the Cuban Revolution's commitment to uproot racial discrimination, not only with laws but above all by leading working people of all skin colors to fight together, breaking down prejudices.

As Mary-Alice Waters notes in her introduction to *From the Escambray to the Congo*, Dreke describes in those pages how easy it became after Cuba's socialist revolution to “take down the rope” that had long segregated blacks from whites at dances in the town squares. At the same time he explains “how enormous was the battle to transform the social relations underlying this and all the other ‘ropes’ — inherited from colonialism, capitalism, and Yankee domination.”

Dreke led two militia companies in the 1961 battle at the Bay of Pigs, where a U.S.-organized mercenary invasion of Cuba was defeated. The following year he was promoted to the rank of commander of the recently founded Revolutionary Armed Forces.



In 2002 Dreke spoke to 3,000 people during seven-city U.S. tour on “Cuba and Africa: From 1959 to Today,” including at Miami's Florida International University. On Miami panel, from left: Miami-Dade NAACP President Brad Brown; Cuban revolutionary Ana Morales; translator Aaron Ruby; Dreke; co-chair Mel Reeves; professor James Sweet.



to Dreke in 1999 by Iraida Aguirrechú, chief editor of the Communist Party's publishing house, Editora Política. At that time he was a leader of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. He readily agreed to an interview, and it led to the book *From the Escambray to the Congo*. It was launched in February 2002 during the Havana International Book Fair at an overflow meeting of more than 200.

Dreke spoke at the event along with Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press. Also on the platform were generals and Heroes of the Revolution José Ramón Fernández, Rafael Moracén and Harry Villegas. They were joined by Commander Faure Chomón, who had led

the Revolutionary Directorate forces in the Escambray during the revolutionary war; Jorge Risquet, head of the Cuban internationalists who went to Congo-Brazzaville while Guevara was leading the column in neighboring Congo-Kinshasa; and Armando Entralgo, a former revolutionary combatant and Cuba's first ambassador in Ghana.

Alexandre Nunes Correia, a leading PAIGC cadre during the liberation struggle, was also welcomed onto the platform. He told the audience he had fought alongside “my commander Moja” during the independence war, and joked that he “seemed like a Guinean who just happened to be born in Cuba.”

After the Havana fair, Dreke and Waters took part in a five-day speaking tour across central Cuba. They spoke to hundreds of people, from veteran revolutionary combatants to high school students. The meetings were held in Santa Clara, Sancti Spiritus, Trinidad and Sagua la Grande, as well as in the towns of Placetas and Manicaria — in the heart of the Escambray Mountains — that had been the sites of important battles in the revolutionary war. The book presentations were hosted by the Combatants Association, the Communist Party of Cuba and two provincial governments.

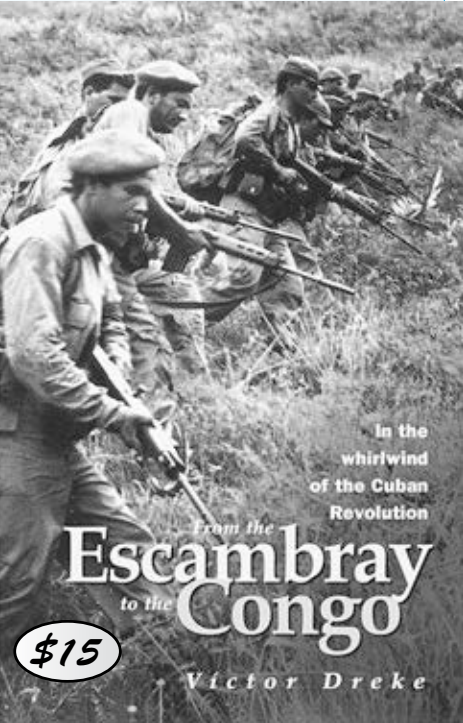
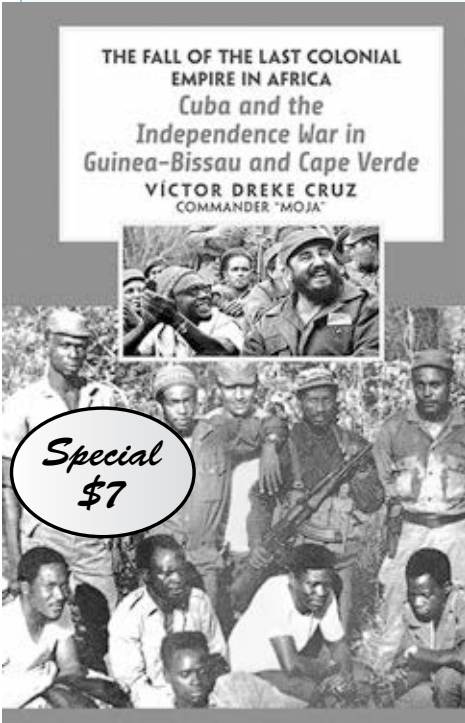
In late 2002, Dreke was invited by a broad range of student, faculty and other groups to do a monthlong speaking tour in the United States on “Cuba and Africa: From 1959 to Today.”

Sharing the platform with him was Ana Morales, who had helped found the medical school in Guinea-Bissau, the first one in sub-Saharan Africa. They spoke in seven cities to a total of 3,000 people — university students, rail workers in Washington, D.C., Black farmers in southern Georgia and Alabama, civil rights leaders in Atlanta and Birmingham, and more.

A high point of the tour was a meeting of 250 at Florida International University in Miami. It was co-sponsored by academic departments and student organizations, as well as Haitian, Cuban American and civil rights groups in the Miami area. Because of the breadth of forces supporting and attending the event, as well as the disciplined con-

Continued on page 10

Two books by Víctor Dreke



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Join fight against Jew-hatred, defend Israel

The fight against Jew-hatred is a decisive question for workers worldwide. Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, pogrom in Israel opened a renewed drive to exterminate Jews by forces on both the left and right of bourgeois politics — as was graphically shown in the deadly attack on Bondi Beach. Hamas issued a statement Dec. 24 glorifying Oct. 7 as a pivotal moment in its ongoing fight to destroy Israel.

The “ceasefire” imposed by President Donald Trump has given Hamas time and space to rearm and strengthen ties with allies worldwide. Its reactionary backers in Tehran are rebuilding their missile systems and looking to restart work toward nuclear weapons.

Hamas’ continued existence makes more pogroms in Israel inevitable. It must be defeated and dismantled. Israel, the one state that unconditionally offers Jews a refuge, is the only force capable of doing that. It deserves the support of workers everywhere.

Washington has only one aim in the Middle East — to enforce stability for the expansion of the U.S. rulers’ profit-driven interests. It has no interest in the protection of Jews.

Israel’s defeat of Hamas would remove a huge obstacle to the development of common struggles by workers of all nationalities in the Middle East — Palestinians, Jews and others.

Working people in Iran, who have taken to the streets in recent days, are a key ally in the fight to defeat Hamas. Their confidence to combat the cleric-led capitalist government has grown in the wake of Israel’s steps against the Iranian rulers’ moves to develop deadly missiles and nuclear weapons. A majority of Iranian toilers loathe Tehran’s murderous use of its proxies in the region and its calls for “Death to Israel.”

The worldwide crisis of imperialism is accelerating. Washington has imposed a blockade against Venezuela and tightened its economic war on Cuba. Moscow’s bombardment of civilians in Ukraine has escalated. Military threats and conflicts are spreading in Africa, Southeast Asia and beyond.

Jew-hatred is not just a Mideast question. It is a key weapon for capitalist rulers everywhere in the imperialist epoch, to be deployed as the crisis of their system deepens. It is a crucial tool on their march toward fascism and a third world war. The road to preventing that unthinkable prospect lies in building proletarian parties in the U.S. and worldwide to lead working people to overturn capitalist rule and take power.

That’s the program of the Socialist Workers Party. Its cadres are forged in struggle and steeped in the lessons of previous revolutionary battles. To be part of the fight for a better world, join the SWP.

Mangione and the left’s love of political violence

BY TERRY EVANS

NEW YORK — Pretrial hearings for Luigi Mangione, accused of second-degree murder in the shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, were held here Dec. 1-18. The liberal media’s fascination with Mangione, alongside the worship of violence by the middle-class left, pose serious dangers for working people.

The CEO was shot from behind at close range by a lone gunman in Manhattan while on his way to work Dec. 4, 2024. Surveillance video caught the shooting on tape. Bullets found at the scene had the words “deny,” “defend” and “depose” etched on them, terms used by health insurance bosses to describe their efforts to thwart lawsuits. Five days later Mangione was arrested in Altoona, Pennsylvania, with a false ID, a gun, as well as a document assailing the health insurance industry and urging the killing of its CEOs.

His attorneys used the court hearing to try and suppress this evidence. He faces three separate cases and has pled not guilty to the one he faces here.

People Over Profits New York demonstrated outside the hearings, using the case as a pretext to protest against health care providers. A digital billboard truck displaying stories of people denied health insurance coverage was parked outside the court, reinforcing the notion that Mangione’s heart was in the right place.

Many of Mangione’s supporters don’t care if he was guilty or not. They think what he did was just, and he should be free. “No one was listening” about the health care crisis, nurse Natalie Jeremias told the *Wall Street Journal*. “What else could he do?”

The fascination with Mangione extends to the editors and writers for the *New York Times*, who saw fit to print a lengthy article about the hearing, headlined “The Meaning of Luigi Mangione’s New Suits.” It was written by the paper’s chief fashion critic.

Ever since his arrest, Mangione has been idolized among layers of the middle-class left and beyond. Merchandisers are selling “Mama, I’m in love with a criminal” tote bags with Mangione’s picture on them.

People Before Profits New York chartered a plane to fly over the city on May 10, Mangione’s birthday, towing a banner reading, “Free health care. Free Luigi.”

Last summer tickets for “Luigi: The Musical” sold out immediately in San Francisco. He is “an earnest and unassuming critic of capitalism,” albeit a “naïve narcissist,” Amanda Hess wrote in her *New York Times* review. She compares the depiction of Mangione to righteous outlaws in the wild west, who “represent a higher form of social justice.”

Mangione, as well as Tyler Robinson, who is accused of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk, are “a new archetype,” David Wallace-Wells wrote in

the liberal *New York Times*. “The suspects themselves seem to be growing more normal.”

The normalization of murderous violence against political opponents has its roots in Stalinist politics. These deadly attacks go back to Stalin’s murder of millions of those opposing his regime, including Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, as well as others he simply didn’t trust.

In the 1960s and ’70s Stalinist outfits glorified the brutal methods employed by the Mao Tse-Tung regime in China. This spawned terrorist outfits in the U.S., like the Weathermen in the 1960s.

Black Lives Matter, antifa and others turned protests against police brutality after the 2020 death of George Floyd into weeks of bloody rioting. Many in these groups are part of the middle-class meritocracy — an insecure and resentful social layer — at a time of sharpening class polarization and tension.

Following Hamas’ murderous Oct. 7 pogrom in Israel, middle-class radicals in the U.S. and worldwide have glorified the massacre. This is what their call to “Globalize the Intifada” means. Assaults on Jews in Australia, the U.S. and elsewhere are on the rise.

Liberals adapt to middle-class left

The lionizing of the murder of CEO Thompson, and of the assassination attempts against Donald Trump in 2024, are an outgrowth of the explosion of “cancel culture” on the left. Over years extreme intolerance toward political opponents led to the shutting down of political events, especially on campuses. This went side by side with bans on works of literature, history and anything else that doesn’t conform to the woke values of those who dominate academia.

Liberals don’t openly espouse assaults like the one Mangione is accused of carrying out. But they do provide excuses for them. “Violence is never the answer,” Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren said after Thompson’s murder, but she added, “People can only be pushed so far.” She later retracted her comments.

The glorification of what Mangione is alleged to have done has nothing to do with fighting the capitalist rulers’ refusal to provide government-guaranteed health care. Individual violence like this sets back working-class struggles. It cuts across the discussion and debate workers need today to forge a road forward.

The worship of violence by the middle-class left will be pushed back as working-class struggles grow. As workers gain self-confidence and unions exert their social power, they’ll come to the heart of the leadership of struggles against capitalist exploitation, its many injustices and its wars.

In the course of the revolutionary battles to come, workers will have our chance to take political power.

Víctor Dreke

Continued from page 9

duct of students acting as security monitors, efforts by right-wing opponents of the Cuban Revolution to cancel or disrupt the meeting were a resounding failure. This victory for free speech was repeated the same week at a campus meeting of 125 in Tampa.

At the conclusion of the tour, in an interview with *Militant* reporter and SWP leader Sam Manuel, Dreke said how much he had appreciated the seriousness of the exchanges with workers, farmers, and young people he had met — their widely varying questions and opinions.

“Sometimes people thought we were angry at them,” Dreke told the *Militant*. “Sometimes they were angry at us because they didn’t like the answer we gave. But we told everyone we are here to answer any question and they should not be afraid to ask anything.”

At the Miami meeting, in face of hostility by a small minority who wanted to prevent an exchange and at one point unsuccessfully tried to storm the platform, Dreke’s clear answers, calm demeanor, and sense of humor riveted the audience and won respect for the Cuban Revolution, as he and Morales had done at other events.

Since 1959, no Cuban revolutionary leader of Dreke’s stature had had the opportunity to speak so widely in the U.S.

Dreke was also invited to speak at broadly sponsored events in London and Dublin in 2011, as well as in five Italian cities in 2017.

Equatorial Guinea’s first book fair

Dreke served from 2003 to 2008 as Cuban ambassador to Equatorial Guinea. In 2005 he invited a team of socialists from the United States and the United Kingdom to participate in the first-ever book fair in that central African country, a former Spanish colony. They brought a shipment of Dreke’s book and a range of other Pathfinder titles to make available at the book fair.

During the event, held at the National University of Equatorial Guinea in Malabo, the capital city, Dreke and Waters presented *From the Escambray to the Congo* to a responsive audience of 200 university and high school students. Many were eager to read Dreke’s account of his experiences in the Cuban Revolution and internationalist missions in the Congo and Guinea-Bissau.

In 2008 Dreke accompanied a team of *Militant* reporters from the U.S. and United Kingdom on a fact-finding trip to 10 cities and towns in Equatorial Guinea. Government officials arranged for them to visit hospitals and clinics across the country, meeting members of Cuba’s volunteer medical brigades as well as youth who had studied medicine in Cuba.

Out of those two trips came the Pathfinder book *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa: Reports from Equatorial Guinea*. It includes Dreke’s speech at the 2005 book fair, “Cuba’s experience is at your disposal.”

On returning to Cuba from his responsibilities as ambassador in Equatorial Guinea, Dreke served for many years as a national leader of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution and head of its work in Havana.

Dreke has also shouldered many other responsibilities as a representative of the Cuban Revolution in Africa. Today he is president of the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association.

Earlier this year, Dreke was given an award by the Amílcar Cabral Student Health Brigade, a group of youth from Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso and other African countries who are studying medicine in Cuba. The students inscribed the following dedication on the plaque:

“To Commander Víctor Dreke. Thank you for your support to the unification and liberation of Africa from imperialism and colonialism. The struggle continues!”

‘Militant’ Prisoners Fund

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