

Washington says will pull out of 20-year Afghan war

BY TERRY EVANS

The U.S. rulers’ 20-year-long war in Afghanistan will be brought to an end, promised President Joseph Biden, as had Donald Trump before him, halting a conflict Washington long ago gave up trying to win. Some 2,500 U.S. troops will leave Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of 9/11 attacks by the World Trade Center five months from now, he said. A further 7,000 NATO troops from allied powers will also be withdrawn.

The war in Afghanistan is the longest ever fought by the U.S. rulers, the world’s dominant but declining imperialist power. Acting on the illusion that they won the Cold War when the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe came apart, and could impose their authority as the one “indispensable power,” Washington began a series of wars and military operations from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya and Pakistan.

Each conflict was aimed at imposing compliant regimes and extending the U.S. rulers’ global reach at the expense of their capitalist rivals. Each brought down carnage on the peoples of those countries as well as on the U.S. troops, workers in uniform used as cannon fodder.

The U.S. government claims its war

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Build support for striking miners and steelworkers!



UMWA Local 2397 members Andre Ball, standing on left, and Ronnie Reynolds, seated in the right foreground, staffing the picket line at Warrior Met Coal’s No. 7 Mine West Portal.

USW wins solidarity in strike against ATI bosses

BY MALCOLM JARRETT

WASHINGTON, Pa. — United Steelworkers union officials and Allegheny Technologies Inc. bosses returned to the bargaining table April 19 for the first in-person negotiations since 1,300 workers went on strike at nine ATI plants across the country March 30. The strikers have been winning solidarity, standing up to the

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Mineworkers battle for safety, against divisions

BY JOHN HAWKINS
 AND MAGGIE TROWE

BROOKWOOD, Ala. — “We are one UMWA,” “No contract no coal,” and “United we stand UMWA” signs dot yards, showing support for the 1,100 members of the United Mine Workers of America on strike against Warrior Met Coal here since April 1. You also see these yard signs in working-class

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Jury finds the cop who killed George Floyd guilty

BY MARY MARTIN

MINNEAPOLIS — A jury here convicted fired cop Derek Chauvin on all charges April 20 for the killing of George Floyd last May.

After two days of deliberation the jury unanimously found Chauvin guilty of second- and third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. The charges carry a maximum penalty of 40 years in prison.

Hundreds of thousands of working people — Black and Caucasian — had taken to the streets in cities and small towns across the U.S. and around the world to protest Floyd’s killing. Millions more were outraged after watching a video that showed Chauvin holding Floyd, handcuffed and face down, with his knee on Floyd’s neck and then his upper shoulder, for over nine minutes. Floyd, a 46-year-old African American, was stopped and taken to the ground under suspicion

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Minnesota SWP campaign joins debate over how to fight cop brutality

BY MARY MARTIN

MINNEAPOLIS — Doug Nelson, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, and SWP campaign supporters have been fanning out, bringing solidarity to labor battles, speaking out against police brutality and exchanging views with workers on their doorsteps about the need for working people to break with the capitalist parties, the Democrats

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NY event hails Cuban literacy drive, Bay of Pigs victories



Some 105 people at April 18 meeting in New York Socialist Workers Party hall celebrate Cuban revolution’s 1961 victory at Bay of Pigs; popular, proletarian campaign to end illiteracy; and example for U.S. workers.

BY STEVE CLARK

NEW YORK — The victory of the Cuban armed forces and volunteer militias against U.S.-trained and -equipped mercenaries at Playa Girón in April 1961 demonstrated “the determination of the Cuban people to defend the socialist revolution, whatever it took,” said Ambassador Pedro Luis Pedrosó, Cuba’s Permanent Representative to the

United Nations, April 18.

He was speaking to some 105 people at a program sponsored by the New York and Northern New Jersey Socialist Workers Party to celebrate the 60th anniversary of that historic triumph, as well as the launching in January 1961 of the yearlong campaign that eliminated illiteracy in Cuba. The talks, messages, colorful displays and books

featured at the meeting addressed several themes.

One is the continuity of the revolution’s program and course of action. It extends from the opening of the revolutionary struggle in 1953, to the Rebel Army in the mountains later that decade, to the January 1959 victory toppling the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. It continued through the mobilizations of workers and peasants that nationalized the land, banks, and factories, to Fidel Castro’s call to arms to defend the socialist revolution on the eve of the Bay of Pigs invasion, to the revolution’s proletarian internationalism shown today by its active solidarity with peoples the world over in face of the COVID pandemic.

A second theme is that Cuba shows socialist revolution is not only necessary but, with a conscious and disciplined working-class leadership, can be *made* — and *defended*. It is the only realistic perspective for working

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After outcry, SF school board reverses renaming 44 schools

BY BETSEY STONE

OAKLAND, Calif. — In the face of mounting opposition by parents, alumni and others, as well as a lawsuit, the San Francisco Board of Education voted 6-0 April 6 to reverse its decision to rename 44 schools. Claiming it was acting to fight racism, the board had targeted schools named for George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, among others.

The school board says it stands by its efforts, and only reversed the decision to avoid the expense of “frivolous litigation.” But the reversal was a result of the public outcry, anger at the arrogant and light-minded manner in which the proposed changes were decided, and the criteria used by the board majority to determine who would be erased.

School board President Gabriela López declared in a February interview with the *New Yorker* magazine that their goal was to dismantle “white supremacy culture.” The board was determined to deal with any past conduct they disagreed with by wiping it out. They sought to impose their view that all history and politics must be viewed through the lens of race. To them class and class divisions — *and the facts themselves* — are irrelevant.

Any historical figure they deemed guilty of racist activity of any kind was to be removed. Washington and Jefferson because they were slaveholders. Lincoln because of his policies toward Native Americans. Paul Revere based on false information that he participated in an attack on a Native American tribe. They had considered “disappearing”

Malcolm X as a sexist, but decided that was going too far.

Much of the debate zeroed in on the proposed removal of names of participants, regardless of their contributions, in the two great revolutions in U.S. history — the American Revolution that wrested independence from British colonial rule and the Civil War that abolished slavery.

As the *Militant* pointed out when the board first approved the name changes, removing these names would erase the revolutionary history that working people and youth need to know. Absent was any recognition of how these revolutions laid the basis for workers’ and other social struggles today, including fights against racist oppression.

The American Revolution of 1776 was the first victorious anti-colonial revolution of the capitalist epoch. It established a republic instead of rule by a king. And it opened the door for the rise of social classes capable of leading a mass movement to abolish slavery.

“Uprooting the problematic names and symbols that currently clutter buildings, streets, throughout the city is a worthy endeavor,” Jeremiah Jeffries, chairman of the school board’s renaming committee, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Debate in Selma

The destruction of the real history of this country is also being considered in Selma, Alabama, today. A petition to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma — where marchers fighting for voting rights in 1965 were brutally beat-



Above, Matt Herron; inset, Flip Schulke
Martin Luther King, above, center, and SNCC leader John Lewis, right, on Selma to Montgomery march after crossing Edmund Pettus Bridge March 21, 1965. Left, “Bloody Sunday,” March 7, when Lewis was severely beaten at bridge. Pettus was a Confederate general and Klan leader. In 2015, Lewis opposed efforts to rename the bridge, saying it “symbolizes both who we once were, and who we have become.”

en by cops and thugs on what became known as “Bloody Sunday” — has gained over half a million signatures. The petition proposes naming the bridge after John Lewis, a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader of that march who was severely beaten. He later became a leading Democratic Party politician and member of Congress.

Pettus was a Confederate general and a leader of the Ku Klux Klan, as well as U.S. senator under Jim Crow segregation. Using the criteria of the San Francisco School Board, the bridge’s name would surely be changed, or torn down.

But Lewis, who died last year, was opposed to the renaming. “The Edmund
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SWP ‘stimulus’ donations heading toward \$150,000!

Over the past week 16 contributors donated \$16,800 to bring the growing total of contributions to the Socialist Workers Party from U.S. government \$1,400 “stimulus” payments to \$135,300 from 111 people.

Dennis Richter from Los Angeles sent his contribution last week with a note: “To help go over \$120,000!” The appeal is now heading toward \$150,000. Join the effort!

The many notes from contributors around the country capture the political confidence in the working class and commitment to building a revolutionary working-class party in the U.S.

“So gratified we can turn over these contributions to the party dedicated to ending capitalist exploitation,” write Sara Gates and Bob Bruneau, from Seattle.

Janet Post, from Philadelphia, writes: “Enclosed find my ‘American Rescue Plan’ stimulus contribution. Inspired by the work of the party telling the truth — and what working people say in response.”

These contributions are making a tremendous difference toward expanding the ability of the party to bring its program to many thousands of workers and exploited toilers, and to join with other fighters in labor and social struggles. To build on a course toward the working class taking political power in the U.S. and joining with toilers worldwide to end social relations based on exploitation — class vs. class — and build a socialist society based on human solidarity.

Send your contribution! To contribute, make out your check to the Socialist Workers Party and send it to SWP, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. The *Militant* will report weekly on the progress of the appeal.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

THE MILITANT

U.S. troops out of the Middle East!

Washington maintains massive military might in the Middle East to defend its imperialist interests and serve as a threat as talks begin with Tehran on reviving the 2015 nuclear pact. The ‘Militant’ calls for unilateral U.S. withdrawal, for destruction of all nuclear weapons.

Protests spread across Iran in 2018 in opposition to regime’s wars, economic crisis.

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Minn. SWP campaign

Continued from front page

and Republicans, and forge their own party, a labor party.

Nelson and campaign supporters visited the Marathon Petroleum workers picket line in St. Paul Park April 18 to extend solidarity with their fight. Nelson discussed with strikers how important it was that their union, Teamsters Local 120, joined the vigil for Daunte Wright in nearby Brooklyn Center, after he was killed by police there April 11.

On April 17 SWP campaign supporters participated in two rallies opposing police brutality. One was organized at the site where Wright was shot down, where community groups put up tables and various speakers addressed the crowd. The Socialist Workers Party campaign was well received. Dozens of people took campaign literature and 10 bought books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders, including three copies of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the SWP.

That same day campaign supporters participated in a rally of 300 called by the NAACP at the Hennepin County Government Center, where the trial of Derek Chauvin, the cop who killed George Floyd, was held. Warehouse worker Mike Biskui discussed with campaign supporter Nick Neeser how police target workers. “This system and the police go right to the use of force if you don’t do what they tell you,” Biskui said, “or even if you do what they tell you.”

Rick Prez, a restaurant worker, told Neeser he came to the rally because “it’s important to me. I want to talk about why the government is corrupt, how they don’t care about their homeless. They only care about the rich and the big corporations.”

“The Republicans and Democrats are the same party,” he added. “Joe Biden and Kamala Harris aren’t to be trusted any more than anyone before them.”

That’s why the Socialist Workers Party points to the need for workers to break from the Democrats and Repub-

licans and build a labor party, Neeser said, based on fighting unions.

Nelson spoke to a packed Militant Labor Forum April 17 in St. Paul on “How to Fight Police Brutality: It’s Class Against Class, Not Simply Race Against Race.”

Nelson described the labor battles and social struggles he is participating in as part of the national slate of SWP candidates. “Workers ask us what these struggles have to do with socialism and where is all this going?” Nelson said. He pointed to the example of the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro, which showed that to put an end to police brutality and all the other scourges of capitalism it’s necessary to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class and bring to power a government of workers and farmers.

On April 18 the SWP campaign had a table at “Black and Yellow: Asian Solidarity Rally, Dedicated to Daunte” held



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Gerardo Sánchez, right, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas City Council District 1, talks with UAW members Mitchell Vickery, left, and Chris Hodge, UAW Local 3057 president, on picket line at Prysmian Group in East Texas April 19. Over 200 unionists are striking for better working conditions. Bosses “don’t take into consideration that we are human beings,” Hodge said. SWP candidates campaign to build support for union battles.

at George Floyd Square. Their table was surrounded as soon as it was set up by participants wanting to talk about how to fight racism and police brutality.

Nelson joined campaign supporters to attend one of the nightly protests at the Brooklyn Center police station to protest the killing of Wright. He was asked where he stood on “defunding the police.”

“The idea that giving the police more training or less money will end police brutality avoids the reality of what the police are and their function under capitalism,” Nelson said, “which is to keep the working class in line. We have to replace the entire system.”

To get involved in campaigning with the SWP, contact the nearest party branch, listed on page 8.

Steelworkers win solidarity in fight with ATI bosses

Continued from front page

steel giant’s demands for givebacks that would weaken the union and widen divisions among workers.

Workers have not had a pay raise in seven years, while prices of basic necessities are going up, but ATI has offered no pay raise the first year of their proposed contract and just 3% for each of the next three years. ATI demands workers pay more for health insurance, that retirees’ benefits be cut, and that divisive lower wage and benefit tiers be expanded for new hires.

ATI bosses have been closing and downsizing Steelworkers-organized plants, while opening new plants non-union, including a large and more profitable complex in North Carolina. Workers say less than 10% of ATI workers are employed at unionized plants today.

“They are trying to break the union,” Walter Hill, vice president of Steelworkers Local 1196 in Brackenridge, told Ned Measel and Samir Hazboun from Louisville, Kentucky, who visited the picket line April 17. They gave the union a solidarity card signed by 33 of their co-workers at Walmart, along with \$90 in contributions for the strike fund.

Hundreds of workers have been laid off over time at the Brackenridge plant, ATI’s largest union mill, Hill said. Now there are less than 500 workers, because the company has been closing some production lines and sending other work to its newer, nonunion plants.

“They want to force new hires into worse health care,” Hill said. “I am an older worker. I am not selling out the next generation. The previous generation stood up for us.” He was referring to the fight waged by the union when ATI bosses locked them out in 2015 and a hard-fought strike in 1994.

Several Walmart and other workers from Pittsburgh, including this *Militant* worker-correspondent, joined strikers’ picket line in Washington the same day.

“We have learned over the years a lot about concessions, we gave concessions in 2004, and in 2008,” said striker Ron Klauss, who has worked in the mill for 14 years.

“The concessions they are trying to get out of you guys are like the ones they were trying to get out of us,” Gordon Everett, a retired autoworker who used to work at the now-closed Lordstown, Ohio, GM plant, told strikers.

Rebecca Roman noted that because there is no union at Walmart, the bosses are imposing “schedule changes that make it impossible for many of us who don’t have cars and depend on public transportation to get to work. They did this without asking us. They just brought us into an office and said we had to pick.”

That’s why we are fighting to defend our union, striker Ed Burgh said. “We know that if there were no union, every place would be like Walmart.”

Tony Lane, another Walmart worker from Pittsburgh and a Socialist Workers Party campaign supporter, and Melinda Swartz, a worker at

American Cap Company in Sharon, and member of Steelworkers Local 1016-13 there, joined the picket line in Louisville, Ohio. Swartz was part of the fight that won the union at American Cap, after working there for eight years without one.

Striker Steve Benematti, a 30-year employee, told Swartz that teachers from the Louisville Education Association in Ohio had visited the picket line. “They came when we were locked out five years ago,” he said. “When they were on strike, we went down and supported them.”

Working-class solidarity is crucial in labor battles. Help win support for the ATI strikers! Join the picket lines. Send your support or contributions to USW Local 1196 at 1080 Brackenridge Ave., Brackenridge, PA 15014, or USW Local 7139 at 1505 Jefferson Ave., Washington, PA 15301, or USW Local 1046, 925 W. St. Louis Ct., Louisville, OH 44641.

Malcolm Jarrett is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Pittsburgh.

SF school board

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Pettus Bridge symbolizes both who we once were, and who we have become today,” he wrote in a 2015 editorial co-authored with Alabama Congresswoman Terri Sewell. “Instead of hiding our history behind a new name we must embrace it — the good and the bad. The historical context of the Edmund Pettus Bridge makes the events of 1965 even more profound.”

Renaming the bridge, Lewis and Sewell wrote, would diminish the enormity of the historic change brought about by that 1965 battle, one of the turning points in the overthrow of Jim Crow segregation that led to passage of the Voting Rights Act.

Lynda Lowery, who at 14 years old was also one of the protesters beaten on the bridge, says of the proposed renaming, “It’s part of history. Leave my bridge alone.”

Her sister, Jo Ann Bland, says there is something empowering about the name Edmund Pettus for Black people when they cross the bridge each year to commemorate the 1965 protests. “I bet he’s rolling in his grave every time we walk across that bridge,” she says.

Help ‘Militant’ win new readers, raise \$145,000!

The *Militant* is urging its readers to join us getting the paper and books on revolutionary working-class politics into the hands of working people wherever they can. We are launching a nine-week circulation and fund drive that will run from April 24 to June 29. Help spread the word about today’s strikes and other working-class battles at home and abroad, and deepen discussion about a working-class road forward!

Alongside the drive to sell 1,400 subscriptions to the paper and the same number of books, the paper will raise \$145,000 in contributions from its readers and other workers for the annual Militant Fighting Fund.

Books on special offer during the drive explain what lies behind bosses’ attacks on jobs, wages and conditions. They explain why working people are capable of organizing to bring a workers and farmers government to power — as working people did in Cuba in 1959 — and what kind of party we need to build to emulate their example.

You can make the *Militant* a lively source of information about working-class politics by sending in reports about work to expand its circulation from your area. Contribute to the fighting fund!

John Studer
John Studer, Editor

Protests demand Jakarta grant West Papua self-determination

BY ROY LANDERSEN

NEW YORK — A picket outside the Indonesian Consulate here April 12 protested military repression in West Papua and elsewhere in the archipelago. The West Papuan people “experience systemic racist discrimination,” Julian Howay, a warehouse worker in Atlanta originally from West Papua, told the protest, “due to the occupation and colonization by Indonesia.”

On behalf of the West Papua and Moluccan Coalition USA, he read a statement calling for West Papuan self-determination that was later submitted to the 20th session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to be held April 19-30.

Howay said the indigenous people of West Papua, as well as those in the nearby Moluccas, share centuries-old cultural ties. “Despite having abundant natural resources,” these two regions are still the poorest in Indonesia. He noted the West Papuan people “come from the Melanesian ethnic group,” common to other islands across the South Pacific. This includes Papua New Guinea, the eastern half of the same island as West Papua is on.

The U.S. government engineered a deal called the New York Agreement in 1962 that transferred control of West Papua to the U.N. for a year and then to Indonesia. No one on West Papua was consulted.

First under the left-leaning government of Sukarno, and then, after a military coup led by General Suharto and the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Maoist Communist Party members



Picket supporting independence for West Papua outside Indonesian Consulate in New York, Oct. 23. Morning Star flag of an independent West Papua, first raised in 1961, is on right. Flag of national rights struggle in Moluccas is third from right.

and labor and peasant activists, the subjugation of West Papua was entrenched. During “the reform era since the fall of the military dictator Suharto,” the statement notes, “there is still violence, extrajudicial killings, restraints on democratic space,” including the deployment of “large-scale military operations to secure the exploitation of Papua’s

natural resources.” The territory’s vast tropical forests “are currently in a state of degradation and deforestation” as a result of “the expansion of large-scale oil palm plantations.”

West Papuan independence

The Indonesian annexation in 1963 blocked independence, a move

supported by imperialist rulers from the U.S. to Australia, justified by Cold War anti-communist rhetoric. In fact, Washington had its eyes on the highly valuable gold, copper and other mineral resources there.

The Indonesian rulers “then carried out a similar military invasion” in 1975 to annex the territory of East Timor (Timor Leste), “previously colonized by the Portuguese,” the statement said. After 24 years of colonization by Indonesia, the East Timorese people were finally able to gain independence in 1999.

The declaration demands the immediate unconditional release of 14 Maluku and numerous Papuan political prisoners, all jailed for voicing their aspirations for independence. It calls for self-determination for the two peoples of West Papua and Maluku.

SWP: ‘The people of West Papua deserve support!’

The following is a statement by Rachele Fruit from the Socialist Workers Party to the 20th Session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, April 19-30.

Distinguished guests:
My name is Rachele Fruit. I am the Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Atlanta, Georgia. I send greetings today in support of the decadeslong struggle of the people of West Papua for independence. The people of West Papua, the last

colonial outpost in the Dutch East Indies, briefly tasted self-determination after raising their Morning Star flag on Dec. 1, 1961.

As part of the wave of anti-colonial struggles after the second imperialist world war, the Indonesian national movement itself had won independence from Dutch domination in 1949.

With the backing of the John F. Kennedy administration in Washington, the Indonesian rulers invaded and annexed the ethnically and culturally distinct West Papuan territory in 1963. After six years of subjugation, a sham United Nations-endorsed “referendum” was put on in 1969. A show of hands by 1,026 hand-picked chiefs, not a vote of the country’s 1 million people, was used to justify the Indonesian rulers’ continued control.

This was under the dictatorial regime of General Suharto, who four years earlier had slaughtered over a million Communist Party members and labor and peasant activists.

In the decades since, the Melanesian people of West Papua have faced brutal conditions under Indonesian domination. Less than half the population of 4 million has access to electricity. Over a quarter of West Papuans live below the poverty line, more than twice the official average across Indonesia. West Papuans, including those studying in Indonesia, are often subjected to racist abuse by military authorities.

The Indonesian military and police have caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of the indigenous people of West Papua and detained and tortured thousands in their drive to suppress opposition to Jakarta’s rule. But this has just fueled the opposition of the native population against the occupation and produced new generations of resistance. The people of West Papua call for self-determination.

Thousands of tribal people have been forced from their traditional lands. Rapacious capitalist firms from Indonesia to the U.S. and Canada, Australia, Japan and Malaysia, profit

mightily from mining and forestry in the resource-rich territory.

It is in the interests of working people around the world — from here in the U.S. to neighboring Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific — to support the West Papuan people’s aspirations for independence. We all share a common enemy in the imperialist rulers from Washington, Canberra and other capitalist powers, who exploit and oppress working people at home and abroad in the name of profits.

Here in Atlanta, I and my party have had the great pleasure to join with fellow workers from West Papua in protests supporting their right to self-determination, the union organizing drive at Amazon and in activity opposing the U.S. rulers’ economic embargo against Cuba.

The people of West Papua deserve our support as they fight for their self-determination.
Thank you.

**Join Caravans
against US economic
war on Cuba!
Sunday April 25**

End travel restrictions!
U.S. out of Guantánamo!
Join the monthly car/bike
caravans in cities across the
US and Canada

For the protest nearest you
contact the National Network
on Cuba at
nnoc.org or see list of *Militant*
distributors on page 8.

— CALENDAR —

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Celebrate 60th Anniversary of Cuba’s Literacy Campaign and Historic Victory of Cuban Workers and Farmers Over U.S.-Backed Invasion at Bay of Pigs. Speaker: Rachele Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Atlanta. Fri., April 30, 7:30 p.m. Donation \$5. 777 Cleveland Ave. SW, Suite 103. Tel: (678) 528-7828.

Seattle: Stop Philippines gov’t killing labor activists



Malaya Movement Pacific Northwest

SEATTLE — About 100 Filipino Americans, members of Bayan Pacific Northwest, Malaya Movement Seattle, and the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines, as well as Socialist Workers Party members and others gathered April 9 at Jose Rizal Park here to demand justice for nine Filipino activists killed by cops in the Calabarzon region of the Philippines March 7. The cop attacks are being called “Bloody Sunday.”

They marched to a nearby bridge overpass to hang banners saying, “Stop the killings in the Philippines” and “Defend Southern Tagalog.” Then they marched back to the park for a rally. Speakers from the three Filipino groups described the growing repression by the government of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, including the killings of trade union and political activists.

On April 11 activists went to a local mall in Tukwila, Washington, and did a die-in outside a Filipino restaurant to memorialize the slain activists. They marched out of the mall chanting their slogans.

In addition to protesting the government’s murderous assaults, activists are calling on Congress to pass the Philippine Human Rights Act, which would suspend U.S. military aid to the Philippines.

— EDWIN FRUIT

UK Uber drivers discuss how to advance fight for a union

BY DAG TIRSÉN

LONDON — After a five-year legal battle by taxi drivers and their union, the Supreme Court ruled Feb. 19 that Uber should recognize its drivers as workers and pay them the minimum wage and holiday pay. Drivers are discussing how to advance the fight for a union against bosses who are determined to undermine any gains that workers make.

James Farrar and Yaseen Aslam, former Uber drivers and leaders of the App Drivers and Couriers Union, took Uber to the London Employment tribunal in 2016. Since then drivers have organized protests and work stoppages in London and elsewhere against taxi bosses' arbitrary suspensions and firings, and for better wages and working conditions.

The court case highlighted the exploitative conditions app-based drivers face. It was supported by the GMB union, which filed a parallel lawsuit. Uber fought the case tooth and nail. Its appeals were twice rejected before the Supreme Court issued a final ruling.

Locked in fierce competition with other taxi bosses, Uber has profited by classifying drivers as "independent contractors," foisting the costs of running and maintaining vehicles onto them and only paying them a small fraction of fares. Uber now says its drivers will receive the statutory 9 pound (\$12.50) hourly minimum wage, and holiday pay based on 12% of their income. It says it has initiated a process for drivers to seek compensation for lost income and also a pension plan.

Aslam and Farrar in a statement pointed out that Uber says it will only pay drivers the minimum wage from when they accept a ride, not the whole time the driver is logged onto the Uber app. Drivers often wait in their cars for long periods for people to book a ride.

"I think the ruling is good," Uber driver Ashraf Ahmed told Andrés Mendoza, Communist League candidate for London mayor. "Maybe I can make a living on driving again." Ahmed said that though he had worked for Uber for many years he has had more difficulty

making ends meet recently. Mendoza said his campaign calls for one union for all cab drivers — black cabs, private hire, and app-based drivers — in order to fight for better wages and conditions.

Mendoza also spoke with Abdirahman Mohamud and Hassan Ali about the ruling. They are members of the App Drivers and Couriers Union who participated in drivers' protests in 2018 and 2019.

"We don't have any confidence in Uber," Mohamud said. "We are just numbers to them." He pointed to bosses' refusal to end the arbitrary firing of drivers based on customer ratings or complaints without any say from the driver. "The company just blocks the driver from logging into the app," he said. "They can just send a note to Transport for London that then revokes our license, which we paid 500 pounds for."

"A driver who never had a drop of alcohol in his whole life was terminated, with no right to appeal, following an alleged customer complaint he was drunk," Ali added.

Aslam and Farrar additionally challenged Uber's jealous guarding of its unilateral decisions over workers' expenses. "This must be subject to collective agreement," their statement said. Uber needs to "make progress towards trade union recognition."

Uber employs 40,000 drivers in London. During the pandemic, drivers' income has fallen alongside passenger numbers. Bosses cut fares to compete with their rivals, while the costs of insurance and licenses for drivers remain the same. Drivers must also pay a 15 pound daily London "congestion charge." Last June Mayor Sadiq Khan hiked it by 30% and extended it to cover weekends in the name of stopping the spread of coronavirus. Many taxi drivers quit driving.

"The ADCU is demanding ride-hailing companies not be allowed to take more than 15% of the fare instead of 25%," Ali told Mendoza. "This can only be won by united action by all drivers."

Rally backs locked-out Shell oil workers in Quebec



Militant/Steve Penner

MONTREAL — More than 150 people rallied April 13 in front of Shell's oil terminal here in solidarity with 17 members of Unifor Local 121 locked out by the bosses since November. They've been without a contract for almost two years.

The union fighters have been standing up to Shell, "maintaining picket lines 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Local 121 President Eric Lepage told the rally. "We don't give up easily."

Shell Canada bosses are refusing to offer the terminal workers the same terms they agreed to with other oil workers in 2019 under the National Energy Program, which covers 8,500 workers organized by Unifor across Canada. Workers made gains on wages, severance pay and other issues.

The terminal bosses are demanding a two-year wage freeze, to eliminate 30% of the jobs and to be able to use more contract workers to replace union members. They also insist on no retroactivity once a new contract is signed.

"We're here because of the importance of solidarity. These actions can change someone's life," Jean-Marc Lemoyne, president of Unifor Local 50 at Kruger's paper mill in Gatineau, Quebec, told the *Militant*. Lemoyne made the two-hour trip to the rally with two of his co-workers. Groups of Unifor workers from several workplaces in the area joined in.

Several members of other unions affiliated with the Quebec Federation of Labor also came out to show their support, including United Steelworkers, United Food and Commercial Workers, Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

— BEVERLY BERNARDO

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Ontario aerospace workers strike over wages, conditions

HALEY STATION, Ontario — "Our pay doesn't even keep up to the cost of living," Leonard Godin, president of United Steelworkers Local 4820 at Magellan Aerospace, told the *Eganville Leader*.

Some 350 workers at Magellan's casting foundry here have been on strike

since March 29 after rejecting the multinational corporation's final offer, which had no pay raise the first year of the contract, a measly 30 cents per hour the second year and 35 cents per hour the third.

Strikers on the picket line told this worker-correspondent April 10 that they don't get any paid sick days and are fighting company plans to introduce forced weekend overtime.

Many union members remember previous hard-fought battles, including a strike in 1991 when Magellan brought in scabs in school buses.

I joined fellow Communist League member Joe Young to speak with working people and farmers in the area on their doorsteps April 10-12. "The biggest concern was weekend shifts," retired factory worker Ambrose Limlawt told the *Militant*. "I back them 100%. If you can't have the weekend off with your family, what the hell is left in life?"

We brought solidarity letters signed by workers at two Walmart stores in Montreal for the Steelworkers local. We also brought a signed solidarity card with a photo of workers at the Cargill meatpacking plant near Montreal.

Amelie Beauvolks, a United Food and Commercial Workers member at the Cargill plant, helped initiate the card. "It was neat to take a photo," she said. "That way they can see we really support them. It's good to unite for the cause."

Messages of support can be sent to USW Local 4820, c/o USW, 200 Ronson Drive, Suite 300 Etobicoke, ON M9W 5Z9.

— Katy LeRougetel

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 6, 1996

In a move that restricts many democratic rights, president William Clinton signed a broad "antiterrorism" bill into law April 24.

The legislation strengthens the government's ability to arbitrarily ban or deport those it does not want to allow into the United States. It also places greater restrictions on the rights of prisoners, particularly the right to habeas corpus appeals — often the only recourse for inmates sentenced to death. A step up in convictions and executions is expected.

The passage was accompanied by extensive media interviews with relatives of those killed in the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building one year ago.

Gregory Nojeim, legislative counsel to the American Civil Liberties Union, said the bill virtually ensures that a person wrongly convicted would never "get his day in court to prove his innocence."



May 7, 1971

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On April 24, more than half a million Americans marched here to answer Nixon's hollow promises about an "honorable" disengagement from Vietnam. "OUT NOW!" was the clear and powerful message that roared from the crowd. To a greater degree than before, the demonstration reflected the American population as a whole. The most significant increase came from the ranks of labor, in many cases in open defiance of union officials.

SAN FRANCISCO — It was the largest demonstration in the history of the West Coast. The organizers, the National Peace Action Coalition, estimate that well over 300,000 demonstrators marched in a massive display of sentiment for ending the war. April 24 more than ever before was a confirmation of mass action for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops as the central organizing tool of the antiwar movement.



May 4, 1946

McCOY, Va., April 21 — Twelve workers in this community last Thursday were murdered for profits. Twelve miners were blasted and burned to death by the greed of the coal operators.

The operators doomed these twelve as they have scores of thousands of others. And they will continue to doom new thousands unless the AFL United Mine Workers win their current soft coal strike for adequate safety measures, and a Union Health and Welfare Fund.

This latest mine disaster leaves this small community with 12 more widows and 55 fatherless children. The explosion of methane gas was so terrific that 150-pound jacks were blown 350 feet.

In the face of this latest tragedy, the operators continued to defy the demand of the UMW for a health and welfare fund to maintain the families of miners killed or maimed in such unnecessary disasters as this one.

NY event hails Cuba Revolution

Continued from front page people in the United States.

Participants in the event included Cuban Americans from both sides of the Hudson River who’ve taken part in car and bike caravans in New York City demanding an end to Washington’s decadeslong economic war against Cuba. There was a young hardware store worker from New York City, as well as a worker at a graphics shop in the Albany area. There were college and high school students from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Workers at several Walmart stores in the region attended, as did rail freight conductors, nurses and other workers. There was a radio host for a station in Orange, New Jersey, connected to a large Pentacostal church, that broadcasts interviews and other news to Haitians on the island and here, including information about the Cuban Revolution.

SWP members and supporters came from Albany, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. A delegation from the Frente Independentista Boricua, a Puerto Rican independence group, took part, as did a Venezuelan-born physician trained at a Cuban medical school, now practicing in the United States. A Nicaraguan psychologist visiting family in New York, who studied at a Cuban university in the late 1980s, came. And many others.

Shelves of books on revolutionary working-class politics ringed the meeting room. Enlarged covers of *Bay of Pigs/Playa Girón, 1961: Washington’s First Military Defeat in the Americas* by Fidel Castro and José Ramón Fernández and *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* by Jack Barnes were featured above the speakers table.

Along with Ambassador Pedroso, speakers included Mary-Alice Waters, a member of the SWP National Committee and author or editor of many books on the Cuban Revolution, including interviews with its leaders, as well as Catherine Murphy, director of The Literacy Project. Murphy, who participated via video hookup from

San Francisco, also shared a preview from her forthcoming documentary on Cuba’s literacy campaign, *Maestros voluntarios* (voluntary teachers).

Joanne Kuniansky, SWP candidate for governor of New Jersey and a deli counter worker at Walmart, welcomed participants to the celebration, held at the party’s New York City headquarters. Kuniansky described the receptivity she and other SWP candidates find as they campaign on working people’s door-steps, build solidarity with strikes and other labor struggles, join in social protests, and present working-class answers to today’s widespread joblessness and other crises of the profit-driven capitalist system. At the close of the meeting, Kuniansky introduced the other SWP candidates in attendance.

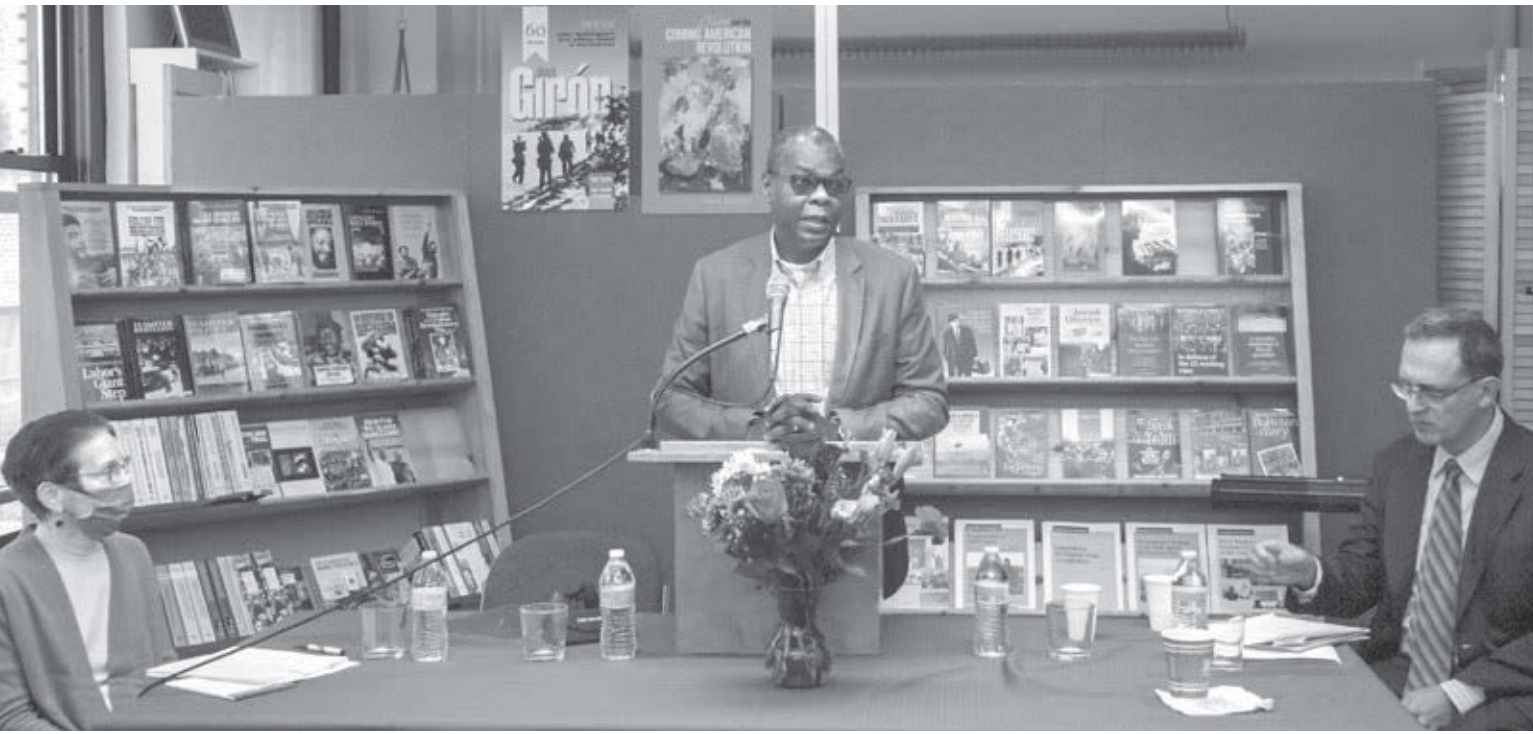
The program was chaired by New York SWP member Martín Koppel, who is active in the local Cuba Si coalition and a Pathfinder Press editor. “In Cuba, too, millions are celebrating these anniversaries,” he said, “including during the congress of the Cuban Communist Party taking place right now.”

Koppel introduced the delegation from Cuba’s U.N. mission, which, along with the ambassador, included first secretaries Ena Domech and Karell Lussón. Koppel also recognized Cuban Americans in the audience who’ve joined caravans against Washington’s embargo, as well as a number of other individuals, including Jack Barnes, Socialist Workers Party national secretary.

‘A genuine revolution’

“Successive U.S. administrations have denied the fact that the Cuban Revolution is a genuine process born out of the Cuban people,” Ambassador Pedroso said. But what the Cuban people did 60 years ago at Playa Girón belies that claim.

“Our revolution was not imported or invented by a group of young dreamers,” the ambassador said. “The revolution, the literacy campaign, and the victory at Playa Girón were the result of years of struggle against Yankee interference



From left, Mary-Alice Waters, Socialist Workers Party; Pedro Luis Pedroso, Cuba’s ambassador to the U.N.; and Martín Koppel, an editor at Pathfinder Press, at April 18 celebration in New York. “The Cuban Revolution is a genuine process born out of the Cuban people,” Pedroso said.

and the blunder of neocolonial governments and bloody dictatorships that ignored the needs of the Cuban people,” who confronted “rampant illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment, prostitution, drugs and gambling casinos.”

At the end of the meeting, as part of a toast by participants to these victories, the ambassador raised his glass and said: “For another Girón, this time of a huge international movement to defeat the blockade!”

In Fidel Castro’s September 1960 address to the U.N. General Assembly, Catherine Murphy pointed out, he announced that Cuba would eradicate illiteracy in the coming year. Ensuring that the island’s entire population — whether 85 years old, or only 8 — learned how to read, write, and figure was “a core pillar” of the revolution’s program, Murphy said. It had been ever since Castro’s 1953 defense speech in the courts of the U.S.-backed tyranny — a speech that was printed and circulated in the hundreds of thousands under the title *History Will Absolve Me* as part of the revolutionary struggle that triumphed six years later. Murphy held up a copy of that historic program, noting that Pathfinder had published it in English translation.

Some 100,000 young people under age 18 volunteered in 1961 for nearly yearlong brigades, fanning out mostly to rural and mountain areas. The clip from Murphy’s new video explained that these young people not only conducted classes but took part in daily farm tasks, vaccinated children, taught basic health measures, registered those without birth certificates, conducted marriage ceremonies and more.

It was a popular, proletarian mobilization only possible in the course of a socialist revolution, transforming not only the brigadistas but the peasants and other working people they were both teaching and learning from. Altogether, a quarter million Cubans volunteered for the literacy campaign.

The Cuban leadership was confident they could meet this seemingly impossible goal, Murphy said, because of what working people had already done, starting with the sweeping land reform nearly two years earlier. Moreover, starting in April 1960 hundreds of volunteers had already been teaching both children and adults in the mountains. In January 1961 Conrado Benítez, a 19-year-old literacy brigadista, was murdered by counterrevolutionary bandits. The new film, Murphy said, pays tribute to the revolutionary example set by Benítez.

María de los Ángeles Vázquez, a Puerto Rican independence fighter and wife of Rafael Cancel Miranda, sent a message to the meeting. Cancel Miranda, a lifelong revolutionary and leader of the fight for Puerto Rico’s freedom, died in 2020. Copies of her greetings were featured on a display along with photos of Cancel Miranda and other Puerto Rican Nationalists being welcomed in Cuba by Fidel Castro in 1979 after their release from a quarter century in U.S. prisons.

The meeting also received a message from Ike Nahem, an organizer of the New York-New Jersey Cuba Si Coalition.

A proletarian course for a lifetime

Mary-Alice Waters focused her comments on the importance of the road that the Playa Girón victory and literacy campaign — that is, the Cuban Revolution itself — had opened for communist workers and revolutionary-minded youth in the United States. That’s truly a cause for celebration, she said, because “without that revolutionary political course, we wouldn’t be here today.”

For those in the room who had lived through those days in April 1961 — and “I count myself among them,” Waters said — those events “defined us and set a course of action for a lifetime.” At the time, Waters said, she was “a green, apolitical sophomore in college.” But for Waters and others like her, “the possibility of being proletarian revolutionists became totally realistic and concrete” in 1961, because of the example of the socialist revolution in Cuba.

Waters read from Fidel Castro’s speech on April 16, shortly after the first U.S.-organized airstrikes, preparing Cuba’s workers, peasants and youth for the inevitable battle they knew was coming — the mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs that began the very next day. “What the imperialists cannot forgive,” Castro said, is “the dignity, the integrity, the courage, the firmness of ideas, the spirit of sacrifice, and the revolutionary spirit of the people of Cuba.

“What they cannot forgive is that we have made a socialist revolution right under the very nose of the United States.”

But that affirmation by Fidel of the socialist character of the revolution wasn’t an ideological statement, Waters emphasized, but an unfolding working-class political course. And it didn’t come out of the blue. From the opening days after the January 1959 triumph, a debate

had raged over whether what was happening in Cuba was a socialist revolution or — as traditional Communist Party leaderships in Cuba, across Latin America, and in the U.S. insisted — a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

On July 28, 1960, nine months before Playa Girón, Waters noted, Che Guevara had addressed an audience of thousands at the opening session of the First Latin American Youth Congress in Havana. “I might be asked whether this revolution before your eyes is a communist revolution,” Guevara said. “I would answer that if this revolution is Marxist — and listen well that I say ‘Marxist’ — it is because it discovered, by its own methods, the road pointed out by Marx.”

Mineworkers battle for safety

Continued from front page neighborhoods across the Tuscaloosa/Birmingham corridor.

When Warrior Met offered a five-year contract with little more than a paltry \$1.50 raise April 5, union miners voted overwhelmingly to continue their strike.

Warrior Met Coal was formed in 2016 out of the bankruptcy of Jim Walter Resources. The pro-boss bankruptcy court helped the “new” mine owners — hedge fund bosses and other creditors owed money by Jim Walter — to take over, reorganize the company and insist on concessions from the miners.

The new bosses demanded major givebacks on wages and working conditions, claiming sacrifice was necessary to continue production, save jobs and pay benefits for retired miners. A major wage cut, loss of sick days and holidays, and higher health care premiums were imposed on workers, along with speed-up and erosion of safety.

“We lost 15 years of gains in that last contract,” Ronnie Reynolds told these two *Militant* worker-correspondents on the picket line April 18. John Hawkins worked at Jim Walters No. 5 Mine from 1985 to 1997. “We get overtime pay after 40 hours instead of after eight. That 80/20 health plan and the \$750 deductible we have to pay amounted to a wage cut too. Just like the company taking our paid lunch.”

“I hadn’t thought about it quite that way, but that’s right,” Andre Ball said. “I know we lost between \$6 and \$8 per hour right when they filed for bankruptcy. In the first year our labor brought them out of bankruptcy. The second year after they had declared bankruptcy they



Above, Cuban militia celebrates after defeat of U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at Bay of Pigs in April 1961. Right, one of over 100,000 volunteers in the popular, proletarian yearlong literacy campaign that transformed teachers and students alike, strengthening the revolution.

A socialist revolution “cannot be finessed,” Waters said. “It is the act of free men and women, of conscious men and women.” It is the product of the kind of class-struggle experience millions of Cuban working people had been engaged in well before April 1961. “The deed comes first,” Waters said. “But the deed deepens the importance of theory, of understanding *what* you are fighting for and *why*. What you are willing to give your life for.

“Without that working-class political consciousness,” Waters said, “the literacy campaign in Cuba would have been a bourgeois reform,” like those during the Mexican Revolution of the early 1900s. Not a road to unite working people in city and countryside, making it possible

for them to take an increasingly greater part in running every aspect of society.

To this day, the U.S. rulers and their propagandists peddle the lie that what happened at Playa Girón was the result of vacillation by Democratic Party President John F. Kennedy and the CIA’s failure to organize adequate air support for the invasion force.

“But the battle at Playa Girón was not lost by ‘blunders,’” Waters said. “*It was won by the courage and discipline of the Cuban people.*”

She cited a talk by Che Guevara to an assembly of electrical workers and militia members shortly after the victory. The U.S. government’s operation “was well conceived from a military point of view,” Che said. “They did their mathematical calculations as if they were confronting the German army and coming to take a beachhead at Normandy.” They organized the invasion “with the efficiency they display in such matters.”

“But they failed to measure the moral relationship of forces,” Guevara said. They were “wrong in measuring the capacity for struggle” of Cuban working people resisting the assault.

‘Our fight is here in the U.S.’

In concluding, Waters returned to what the Cuban Revolution meant for the class struggle and for communist workers and youth in the United States.

As the Cuban Revolution was advancing, she said, the mass proletarian civil rights movement was bringing down the Jim Crow system of state-enforced segregation in the U.S. “We could begin to see the kind of social forces, the working-class forces capable of doing here what working people were accomplishing in Cuba. We could see the prospects for making a socialist revolution here, too.

“The Cuban victory at Playa Girón smashed the myth of the invincibility of U.S. imperialism,” Waters said. “It showed what working people are capable of with a caliber of leadership forged in combat and, to paraphrase Fidel Castro, with the kind of sacrifices that entails.”

Waters recounted the experience of SWP leader Jack Barnes, who as a college student had spent the summer of 1960 in Cuba. Barnes participated in the Latin American Youth Conference at which Che Guevara spoke, and joined the debates about whether or not a socialist revolution was being led there. There were “interventions” by workers spreading in factories and other workplaces to halt employer

sabotage. And massive working-class mobilizations that accompanied the nationalizations of U.S.- and other imperialist-owned companies.

Barnes explained to a local militia leader he had gotten to know that he was thinking of staying in Cuba to help defend the revolution from the U.S. government assault everyone knew was coming. “No. Your job is elsewhere,” the militia leader told Barnes. “We’ll take care of the invaders when they come. Your job is back in the United States, finding others like yourself who are determined to do there what we’re doing here.”

That militia leader was right, Waters said. “It gives us great satisfaction to celebrate the Cuban revolution’s victories. They are victories for all of us.

“But we never forget that our fight is here in the United States,” Waters said, “building a working-class party and movement that can take power out of the hands of the capitalist class. That, too, is what we celebrate today.”



Meeting participants stayed for more than an hour after the program, talking to the speakers and each other, studying the displays, purchasing books, and eating the large spread of food prepared by volunteers. In all, participants purchased 15 books, including four copies of *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*.

Fidel Gómez, a Cuban living in New Jersey who participates in the caravans against the U.S. embargo, told the *Militant* that although he himself wasn’t born until 1969, his father and uncle fought as part of the militia at Playa Girón. “That was a big victory for the Cuban people, for the revolution, and for socialism,” he said.

Oscar Montes, a young worker at the meeting, recalled the impact that watching *Maestra*, Catherine Murphy’s earlier documentary on the 1961 literacy campaign, had on his thinking last year. “The Cuban Revolution was raising consciousness back then, and it’s still raising consciousness 60 years later.”

“We don’t learn about the Cuban Revolution in school,” Dakota Jarrett, a high school student from Pittsburgh, said. “We need to fight to defend it. Why wouldn’t it be possible to make a revolution here in the United States, too?”

A collection for the work of the Socialist Workers Party raised over \$3,000.

Sara Lobman and Candace Wagner contributed to this article.

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Washington's Afghan war

Continued from front page
in Afghanistan was intended to prevent another 9/11 attack. But the massive use of military might there was primarily aimed at “persuading” governments across the region “that continuing to get crosswise with Washington is not only against their class interests but contrary over any extended period to their own survival,” a 2005 Socialist Workers Party resolution explained.

Attack on popular revolution

A popular revolution swept Afghanistan in 1978 bringing to power the Stalinist-led People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. It legalized trade unions, canceled peasants' debts to landlords, enabled oppressed nationalities to publish and broadcast in their own languages for the first time, and promised to expropriate large landowners and distribute land to peasants.

But this government never tried to mobilize working people to carry out these measures and to take command of their lives. As conditions worsened, the PDPA government became isolated.

Moscow intervened in 1979 to back one faction within the PDPA engaged in a murderous assault against another. Then it sent an invading force to prop up the PDPA regime against a rebellion led by landlords and other reactionary forces, backed by Washington. Moscow's 10-year war against these Islamist forces became increasingly unpopular at home. Its defeat and anti-government sentiment were among the causes of the collapse of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union in 1991.

Mineworkers

Continued from page 7

this group has twisted strikers' statements or put words in their mouths. When miners expressed concerns, we showed them the article, “Anti-Labor Outfit Attacks Miners Strike, Union” from the April 26 *Militant*.

Demand is high for the metallurgical coal mined here. Warrior Met bosses are trying to get some coal out during the strike, using managers and strikebreakers, some of whom were contract workers before the strike. Scabs are brought into the No. 7 mine in school buses with darkened windows from the company-run training center.

A few union members have crossed the picket line, several pickets told us angrily. There's a heavy presence of state troopers and other police in the area, some parked at mine entrances and others patrolling mine roads.

Unionists and workers who have heard about the strike have begun to visit the picket line to offer solidarity, strikers told us, including a delegation of union miners from West Virginia. Members of United Steelworkers Local 1013 from the nearby U.S. Steel pipe mill came by. Their local set up a collection area in their union hall for members to bring food for the striking miners.

The national union has called a series of rallies in solidarity with the strike. The first one was April 21 in McCalla.

The miners' fight is in the interests of all workers. Contributions and messages of support and solidarity should be sent to UMWA District 20, 21922 Hwy. 216 (Miners Memorial Parkway), McCalla, AL 35111. Email: umwadistrict20@bellsouth.net. Tel.: (205) 477-7500. Fax: (205) 477-0004.

The Taliban forces took power in 1996 and allowed al-Qaeda — which was led by many of the guerrilla forces the U.S. rulers had funded and armed, including Osama bin Laden — to set up bases there.

The Taliban enforced stifling political and cultural conditions on working people, driving women from public life, banning TV and music and executing anyone accused of disobeying its orders.

Washington invaded Afghanistan not only to overturn the rule of the Taliban, but also to establish a military presence across Central Asia. The Pentagon continues working on plans to bolster its forces in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the wake of the proposed Afghan pullout. “There's probably not a space on the globe that the United States and its allies can't reach” with drone strikes, boasted Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin April 14.

War devastated working people

Dubbed “Operation Enduring Freedom” by President George W. Bush, the Afghanistan war led to the deaths of an estimated 157,000 people by the end of 2019, including 2,300 U.S. military personnel. Over 5.3 million Afghans have been forced from their homes.

In 2001 Washington installed Hamid Karzai to head the government. But neither Bush nor three subsequent U.S. administrations ever established a stable regime there. The Barack Obama administration escalated U.S. troop deployment to 100,000 in 2011, without defeating the Taliban.

For more than a decade, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, the Pentagon has claimed it was close to turning the war over to the Afghan military. Despite the start of talks with the Taliban in December 2018, U.S. and allied forces continued their airstrikes, killing more civilians in 2019 than at any time since 2002.

“The Taliban are in a stronger military position now than at any point since 2001,” admitted a U.S. government report last month. It controls a fifth of the country. The U.S.-backed regime controls most major cities, with neither side in firm control of much of the rest.

At the beginning of the war the Pakistani government was transformed from a protector of the Taliban into Washington's ally, providing the U.S. rulers with airbases to carry out bombing assaults.

Locked-out Marathon Petroleum workers stand strong



Militant/Lisa Rottach

ST. PAUL PARK, Minn. — Some 200 Marathon Petroleum refinery workers, members of Teamsters Local 120, have been locked out by the bosses for over 12 weeks, but remain strong in their fight for safety on the job and for people who live near the refinery. Marathon — the largest refinery chain in the U.S. — has refused to budge from demands to bring in more nonunion contract workers and combining jobs. No union member has crossed the picket line.

Danielle Snyder, Dan Fein and Dean Hazlewood came from Chicago to join the Marathon workers' picket line April 18, bringing greetings from co-workers at the Walmart stores where they work. Snyder and Fein work at the Villa Park store, and brought a message signed by 39 workers. Hazlewood brought a message from 22 fellow workers at the Darien store. They were warmly welcomed and thanked for the support as they joined the picketing.

The Teamsters are doing informational picketing about their fight at Speedway gas stations in Minnesota and Wisconsin owned by Marathon. The Chicago Walmart workers talked with Matt Foss, who has worked at the refinery for 22 years and heads up these pickets. Snyder, who lives down the block from a Speedway, told Foss that she and Fein will contact the Teamsters in the Chicago area to organize a picket at the Speedway in her neighborhood.

— HELEN MEYERS

In 2009 it waged deadly attacks on people in areas of Pakistan controlled by the Taliban, with backup from U.S. special forces and drone strikes.

But at the same time, Islamabad continued to provide a haven for Afghan Taliban forces. This was “crucial” to the U.S. forces' failure, complained Jack Reed, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, April 15. And the Pakistani rulers have grown less dependent on Washington and have been increasingly drawn into Beijing's orbit.

The ongoing competition and conflict between Washington and Beijing now dominates politics in the region.

Washington's two-decade occupation of Afghanistan has done nothing to eradicate the wretched living conditions working people there face. Some 57% of

adults are illiterate. The infant mortality rate is 46.5 deaths for every 1,000 births, in contrast to 5.6 in the U.S.

The U.S. capitalist rulers came out of the second imperialist world war proclaiming they would now preside over an “American century.” But they fought in Korea to a stalemate, were defeated in Vietnam, presided over war and destruction across the Middle East, and now say they'll get out of Afghanistan.

“Working people need our own foreign policy,” Alyson Kennedy, the Socialist Workers Party's 2021 Texas state campaign chairperson, told the *Militant*, “starting from solidarity with fellow working people in Afghanistan and elsewhere. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan and across Central Asia.”

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Cut workweek with no pay cut to save jobs!

Statement by Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas City Council, District 1, April 21.

Millions of workers remain out of work today, facing mounting hardships and uncertainty and isolation from fellow workers on the job. That is the one place where we can join together as a class, discuss the road forward together and fight for what we need.

Neither Democratic nor Republican administrations have acted to reverse this crisis. The Biden administration’s “jobs act” wouldn’t create a single job. It just pumps more money into the coffers of the bosses and government bureaucrats to do with as they please.

It will take workers and our unions, organizing and fighting to change these conditions. We need to fight for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available jobs among us. This is needed now to prevent more layoffs and keep millions on the job without anyone losing a single cent in take-home pay.

Our unions need to mobilize our ranks — and tens of millions of unorganized workers — to fight together for a federally funded public works program that can provide jobs at union-scale pay to build houses, hospitals, schools and other things working people need.

And we need to fight for workers control of production to prevent crippling speedup, understaffing and all manner of danger to life and limb. This would open

the door to the working class — not the bosses — taking charge of how and what things are made in the factories and mills, to meet the needs of working people.

Fighting for such demands would advance the unity of the working class and every union struggle workers are organizing today — from coal miners striking for improved pay and conditions at Warrior Met in Alabama, to locked-out oil refinery workers fighting for safety in Minnesota, to steelworkers battling ATI bosses’ job cuts, and the countless other daily battles workers organize on the job to defend ourselves.

Only through working-class struggle against those who exploit us can workers win what our class needs and change ourselves — to develop our fighting capacities and class consciousness. This is the road to a battle-tested working-class movement, one that can forge our own political party, a labor party, capable of leading millions of the exploited and oppressed to take political power into our own hands.

There is a living example today where working people carried out exactly the kind of revolution we need here — in Cuba, where the July 26 Movement led a mass popular uprising that overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and announced the socialist revolution in our hemisphere.

As Fidel Castro said in 1961, “There will be a victorious revolution in the United States before a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba.”

Myanmar junta targets union, protest leaders

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Unable to stop the nationwide movement against the Feb. 1 military coup, despite killing more than 700 people and jailing thousands, the military regime continues to step up targeting of union and other protest leaders.

Soldiers and police arrested Myo Myo Aye, director of the Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar, April 15 at the union’s office in Shwepyithar Township, a working-class neighborhood of Yangon. “We lost our pillar,” said a member of the union staff, “but we are going to operate with the remaining staff.” The STUM is one of many unions that have been at the forefront of protests against the regime.

That same day an unmarked car deliberately crashed into a motorbike protest action in the town of Monywa, hitting Ko Wai Moe Naing, a leader of the Sagaing Regional Youth Committee. Armed thugs jumped out of the car, then beat and hauled him off to army headquarters.

“We simply don’t want to go back to the dark age” of military rule, the 25-year-old Muslim youth committee leader, in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar, told *Irrawaddy* before he was seized. Friends worry that he will be tortured. Well-known actor Zin Wine and singer Po Po, who have spoken out against military rule, were also arrested April 15.

The military has a list of 930 more people it is looking for in connection with the protests. Among them are actors, singers and others wanted on charges of encouraging dissent in the armed forces. The junta is seriously concerned about the reliability of the largely working-class rank and file of the military.

Soldiers attack march of striking medical workers

In Mandalay, the country’s second largest city, soldiers attacked a march of striking doctors and other medical workers April 15, arresting 16 people.

Later that day junta forces fired into the Sule Mosque in Maha Aung Myay Township south of Mandalay, where strike organizers were spending the night, killing one and arresting five others, including children. Soldiers also set fire to houses in a nearby Muslim neighborhood, burning down at least 40 homes.

The junta’s repression is bringing together working people from different religions and ethnic groups. Nuns from the Order of Saint Joseph of the Apparition and a group of Buddhist monks brought food and donations to victims of the fire.

The regime’s repressive forces opened fire on residents and looted public donations for striking railway workers kept at a monastery in the small town of

Myitnge, a rail center in Mandalay Region, April 11. Three people were killed and about a dozen wounded.

“Many of our members still refuse to go back to work,” Maung Maung, president of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar, told a mid-April webinar conference. He pointed to workers on strike on the railway, and at the oil and gas company, banks, schools and hospitals, who are opposing the military coup.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said April 18 that the death toll at the hands of the regime has reached 737. Another 3,229 have been arrested.

The junta, led by Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, seized power after the National League for Democracy, a capitalist party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won the November elections in a landslide. Suu Kyi had shared power with the military command since the party first won in the 2015 elections. Under the 2008 constitution the military high command automatically controls key ministries and 25% of the seats in parliament.

Over a third of Myanmar’s population is made up of 135 ethnic minorities recognized by the government, as well as the Rohingya, who the government falsely claims are “illegal immigrants.”

Members of the majority in the shuttered parliament announced April 16 that they had formed a “National Unity Government.” They named Suu Kyi, who is in prison and denied any communication with her supporters, as head of state. They also named leaders of some of the main ethnic minorities to symbolic ministries.

Even before the coup 70% of the population lived in the countryside where most homes don’t have electricity, cooking gas or indoor plumbing. A fourth of the nation’s children are small for their age because of inadequate nutrition. Some 8 million people eke out a living on less than \$3.20 a day.

Protest organizers called on people to boycott the annual three-day Thingyan water festival that usually attracts thousands across the country. Instead, in Mandalay thousands turned the festival into a protest, marching with the traditional flower pot, but stamped with the symbols of the civil disobedience movement.

“This year we will mark Thingyan only with revolutionary chants,” poet and Mandalay resident Kyaw Gyi told Myanmar Now at the march.

The regime’s newspaper, *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, tried to counter the boycott, by claiming that Ngapali beach was “thronged” with travelers celebrating the holiday. But the picture they ran with the article showed an almost empty beach.

Jury finds cop guilty

Continued from front page
of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill.

During the trial, witnesses testified that they urged Chauvin to release Floyd — pleas the cop ignored. The medical examiner testified Floyd was killed by Chauvin’s actions, while the defense claimed Floyd died not from the cop’s actions, but from a heart condition and his use of fentanyl.

Floyd’s family welcomed the verdict. They pointed out that the movement that demanded justice for George Floyd had a big impact around the country, and that helped win the trial and the jury’s decision.

It is likely Chauvin will appeal. Three other fired cops who helped Chauvin restrain Floyd face trial on charges of aiding and abetting second-degree murder and manslaughter in August.

The day before the verdict, Democratic House Rep. Maxine Waters called for protesters to “get more confrontational” if Chauvin was not found guilty. After her threat, Chauvin’s attorney, Eric Nelson, moved the judge declare a mistrial because Waters’ remarks could affect the jurors. Judge Peter Cahill dismissed the motion, but told Nelson, “Congresswoman Waters may have given you something on appeal that may result on this whole trial being overturned.”

Liberal politicians, TV talk show pundits and the media had nothing but disdain for Chauvin’s constitutional rights and due process. Stand-up comic Chelsea Handler said the cop should be denied the presumption of innocence. “So pathetic that there is a trial to prove Derek Chauvin killed George Floyd when there is a video of him doing so,” she wrote March 30.

“But any attack on our rights, no matter who it’s aimed at, will be used to weaken protections that are crucial for working people, as we look for a course to build a mass social movement to meet the attacks of the capitalist rulers and their cops,” Doug Nelson, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, told the *Militant* April 20.

A number of liberal groups held a protest at the Hennepin County Government Center April 19, calling for passage of a series of bills to reform the police.

“The fact is, if working people can reach out and organize to bring our mass social weight to bear, we can win victories against cop brutality and more,” Nelson said. “The push of liberals to ‘reform’ the police can never work. They are essential to maintaining the rule of the capitalist class. Only a deep-going social revolution — like took place in Cuba in 1959 — can uproot cop violence and racist attacks once and for all.”

Less than an hour before Chauvin’s conviction, a so-far unidentified cop in Columbus, Ohio, shot dead 16-year-old Ma’Khia Bryant, who was holding a knife. Protests have spread in Chicago after cop Eric Stillman shot dead 13-year-old Adam Toledo March 29.

Since the initial demonstrations against Floyd’s killing swept the country last May, looting, violence and race baiting organized by antifa and some Black Lives Matter leaders became common at some anti-police brutality actions. Their anti-working-class course repelled many working people who wanted to join actions and make their voices heard against the killing of Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others. Protests dwindled.

More than 3,000 National Guard soldiers, along with cops and sheriffs deputies, were ordered to downtown Minneapolis prior to the verdict and hundreds of stores were boarded up.

Protests hit cop killing of Wright

As the trial was taking place, Kim Potter, a cop in nearby Brooklyn Center, shot dead Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black motorist, after the cops stopped him for an out-of-date registration sticker April 11. Potter, who has been fired and faces charges of second-degree manslaughter, says she mistook her gun for a Taser.

Wright’s family urged people to respond without violence and organized some substantial protests. But some of the actions against Wright’s killing have been marked by looting and violence. However, one group that recognizes the destructive effects of this dangerous anti-working-class mayhem, who call themselves the Minnesota Freedom Fighters, went to the protests to try and stop it. This is a welcome development.

The prevalence of cop brutality and the broader assaults the crisis of capitalism brings down on workers and farmers ensures discussion about how to defend our interests and organize a mass movement against cop brutality that can make gains will continue.