

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

African conference organizes solidarity with Cuban Revolution
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 81/NO. 28 JULY 31, 2017

Liberals furor against Trump reflects fear of working class

BY SETH GALINSKY

Why are liberal Democrats, some Republican politicians and most of the mainstream capitalist media continuing to promote the witch hunt against President Donald Trump? Why can't they accommodate themselves to work with his administration? After all, he's one of their own: A wealthy capitalist seeking to advance the interests of U.S. capital at home and abroad.

The fact is both the Democratic and Republican parties are in crisis. The rulers increasingly fear the working class, which is battered by depression conditions and sees no wing of the capitalist political parties with answers and responds to Donald Trump's call to "drain the swamp." The bosses see working-class battles coming down the road.

The most significant phrase uttered by President Trump in his inaugural speech, economics columnist Martin Sandbu wrote in the July 18 *Financial*

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Help build Che brigade to Cuba, Sochi Youth Festival

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

Workers and youth are signing up to participate in two important international gatherings — the "In the footsteps of Che" International Brigade to Cuba Oct. 1-15 and the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi, Russia, Oct. 14-22.

The "In the Footsteps of Che" brigade honors Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. This October is the 50th anniversary of Che's death in combat in Bolivia, where he helped lead a guerrilla movement against that country's military dictatorship in 1967. Castro, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, died last November.

The brigade will include voluntary agricultural work and visits to battle sites where Che fought during the 1956-58 revolutionary war. Brigade participants will meet with combatants who fought alongside Che during Cuba's revolutionary war and in the Cuban military column that fought alongside Congolese fighters seeking

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Socialist Workers Party: US hands off Venezuela!



Thousands of workers rally in Caracas, Venezuela, May 17 in support of July 30 vote to elect delegates to national constituent assembly called by President Nicolás Maduro.

Washington threatens 'strong economic action'

BY JIM BRADLEY

The Washington-backed Democratic Unity Roundtable coalition (MUD), which has been organizing increasingly violent actions against the United Socialist Party government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, carried out a unilateral, nonsanctioned referendum July 16 opposing government plans for July 30 elections for delegates to a constituent assembly.

After the vote, President Donald Trump threatened to "take strong and swift economic actions" against the

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Socialist Workers Party demands 'US hands off!'

The following statement was released July 19 by Margaret Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Albany.

The Socialist Workers Party urges working people across the United States and around the world to stand with their fellow toilers in Venezuela, speaking out against Washington's threats and attacks on Venezuelan sovereignty.

The U.S. propertied rulers, and the Venezuelan opposition forces they back, see the deep economic crisis battering Venezuela's workers and farmers as an opportunity to bring down the government of President Nicolás Maduro there and install a regime more subservient to the interests of Washington and Venezuela's employing class.

President Donald Trump has threatened to "take strong and swift economic actions" against the Ven-

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SWP campaigns in working class to expand reach of party



Militant/John Naubert

Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Seattle mayor, discussing workers' need to fight for political power with Gary Nobles by his home in South Seattle July 15.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor in Seattle, led a team of party members and supporters to South Seattle July 13 to talk with workers there about the deepening economic, political and moral crisis of the capitalist rulers and their system and the party's efforts to reach, get to know and work with those attracted to what it has to say.

"The working people here do all the work and somebody else takes

the credit," Gary Nobles, a disabled auto mechanic, told Martin when she raised these questions after knocking on his door. "And another thing, they have a law for everything and when they have it out for you they use it against you."

"The fact is working people make everything anyone uses today," Martin said, "but the profits go to the bosses, not to us. And this is how they decide what they hire us to make —

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EU rulers force 'new normal' of crisis conditions on Greek workers

BY JIM BRADLEY

Working people in Greece face a "new normal" of rising mortality rates, worse jobs — if you're lucky enough to have one — with lower pay, slashed social benefits and a lower quality of life. This is the result of a decade of government assaults amid world capitalism's deepest crisis in decades.

This crisis is also the product of the underlying realities of the European Union's "ever greater union." It was purportedly set up to benefit all, but is in fact a marriage of unequal competing capitalist regimes that assures continued profits for Berlin's bosses and other northern rulers at the expense of the peoples of Greece, Italy,

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Coal miners face new rise in scourge of black lung

Quebec zinc workers' strike over pensions is solid

Turkish gov’t obstructs trial of bosses in 2014 mine explosion

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

On May 13, 2014, 301 coal miners were killed by carbon monoxide poisoning in the Soma Holding Company’s Eynenez coal mine in Turkey. The bosses’ disregard for the safety and lives of the miners prompted widespread protests and outrage throughout the country. Three years later, their families and co-workers who survived are still waiting for some justice.

When Recep Tayyip Erdogan — then Turkey’s prime minister — spoke in Soma after the company-caused disaster, he said the risk of death is simply the fate in life of miners. “These accidents are things which are always happening,” he said.

Under pressure from the protests and international attention, government prosecutors brought charges against the mine owner and company executives for “causing death by negligence.” The prosecutors announced they were seeking life imprisonment for Can Gurkan, the owner, and seven other mine bosses, as well as two to 15 years in prison for 29 others.

But now the fight to hold the bosses accountable faces a new obstacle. Following a failed coup attempt in July 2016 — which the Erdogan government blamed on followers of his former ally Fetullah Gullen, who has been in exile in the U.S. — a state of emergency and rounds of far-reaching purges and arrests were imposed to consolidate Erdogan’s sweeping executive power. The judiciary has been a special target.

One month after the failed coup, Gurkan seized the opportunity to claim

terrorism was the cause of the mine disaster. “Our country has been under attack of PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party], DHKP-C [Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front], and FETO [Fetullahist Terror Organization, Erdogan’s term for the followers of Gullen],” he told the court. “They must have done the Soma incident, too.”

“The judge had gone into the Soma mine and did a lot of investigations,” Ali Sogut, a former coal miner who worked at Soma Holding’s Ata Bacasi mine, told the *Militant* by phone July 17. “The judge asked the prosecutor if he was ready for the sentence. They were going to sentence the mine officials to 15 or more years in prison.

“Then the prosecutor asked for the sentencing to be postponed. The judge was threatened by the company lawyers,” Sogut said. “Then he was removed from the case and transferred to Izmir. The state and the company work hand in hand.”

In a July 12 article “Victims of Soma Disaster Still Wait for Justice,” the *Hurriyet Daily News* said, “The system that sacrificed people for more profit and exploited workers had given no value to their safety. ... This should probably be defined as murder, rather than an accident.”

Rumors spread that the judge in the case, Aytac Balli, was being investigated and then was gone. “Discharging the only person ‘competent’ in the case from his duty?” the *Daily News* asked. “Make families say, ‘Give back the judge.’”

Turkish Minute, a news website, reported July 4 that 780 more judges and



Miners in Soma, Turkey, argue with government officials, May 26, 2014, after explosion at Eynenez mine killed 301 coal miners. Fight continues to hold bosses accountable for disaster.

prosecutors had been removed by the Erdogan government, including Balli, “who was about to give the final verdict in the Soma trial.” They noted that the “government has removed thousands of judges and prosecutors from their posts on coup charges since the failed coup.”

One-quarter of all judges and prosecutors in Turkey have been dismissed over the last year, and over 2,000 arrested.

A public appeal was issued by 301 artists, politicians and journalists on behalf of the “301 workers who lost their lives,” reported the *Daily News*, demanding a fair trial and protesting the judge’s removal.

Miners in the Soma mining district continue to face unsafe conditions from bosses determined to boost profits at all costs. Those working at the Imbat mine refused to work after Ismail Karakaya, 44, was killed in a coal-breaking machine in January. “They told us [about Karakaya’s death] and we said we did not want to go down to the mine,” one miner told the daily *Bir-Gun*. “Our job is very intense and dangerous. They do not provide training either. ... When they don’t take the required precautions, the outcome is this.”

Yasemin Aydinoglu contributed to this article.

Las Vegas protests defend ranchers framed-up by federal government

BY BERNIE SENTER

LAS VEGAS — Over 250 people gathered at the Rainbow Garden here July 15 to support four defendants on trial for a 2014 standoff with federal government forces in Bunkerville, Nevada. That armed protest came after the Bureau of Land Management seized hundreds of cattle owned by rancher Cliven Bundy.

Defendants Eric Parker, Steven Stewart, Ricky Lovelien and Scott Drexler were among hundreds of people who converged on Bunkerville and stopped the government from impounding the cattle.

Bundy and family members, including sons Ammon and Ryan Bundy, who were acquitted in 2016 on frame-up charges stemming from an occupation at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, had refused to comply with Washington’s moves to curtail their access to government land to graze cattle.

The four defendants are being retried after the prosecution failed to get a conviction against them in April. Cliven, Ammon and Ryan Bundy are being held in prison without bail awaiting a later trial. Ten others are

Continued on page 4

THE MILITANT

Defend Tom Harding, Richard Labrie!

The ‘Militant’ explains rail bosses’ profit drive and Ottawa’s complicity caused 2013 Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, oil train disaster that killed 47 people. Defense of two rail workers facing trial Sept. 11 on frame-up charges in the disaster is a key part of ongoing fight for railway safety.

Militant/Madhu DurgaSriHari
July 9 Washington, D.C., benefit for framed-up Lac-Mégantic rail workers.

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Telephone: (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947
E-mail: themilitant@mac.com
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Protest demands answers in cop killing of Justine Damond

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

“My mom is dead because a police officer shot her for reasons I don’t know and I demand answers,” Zach Damond, 22, told a vigil of over 300 people held after his stepmother Justine Damond was shot and killed by Minneapolis cop Mohamed Noor July 15.

Damond had called 911 to report a possible assault in an alley behind her home in southwest Minneapolis. When Noor and his partner Matthew Harrity arrived, she walked up to their car and began talking to Harrity, who was the driver. “Suddenly a surprise burst of gunfire blasted past Harrity as Noor fired though the squad’s open window striking Damond in the abdomen,” the Minneapolis-area *Star Tribune* reported.

Neither Noor nor Harrity had their bodycam turned on during the killing.

They have been suspended with pay during an investigation of the shooting by the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

The Star Tribune reported July 19 that Harrity told investigators he was startled by a “loud sound” as Damond approached the car. Noor, a Somali-American police officer, has refused to be questioned.

The killing happened just weeks after the June 16 acquittal of police officer Jeronimo Yanez, who shot and killed Philando Castile in July 2016.

Damond, who is Caucasian, was a yoga instructor who moved to Minneapolis from Sydney. Her killing has been widely covered in Australia and internationally.

Don Damond, her fiancé, told the press that “her family and I have been provided with almost no information



Above, Evan Frost/MPR News

Above, Don Damond, speaking to media July 17, protests killing by cop of his fiancé Justine Damond. At his right is Justine’s stepson, Zach Damond. Inset, NAACP members speak out at community vigil day before demanding action.

from law enforcement regarding what happened after police arrived.”

“The tragic shooting death of Justine Damond will bring home for many Australians a disturbing phe-

nomenon they had only observed from afar and may have even thought was on the decline,” the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, “the extraordinary rate of people killed during encounters with police in the United States.”

“Workers throughout Minneapolis and the world are outraged by the police killing of Justine Damond,” David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, said in a statement released July 18. Campaign supporters have been distributing it as they discuss the killing and working-class politics throughout the area. “The fight against police killings is a working-class issue and a union issue. This incident reveals once again the true purpose of the police. They are used to keep us in our place.”

The SWP calls for the cops involved, and any who try and cover up the killing, to be indicted, prosecuted and jailed.

“The fight against police brutality is part of a bigger fight to unify the working class and act in solidarity with all who are exploited and oppressed,” Rosenfeld said. “It is along this road that we will build a movement that can overthrow the rule of capital and bring workers to power.”

“The killing was unjustified,” truck driver Randy Saylor told Tony Lane when the SWP campaigner knocked on his door. “This woman was trying to do a good deed.”

SWP steps up campaigning to expand reach of party

Continued from front page

what will reap the highest profit, not what people need.

“Until working people organize in the millions to take power out of their hands and run society ourselves and work together to eliminate want and inequality, to build culture and solidarity,” she replied, “workers’ skills and talents won’t be realized.”

Socialist Workers Party members and supporters are knocking on doors in cities and small towns across the country to discuss with working people, the party’s perspective on how to respond to the capitalist crisis.

As part of these discussions, SWP members and supporters introduce workers to *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?*; *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*; and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, all by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, as well as *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters. And they work to expand the circulation of the *Militant*, the party’s paper.

“Every day I try to find ways to fill prescriptions when people can’t afford the medicines,” a pharmacy technician named Ellen told Martin at her door. “But it seems like it always ends up that their only option is to buy fewer pills and try to stretch out the dosage till the next month. They’re not getting the medicine they need.”

“The disaster of health care under capitalism is part of the carnage facing the working class for which neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have any solutions,” responded Martin. “What they offer us isn’t health care, it’s inadequate insurance and exorbitant drug prices, things that make those bosses rich, while more and more of us get less and less care. Workers need to organize to fight for government-funded cradle-to-grave health care coverage.

“It will take a socialist revolution like workers and farmers carried out in Cuba to implement this once and for all,” she said.

Socialist campaigners knocked on doors across the Minneapolis area over the July 15-16 weekend, discuss-

ing politics with workers and making progress in collecting the 750 signatures needed to go well over the filing requirement to put David Rosenfeld, SWP candidate for mayor, on the ballot.

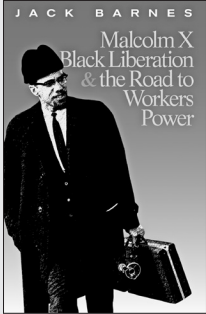
“I work two part-time jobs in the construction industry and I can’t find a job that doesn’t pay minimum wage,” 25-year-old Brenda Kelly said when SWP members explained who they were. “We need fundamental change.” She got a *Militant* subscription and signed to put Rosenfeld on the ballot.

Dozens of other workers got *Militants*, including seven who purchased subscriptions and 10 books by SWP leaders, and more than 160 people signed the petitions.

Socialist Workers Party members and a port trucker they work with from Los Angeles joined a July 15 picket line in front of a detention center in Henderson, Nevada, where four backers of framed-up ranchers Ammon and Cliven Bundy are being held on charges growing out of their successful protests to stop government agents from seizing the Bundys’ cattle.

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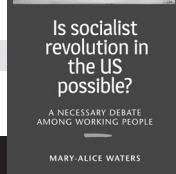
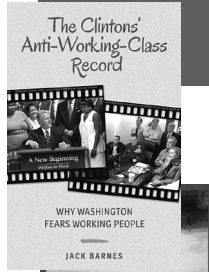
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Greek workers ‘new normal’

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Spain and other weaker economies in southern Europe.

This inequality, exacerbated by the world capitalist crisis, pushed the Greek rulers’ swollen national debt to the point of disaster. The government’s insolvency, deepened by relentless pressure for payment on Greek bonds in the hands of banks and private profiteers, threatened to shatter the EU.

The EU, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund provided aid, but demanded the Greek rulers carry out ceaseless attacks against the workers and farmers to make them pay for the crisis.

EU officials approved another \$9.7 billion in financial assistance to the Greek government July 7, once again postponing a looming debt default crisis that could have threatened the survival of the 28-member European Union.

The action, taken by the board of directors of the European Stability Mechanism, unmasks the myth promoted by liberal capitalist politicians that the EU is a stable, “progressive” counterweight on the world stage to protectionist Washington under the administration of President Donald Trump.

The emergency financial assistance permitted the Greek government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras’ Coalition of the Radical Left to immediately turn around and pay \$7.9 billion due to the IMF and the European Central Bank, which hold most of its almost \$367 billion debt.

On its knees, the Tsipras government pleads that “we expect our partners to respect the sacrifices of the Greek people” by permitting Greece to sell bonds on the EU bond market. Speaking for German bondholders, Chancellor Angela Merkel is opposed to any concessions. Tensions between Berlin and Athens are rising.

“The government and people of Greece,” said ESM Managing Director Klaus Regling, “should continue on its path to rebuild a competitive economy and regain investors’ trust.”

Millions of Greek workers and farmers know from their own bitter experience that Regling’s bureaucratic doublespeak translates into an order to the Tsipras government to intensify its “austerity” drive that has devastated the lives of Greek workers

and farmers.

Over a seven-year period the Greek economy has shrunk by one-fifth. Official unemployment stands at slightly less than 25 percent, but the fact is half the working population has been driven out of the labor market. Over 45 percent of young people are unemployed, forced to live with their parents, unable to be independent, marry or buy a home.

The percentage of involuntary part-time jobs has risen from 45 to 72 percent over the last 10 years. Pensions have been slashed, schools and hospitals closed, the public health system is in shambles. From 2009 through 2015, average wages dropped by 20 percent.

One price of the latest bailout was government assurance of further pension cuts in 2019.

EU’s fatal contradictions

Despite the hype, the establishment of the European Union was never about initiating an era of European postwar “peace and prosperity.” In the aftermath of World War II, as U.S. capital expanded rapidly with little competition, French and German capitalists and others began discussion of establishing a joint protectionist bloc to gain a stronger competitive position in world markets, leading to the establishment of the EU in 1993.

But the EU was born with a fatal



DPA Picture Alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

Greek teachers union demonstrates against layoffs in Athens March 2014. “Merkel out” sign reflects anger against Berlin’s insistence stepped up ‘austerity’ be forced on workers in Greece.

built-in destabilizing contradiction. The capitalist rulers of each member nation protect their profits and privileges, including against their EU partners.

The sharply different levels of economic and social development between industrial powerhouses like Germany and France and lesser-developed countries like Portugal, Italy, Greece and others push the union apart. Berlin is dominant, with the most productive and developed industrial base and consequently the economic and political clout to domi-

nate the economies of the lesser-developed countries in the EU. German capitalists sell. Greeks buy, and go into debt to pay.

All these contradictions have come to the fore under the pressure of the economic crisis, threatening to unravel the EU. Talks began June 19 between Brussels and London on the withdrawal of the U.K. from the EU, a result of last year’s Brexit vote.

And everywhere — as in Greece — the price of dog-eat-dog capitalist competition is foisted on working people.

Help build Che brigade to Cuba, Sochi Youth Festival

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independence from Belgium in 1960.

“We organized a public meeting on the brigade at the Hartford public library,” Greater Hartford Coalition on Cuba member Tim Craine told the *Militant* July 18. Four people signed up to go after hearing about the itinerary and the significance of the visits to the places where Che fought during the revolution. Now we’re raising funds to help people to go.”

Milly Guzman-Young attended the meeting and signed up to go with her daughter. “I am from Puerto Rico. I have so much to learn from Che and the steps that Cuba took to be free,” she told the *Militant*. “Puerto Rico needs to be free from the austerity measures and

the hands of the U.S. Cuba did it and they are still free.”

“You can see for yourself the gains the Cuban people have made,” Jonathan Batres, 24, who joined the May Day Cuba brigade from Los Angeles, told the *Militant*. “You can see the effects of Washington’s economic blockade, and how resourceful and resilient the Cuban people are.”

This fall Batres is planning to go to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Russia. The festival is sponsored by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, an anti-imperialist organization that has organized similar gatherings since 1947.

“Going to Sochi where thousands of people will exchange different opinions,

and being able to meet revolutionary-minded young people from around the world, will also be an amazing experience,” Batres said. “Through opportunities like this we’re able to reach out all over the world and build the movement against war and exploitation.”

Some 20,000 delegates from 120 countries are expected this year. Cuba is organizing to send 250 young revolutionaries. Although the deadline for registration was July 20, the *Militant* will continue to cover the preparations and political debates leading up to the festival.

To sign up for the “In the Footsteps of Che” Brigade, contact the Chicago Cuba Committee at (312) 952-2618 or ICanGoToCuba@gmail.com.

Las Vegas actions defend framed-up ranchers

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also incarcerated.

“In 2014 my family decided we were going to stand,” Cliven Bundy’s wife Carol told the crowd. “The amazing thing is you stood with us. They are standing for what they feel and what they know is right and they are not going to back down.”

“I am the wife of Lavoy Finicum. He was murdered by our government and the FBI,” Jeanette Finicum said.

He had joined the Malheur occupation, and was traveling with Ammon and Ryan Bundy to discuss the occupation with residents in a nearby town when they were ambushed by the FBI and Oregon State Police. Finicum was shot down in cold blood.

The protests in Oregon and Bunkerville were part of larger efforts by farmers and ranchers in the West to defend their right to make a living in the face of increasing federal government policies aimed against them, justified in the name of the environment.

With some 50 percent of all western land owned by the federal government — 85 percent in Nevada — these are life-and-death questions for ranchers.

Some at the rally had participated in protests earlier in the day in front of the federal courthouse and the jail where the defendants are being held. “Drain the Swamp. Start with Navar-

ro,” read one popular sign — a reference to Judge Gloria Navarro, who recently ruled for prosecution motions denying defendants the right to mount a political and constitutional defense, as they had done in the earlier trial.

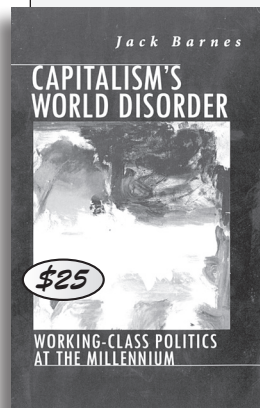
Keynote speaker Roger Stone, a former adviser to Donald Trump, attacked comments Attorney General Jeff Sessions made July 12 praising trial prosecutor Steven Myhre, and called for the president to “pardon the Bundys.”

“Why would we want a pardon? They haven’t been found guilty of anything yet,” one Bundy family member told the *Militant*.

Other speakers at the program included Sean Stone, son of Hollywood director Oliver Stone; libertarian anti-military Iraq War veteran Adam Kokesch; and Ace Baker, a leader of American Warrior Revolution, who helped organize the earlier rallies.

Capitalism’s World Disorder

by Jack Barnes



“A new pattern is being woven in struggle today as working people emerge from a period of retreat. The emerging pattern is taking shape, defined by the actions of a vanguard whose ranks increase with

every single worker or farmer who reaches out to others with the hand of solidarity and offers to fight together.”

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— CALENDAR —

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Solidarity with Cuba! Wed., July 26. Refreshments, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. *Trinity Episcopal Church, 125 E. 26th St. For more information contact Chicago Cuba Coalition at (312) 952-2618.*

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Pacific Blue Cross workers locked out in British Columbia

BURNABY, British Columbia — Over 600 members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1816 were locked out by Pacific Blue Cross July 7. The bosses imposed the lockout in response to several work stoppages over the past couple of months protesting company concessions demands.

Local Union President Beth Miller told the *Militant* the main issues are wages, retiree benefits and the proposed length of the agreement. “I have been president for 20 years and I have never seen anything like this,” she said. “The proposed wage increase doesn’t even cover the cost of living.”

The workers picket 24 hours a day outside the company’s headquarters here, handing out a flyer headlined, “What kind of benefits provider slashes benefits for its own employees? Pacific Blue Cross.” Constant honking shows wide support for the locked-out workers.

The company website claims that it provides one of the “most generous benefit plans to our active and retired union employees,” but wants to “manage cost on certain benefits that threaten our ability to afford them into the future.”

The union points out that Blue Cross made \$11 million in net profit last year.

—Joe Young

Quebec zinc workers’ strike over pensions is solid

SALABERRY-DE-VALLEYFIELD, Quebec — Despite a court injunction that restricts picketing, the 371 members of United Steelworkers Local 6486 have maintained picket lines around the clock here at CEZinc, one of the 10 largest zinc refineries worldwide. They have been winning support.

The zinc workers went on strike Feb. 12 to renew their contract and to oppose the employer’s plans to replace the current pension plan that is 100 percent company funded with one where union members pay 50 percent. Some 600 USW locals across Quebec are contributing to the union’s strike fund.

Zinc Electrolyte of Canada (CEZinc) is owned by Noranda Income Fund, whose major shareholder is the Glencore

Mining Group, a multinational company based in Switzerland.

“The company openly states that it is going after our collective agreement to reduce its production costs,” striker Éric Hallé told the *Militant* on the picket line. He is a welder with 38 years experience.

“We do hazardous work, with lots of chemical products. We are underpaid for this type of job,” said Abdel Chaoua, another welder with 10 years experience in the oil industry of his native Algeria. “We would not have gone on strike if the company offered us the status quo.”

There have been no negotiations for weeks. The company has maintained minimum production with its executives and some local contractors, whose names are posted as scabs on a large sign by the picket line.

—Michel Prairie and Sylvie Charbin



Militant/Francois Bradette

Members of Canadian Union of Public Employees picket Pacific Blue Cross July 13. Bosses locked them out after workers opposed concession demands with series of work stoppages.

Coal miners face new rise in scourge of black lung

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

Coal miners in the U.S., like workers around the world, face the grinding effects of a deepening economic, political and moral crisis of the capitalist for-profit system. Not only have tens of thousands of miners been thrown out of work, but the overwhelming majority of those still employed are in nonunion mines facing a new rise in Black Lung.

In the late 1960s and ’70s, coal miners organized a revolution in their union — the United Mine Workers of America — to fight for safety on the job and against the scourge of black lung disease. In a series of battles they forced the coal bosses to accept union safety committees in the mines with the power to shut down production to reduce coal dust and other unsafe conditions. The strengthening of the union — and the vigilant actions of the miners — led to a decline in black lung and improvement in the social and living conditions of working people in the coalfields.

The bosses never stopped pushing back against this encroachment on their authority because it cut into their profits. Their pressure increased as competition from natural gas grew and the coal industry contracted. By 2015 only 21 percent of miners worked in union mines. While as recently as 1998 the union had 240,000 members, today there are fewer

than 10,000 working UMW members. The last unionized mine in Kentucky shut down two years ago. Without union protection, miners face a new explosion of black lung. One in 14 underground miners with more than 25 years experience will get back lung, double the rate in 1999. And there is a sharp increase of progressive massive fibrosis, the worst form of the disease. West Virginia, the second largest coal-producing state, now ranks 49th in life expectancy.

“We are in the midst of an epidemic of black lung disease in central Appalachia that is historically unparalleled,” Scott Laney, an epidemiologist at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, told a June 29 public meeting held in Morgantown, West Virginia, and publicized by the UMW.

Laney launched his investigation after a radiologist from Pike County, Kentucky, reported to NIOSH his clinic was seeing a sharp increase in coal miners with progressive massive fibrosis. Sixty miners had come in with the disease in just a year and a half. Twenty-six of them were roof bolters and 20 operators of continuous miners, both jobs that expose workers to high concentrations of dust. In contrast, there were only 31 cases nationwide from 1990 to 1999.

Progressive massive fibrosis, which shows up as large masses of scar tissue

and nodules on the lungs, is caused by breathing silica dust. George Williams, a black lung benefits counselor at the Tug River Health Association in Gary, West Virginia, and a former miner, told the *Militant* in a phone interview July 17 that in the last three years the number of miners with progressive massive fibrosis coming to the clinic has “about doubled.”

“The companies mine smaller coal seams and cut more rock to get the height to put in the conveyor belts,” he said. The belts carry the coal out of the mine.

Cutting the rock, and sandstone that’s mixed with it, produces toxic silica dust.

“Ninety-five percent of black lung benefits cases are fought by the insurance and coal companies. Most go to court,” Williams said. “It’s a battle.”

“After a couple of years, progressive massive fibrosis begins cutting the air ducts off. You end up on oxygen,” he said. “Several miners have had lung transplants.”

As coal miners face this reborn threat to their life and lungs, state governments, which are subservient to the mine bosses, are slashing mine inspections. Kentucky just passed a law that will halve mandated inspections, replacing them with so-called “analyst visits” to “coach” miners about safety.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



August 14, 1992

SÃO PAULO, Brazil — On June 27, after a three-day trial in the city of Pôrto Alegre, in southern Brazil, five men and one woman, members of the Landless Rural-Workers Movement (MST) were convicted of complicity in the murder of a soldier. The trial received a lot of publicity in Brazilian news media.

The frame-up charges stemmed from a 1990 army assault against 600 landless rural workers who were demanding government recognition of land they had occupied. The frame-up of these workers is part of a series of attacks by capitalist landlords and industrialists against the movement. There are over 4 million families of landless peasants in Brazil. For many of the landless peasants, direct occupations offer the only way to obtain land.



August 7, 1967

PHILADELPHIA — Following the outbreak of ghetto uprisings across the country, a state of limited emergency was called here July 27. The proclamation makes it illegal for more than 12 persons to assemble on the streets or sidewalks for any purpose whatsoever.

In spite of the proclamation, a Black rally was held Saturday in North Philadelphia to hear Muhammad Ali. There were over 300 persons in attendance. The first use of the proclamation came against an anti-war rally Sunday.

The effect of the proclamation can be seen in the knots of police which are on all important corners after dark and red patrol cars and police wagons which seem to be everywhere. Many normally crowded streets were nearly deserted this weekend.



August 1, 1942

The government-sponsored conference between nine West Coast aircraft corporations and the unions of aircraft workers, was blown up in Los Angeles on July 16 by the flat refusal of administration and employer spokesmen to agree to union demands.

The fact that Roosevelt was preparing more drastic wage controls, and that the Little Steel decision had just been handed down, probably prompted the employers to postpone the conference and await governmental aid in reducing union demands.

The joint AFL and CIO demands would replace the present 60 and 75 cent minimum in aircraft with a 95 cent minimum, and give general wage increases to all aircraft workers. The employers have resisted these demands.

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‘Cuba’s role in the fight for African liberation is unforgettable’

5th Continental Conference in Africa organizes solidarity with the Cuban Revolution

BY JAMES HARRIS
AND WILLIE COTTON

WINDHOEK, Namibia — “From the earliest days of the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban government and the Cuban people, led by Comrade Fidel Castro, embraced the struggles for the liberation of African peoples as their own,” said Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, honorary president of the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association, as he welcomed delegates from across Africa to the 5th Continental Africa Conference in Solidarity with Cuba. The gathering was held here in the capital city of Namibia June 5-7.

“Cuban internationalist volunteers in tens of thousands came to Africa as soldiers, doctors and in other capacities to fight for the liberation of the entire African continent,” he added.

“The sacrifices that the Cuban people made for Namibia to achieve its independence are too great to quantify, because it is difficult to imagine the SWAPO victory without the friendship of Cuba.”

Ya Toivo, a national hero of Namibia, was one of the founders of the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO) that led the Namibian struggle for independence from apartheid South Africa from 1960 to 1990. He was imprisoned for 16 years at the infamous Robben Island prison of the racist South African regime. Ten of those years he was incarcerated alongside Nelson Mandela, the future president of South Africa, and other leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Ya Toivo, who attended every session of the event, died June 9, age 92. The spirit and tone of the conference could not have been captured better than by his words and warmth throughout. The depth of appreciation to the Cuban people for the internationalist solidarity extended to the peoples of Africa in their national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles marked every aspect of the event.

Continental gathering

The 5th Continental Africa Conference in Solidarity with Cuba was attended by 183 delegates from 17 African countries, Cuba and the United States.

The previous four took place in South Africa (1995), Ghana (1997), Angola (2010), and Ethiopia (2012).

The African countries represented at the 2017 event, in addition to Namibia, included Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa), Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), South Africa, Tanzania, Western Sahara, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The conference also received a message of solidarity from the African Union, sent by its chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat of Chad.

Under the banner “Intensifying Solidarity with Cuba and Continuing the Legacy of Fidel and Che,” the gathering was called by the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association and the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).

Namibian President Hage Geingob officially opened the event paraphrasing the words of Cuban national hero José



Garwin Beukes

Namibian President Hage Geingob inaugurated conference June 5. “In our time of need, Cuba rushed to know us,” he told delegates, referring to national liberation struggle against South Africa.

Martí: “In a time of crisis, the peoples of the world who are going to fight together must rush to know each other,” adding that “in our time of crisis Cuba rushed to know us.”

Sam Nujoma, internationally known leader of the independence struggle and first president of Namibia, joined the presidium for the closing session of the conference. Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila addressed the session.

Deputy Prime Minister Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who also serves as



Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia/Granma

From left: Fernando González, president of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples; Sam Nujoma, internationally known leader of Namibia’s fight for independence from apartheid South Africa and the country’s first president; Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, a founding leader of South West Africa People’s Organization and national hero of Namibia, at conference closing ceremony.

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, took part in every session. Activities included not only cultural events but a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at Heroes Acre, where dozens of those who devoted their lives to the independence struggle are buried, and a visit to Independence Memorial Museum.

Nandi-Ndaitwah personally led the tours of both sites, explaining important aspects of Namibia’s history and the cultures of its people, and describing the lives and contributions of those memorialized at Heroes Acre.

Cuban Ambassador to Namibia

Giraldo Mazola headed the Cuban delegation, which included Victor Dreke, president of the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association. Dreke, who is known among anti-imperialist fighters throughout Africa by his Swahili nom-de-guerre Moja, was second in command to Che Guevara in the column that aided anti-imperialist forces in the Congo in 1965. He headed Cuba’s internationalist mission in Guinea-Bissau in 1966-68, fighting alongside the national liberation forces there led by Amílcar Cabral.

The ICAP delegation was headed by its president Fernando González, a Hero



Militant/Willie Cotton

Survivors of the 1978 Cassinga massacre who studied in Cuba. Third from left, José Prieto, director of ICAP work in Africa and one of the Cuban internationalists who fought their way to Namibian refugee camp at Cassinga, and were able to beat back South African attack that killed some 600 women and children.

of the Republic of Cuba and one of the Cuban Five, who also served in Cuba’s internationalist mission in Angola. The ICAP president’s remarks at a State House dinner for conference participants hosted by President Geingob were one of the highlights of the conference. (See accompanying article on page 6.)

José Prieto, another veteran of Cuba’s internationalist mission in Angola, who is responsible for ICAP’s work in Africa, gave delegates a brief summary of the history of the Cuban Revolution’s solidarity with the peoples of Africa during the opening plenary session.

Prieto was one of the Cuban soldiers stationed 25 miles from the Namibian refugee camp in Cassinga in 1978 when it was attacked by South African planes and paratroopers, who massacred some 600 Namibians, mostly women and children. He was among the Angolan and Cuban volunteers who fought their way to the camp to help repel the attack and treat the injured. Sixteen Cuban soldiers gave their lives in that battle and 78 were wounded.

The response of the Cuban leadership to the Cassinga massacre — one of the most infamous episodes during the Namibian struggle against the apartheid regime — is also known throughout Af-

rica. Hundreds of the orphans and other surviving children of Cassinga were flown to Cuba where schools staffed by Namibian and Cuban teachers were established for them on the Isle of Youth. Many went on to study in Cuba for years, graduating from Cuban universities and today shoulder leadership responsibilities in all arenas of Namibian society.

Numerous survivors of the Cassinga massacre educated in Cuba were among the Namibian delegates participating in the solidarity conference.

Impact of Cuba’s solidarity

“Solidarity is not giving what you have in abundance,” Fernando González told the conference. “It means sharing whatever you have, even though it might not be much. That’s the difference between solidarity and charity.”

Remarks made by speaker after speaker during plenary sessions as well as two working commissions revealed the profound impact that revolutionary solidarity of the Cuban people has had on the peoples of Africa.

Delegates worked throughout the conference to hammer out plans for actions to strengthen the solidarity movement with the Cuban Revolution. The



Militant/Willie Cotton

Namibian Deputy Prime Minister Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, second from left, with other delegates during visit to Heroes Acre, where dozens of independence fighters are buried. Nandi-Ndaitwah personally led tours at Heroes Acre and Independence Museum explaining Namibia’s history and cultures of its people. At left, Fernando González; at right Victor Dreke.

discussion was far ranging.

Speaking to the entire gathering, Angolan General Kundi Paihama, former minister of defense and today governor of Angola’s Cunene province, thanked conference organizers for the opportunity to participate. “Solidarity is a moral duty to all on the African continent,” he remarked. “Cuban blood has been spilled here. That is the truth — the role of Cuba was and is unforgettable.”

Referring to the campaign waged by pro-imperialist forces in Africa and around the world who seek to discredit Cuba’s historic contributions to the African freedom struggle, Paihama added, “The accusations against Cuba are not true. Against the facts there is no argument.”

Zimbabwean Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgar Mbwenbwe reminded delegates, to applause, of the decisive role played by Cuban medical personnel in confronting the Ebola crisis in western Africa in 2014. “Cuba needs our solidarity now more than ever,” he added.

Chris Matlhako, general secretary of South Africa Friends of Cuba, spoke on behalf of the large South African delegation attending the conference. The South African government is often pressured by imperialist powers around the world to condemn supposed human rights violations in Cuba, he told delegates.

“We remind them we do not have a short memory. When we were fighting for our freedom, those same countries

were supporting the apartheid regime of South Africa against us,” he said, “and now they ask us to condemn those who fought and died together with us and shared our fate.”

Guinea-Bissau delegate Imani Na Umoja told a reporter for the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, “Conscious people have come from all over Africa to show our solidarity with Cuba. The worst crime in the world is to be ungrateful. When Africa called, Cuba answered. Now Cuba’s calling and Africa must answer. We have a debt.”

Nigerian delegate Denja Yaqub, from the Nigeria Labour Congress, stressed the broad political education tasks that must be central to the solidarity work in every country. “We can’t run away from the fact that we are faced with a contest of socialism versus capitalism,” he emphasized.

Lefika Chetty, another member of the South African delegation, described how “we have been trying to educate South African citizens from working class to bourgeoisie on the role that Cuba played in our own freedom.”

“The struggle that culminated in the winning of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale was a watershed for us,” she added. “It opened the doors to our own freedom.”

Graduates of Cuban universities

One of the most important features of the conference was the participation of delegates from across the continent

Continued on page 8

Fernando González: ‘I will carry those lessons with me until the end of my life’

The following are remarks by Fernando González, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) in Windhoek, Namibia, at a State House dinner on June 5 hosted by the country’s president, Hage Geingob. González is one of five Cuban revolutionaries who served some 15 years in U.S. federal prisons, framed up by Washington on charges of conspiracy to commit espionage. In appreciation for the unparalleled contribution of Cuban internationalists to the Namibian peoples’ independence struggle, President Geingob presented González with a painting of Fidel Castro, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, who died last November. It portrays him as the commander of the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army that brought down the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba in 1959.

BY FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ

Thank you. This is a portrait of a very special man. The same portrait was everywhere during the days we were mourning the loss of the commander in chief. It was very common. That portrait shows him standing in the Sierra Maestra, the guerrilla that he was all his life.



Fernando González at June 5 dinner hosted by the Namibian president during Cuba solidarity conference.

No matter how long he had been in office he was always a guerrilla. And he will always be a guerrilla.

In 1987 I was 24 years old. I had just graduated from college after six years studying international relations and had read many books on colonialism. With that innocence one has just leaving university, I believed I knew it all, that I had all the knowledge I needed to have.

I was a young lieutenant in the Revolutionary Armed Forces and I came to

Africa, to Angola. That’s when I realized that I didn’t know anything about colonialism. No matter how many books I had read, this was the real experience — seeing the effects of colonialism in Africa, but seeing also the peoples of the continent fighting the consequences of colonialism and fighting to overcome colonialism itself.

I learned from my comrades in arms. Young as I was, some were even younger than I was. I learned from the FAPLA [Popular Armed Forces of Angola] fighters, from their fighting capacity, from their sacrifices, and I learned also from the fighters of the PLAN [People’s Liberation Army of Namibia] — seasoned fighters of the FAPLA and PLAN. I will carry those lessons with me ‘til the end of my life.

Later on, when I was in prison in the United States, those lessons helped me get through. They helped me to understand and withstand any difficulty.

I knew that nothing would be more

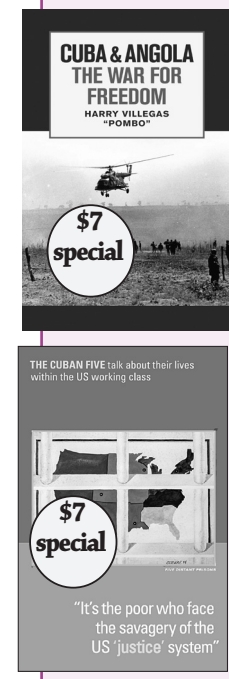
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The Namibian

Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, presenting greetings and display of photos “Cuba and Africa: 1961-2017” to Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, honorary president of Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association. At left is Deputy Prime Minister Nandi-Ndaitwah.

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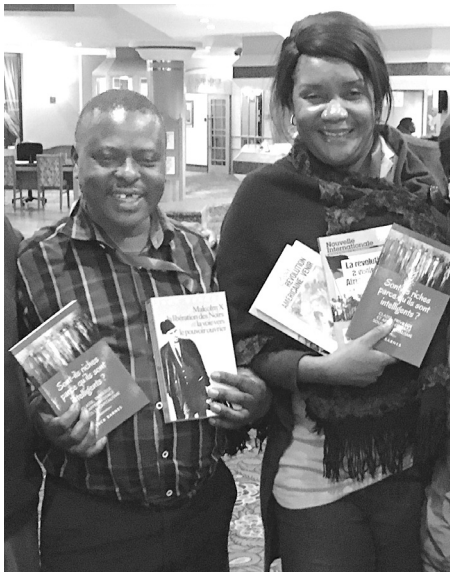
Continued from page 6

difficult than the sacrifices made by the Cuban people during our struggle for independence and the revolution that triumphed in 1959. Nothing would be more difficult than the sacrifices made by the people of Africa, by the people of Angola and Namibia fighting colonialism.

I mention Angola and Namibia because they are the countries I am more familiar with, but I’m sure those lessons could have been learned many other places in Africa.

Throughout the years I was in prison, never was I a prouder Cuban than when I received a letter from one of our compatriots around the world who was working as a doctor, a teacher, a construction worker. Those letters reminded me of when I was in Angola for two years, and brought me back to the reasons that made it worth withstanding any situation in prison.

People ask us sometimes, any of the five of us, what enabled you to resist? Just to illustrate one example, I tell them about the day I was sitting on my bunk in prison for the four o’clock count. Throughout the prison system the four o’clock count is sacred. It takes place every day no matter what is happening. There could be an earthquake and there’s still going to be a count at four o’clock.



Militant/Willie Cotton

A table with broad range of political books in English, Spanish and French published by Pathfinder Press was a popular feature of conference. Virtually every book was gone in the first hours. Above, Erick Kaghesi and Sylvie Siluvundi, delegates from Democratic Republic of Congo, with French-language additions to their health center’s community library in Kinshasa.

After the count clears, an officer delivers the mail.

One day I was sitting on my bunk with all the mail I had received, sorting it out to decide in what order I would read it. I saw a letter with an envelope that was different. And the stamp was one I had never seen before. So I set it apart and said to myself, “I’m going to start with this one.” I opened it up and it was a letter from a Cuban doctor writing from Nauru.

Here I was, a graduate in international relations, and I had to go look up where Nauru was — a small island in the Pacific, with 10,000 inhabitants. And Cuba had a medical team there!

For me, that is reason enough to resist. To withstand anything. A revolution that is able to do things like that is worth dying for.

The truth is that the history of that kind of solidarity by Cuba starts even before I was born. It began in Algeria in 1961, in the first years of the revolution. As Fidel said, apart from that concept of internationalism and solidarity, the Cuban Revolution cannot be understood. It’s who we are.

Solidarity is not giving what you have in abundance. It means sharing whatever you have, even though it might not be much. That’s the difference between charity and solidarity.

When I go back to the time I was in Angola and the lessons I learned, I realize how much we owe to Africa because as a species we came from this continent and then spread throughout the world.

But we Cubans might owe to Africa even more — we owe to Africa who we are, our own sense of nationality, our own identity. But on top of that, it’s what Africa has done, what Africans have taught us with their fighting spirit, their quest for independence, for sovereignty, all those lessons that I learned while I was in Angola. I owe all that to Africa.

I feel so close to these countries, to the people of Africa. All Cubans have this special feeling.

It’s a duty for us, and it’s a duty for me, now, as president of ICAP, to continue the work of those who came before me and keep strengthening the ties of solidarity between Africa and Cuba and our peoples. To continue supporting each other everywhere



Militant/Willie Cotton

More than 40,000 African students have studied in Cuba since the early 1960s. Conference delegates who graduated from schools in Cuba were asked to stand at plenary session, above.

and every time it is possible, in all the causes that we face together, through all the challenges in this complex world in which we live.

I don’t want to extend myself. I

want to thank Africa and Namibia and I want to thank the president and the authorities of this country for making this event possible.

Thank you very much.

Africa continental conference

Continued from page 7

who were graduates of Cuban universities — teachers, engineers, agronomists, medical personnel and many other disciplines. Today, they are not only using their training to address pressing social needs in their own countries. They are also the backbone of solidarity work with the Cuban Revolution in numerous countries.

Many were meeting each other for the first time, sometimes even those from the same country. They began discussing among themselves the potential for creating a network of collaboration across the continent and possibly organizing a continental day of solidarity.

According to former Cuban Ambassador to Namibia Angel Dalmau, who today serves as a food consultant to the Namibian Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, more than 40,000 African students have been educated in Cuba since the opening years of the revolution.

40,000!

“People all over Africa have benefited from what the Cuban educational system has given us,” Namibian delegate Constancio Mwanoingi told

participants at one of the commission sessions. “It’s important for those of us who have been trained in Cuba and understand the revolution to come together and defend Cuba and advance Africa.”

Mwanoingi, a Cassinga survivor, studied in Cuba from 1978 to 1985 and then returned to join the fighting ranks of the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia. Along with others in the conference he plans to take part in activities that will be organized Oct. 11-12, on Cuba’s Isle of Youth to mark the 40th Anniversary of International Education in Cuba — 1977-2017.

On behalf of defenders of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, brought greetings from the National Network on Cuba, the Washington D.C., Metro Coalition in Solidarity With Revolutionary Cuba and the New York-New Jersey Cuba Sí Coalition.

In appreciation of the importance of the conference and the work of the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association, Waters presented Andimba Toivo ya Toivo with a handsome bound display of photos recording Cuba’s more than 55-year record of solidarity with the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa.

Final declaration

Unanimously adopted at the closing session of the conference, the final declaration demanded the U.S. government end the “illegal, economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba.” It called for the “unconditional return to the government and people of Cuba of the territory illegally occupied by the government of the United States of America at the Naval Base in Guantánamo” and denounced the violations of human rights in the U.S. prison located there.

Delegates also affirmed their support for the struggles of the people of Western Sahara and Palestine, the independence struggle of the Puerto Rican people, and solidarity with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The invitation extended by the Nigerian delegation to host the 6th Africa continental conference in Lagos in 2019 was enthusiastically welcomed by all.

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SWP: US Hands off Venezuela!

Continued from front page

ezuelan people if the government doesn't cancel a scheduled July 30 election for delegates to a Constituent Assembly it says it needs to stabilize the country after three months of increasingly violent anti-government demonstrations organized by opposition forces. These same groups now threaten to set up a parallel government of so-called "national unity."

The Maduro government, like the Bolivarian government of Hugo Chávez before it, has earned the undying hatred of the U.S. and Venezuelan capitalist rulers because it has sought to manage the capitalist market to use oil profits to fund social programs popular with most Venezuelan workers and farmers. It collaborates with revolutionary Cuba, sending much-needed oil at reduced prices, speaking out against Washington's interference in Latin America and the Caribbean, and welcoming thousands of

Cuban volunteer doctors, health workers and teachers who bring medical care and literacy to working people throughout the country.

The working class of Venezuela is the real target of Washington and the pro-imperialist parties seeking to overthrow the Maduro government. They rightly fear the working class as the force capable of ending their class rule, as the toilers did in Cuba in 1959.

"Foreign intervention in the Bolivarian and Chavista Republic must stop," Cuban President Raúl Castro told Cuba's National Assembly July 14. "We reaffirm our solidarity with the Venezuelan people."

Working people here and worldwide should follow Cuba's proletarian internationalist example. The Socialist Workers Party says: U.S. hands off Venezuela! End Washington's economic sanctions and interference in the internal affairs of the people of Venezuela!

Furor reflects rulers' fear of working class

Continued from front page

Times, was not "America First" but "American carnage."

"What sort of country describes itself, in the words of its highest leader no less, in such terms?" Sandbu asked.

"American decline is not a figment of Mr. Trump's imagination," Sandbu said, describing the carnage facing working people in the U.S. "Centuries-old progress against mortality has gone in reverse" and working people "are dying from the afflictions of broken lives and broken communities: drug overdoses, liver disease and suicide."

The rulers fear of the working class fuels the relentless drive of the liberal Democrats and media moguls, as well as the middle-class left and some anti-Trump Republicans, to press for indictments against his family members and to drive him from office. They are bound and determined to criminalize what are in fact political differences with President Trump.

Campaign against the working class

"Trump didn't seize the presidency by deception," wrote Colbert King in the *Washington Post* July 14. "Nearly 63 million Americans sent that burlesque comedy with headliner Donald Trump to Washington." In other words, the problem isn't Trump, but the workers who voted for him.

"The hosts of the late-night shows decided that they had carte blanche to insult not just the people within this administration, but also the ordinary citizens who support Trump," Caitlin Flanagan wrote in the May issue of *Atlantic*, viewing them as the "minions pouring out of his [Trump's] clown car."

As a result, working people don't believe much of what they see on the news, Flanagan says, because they see themselves falsely portrayed as "a bunch of trailer-park, Oxy-snorting half-wits" and KKK supporters.

This is why the workers who turned to Trump, many of whom had turned to Barack Obama four years earlier, don't buy the liberal assault on the president. They agree that the capitalist media runs "fake news."

Is Moscow the smoking gun?

After months of trying to find a crime they could pin on Trump and his administration, the *New York Times* and others leading the charge against the president thought they finally found the smoking gun — a June 9, 2016, meeting Donald Trump Jr. had with a Russian lawyer and an ex-spy lobbyist who they thought had dirt on Hillary Clinton. Trump Jr. says it turned out the duo didn't have any information of use, and they listened instead to their calls for relaxing sanctions against Moscow.

But even after the release of Trump Jr.'s emails, and scores of op-eds in the *Times* and other papers crying bloody murder, no one can point to any "crime" that has been committed.

President Trump gets a hearing from many work-

ers when he argues that Hillary Clinton violated the law with her handling of thousands of government emails, but was never prosecuted, while "my son Don is being scorned by the Fake News media."

Charles Krauthammer, a conservative opponent of Trump, conceded in the *Washington Post* July 13 that Moscow is not the only world power that tries to intervene in the elections of other countries.

"You don't have to go back to the '40s and '50s when the CIA intervened in France and Italy to keep the communists from coming to power," he said. "What about the Obama administration's blatant interference to try to defeat Benjamin Netanyahu in the latest Israeli election?"

The criminalization of political differences between different factions of the capitalist parties will continue.

Both parties are wracked by divisions and will never be the same. In addition to the ceaseless anti-President Trump chorus, the Republicans are divided by their own differences, incapable time and again of passing an alternative to Obamacare. And this despite the fact they have a majority in both houses of Congress.

Trump himself isn't really a Republican. "President Trump has a funny way of talking about the Republicans as if he's not one of them," James Hohmann wrote in the *Post* July 19. "Maybe it's because he was a registered Democrat until as recently as 2009."

The Democrats are in no better shape. While they all are buoyed by the shrill campaign against Trump, they are bitterly divided on how to rebuild a party that can win elections and con working people. The Bernie Sanders "revolution" is working hard to gain position to take over the party, even if it means the Democrats continue to lose elections while they plod along.

—LETTERS—

Gives to prisoners' fund

I am currently incarcerated at the Illinois River Correctional Center in Canton, Illinois, and have had the privilege to finally read one of your past issues (June 12). I have thoroughly enjoyed it and would like to subscribe to the 12 issues for \$10. I'm also sending an additional \$10 towards the Militant Prisoners' Fund. Thank you and keep up the great work.

*A prisoner
Illinois*

Revolutionary consciousness

I'm indigent, but would like to maintain my revolutionary consciousness. The *Militant* is a tool. One that kept me aware of the struggle, not only in the U.S., but across the world. No one here gets your paper from what I see, and so I hope to share and build with others.

*A prisoner
Florida*

Washington threats

Continued from front page

Venezuelan government if it didn't cancel the vote.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini joined Trump in demanding the Maduro government implement "political gestures to de-escalate tensions" by "suspending the process of putting the Constituent Assembly into place."

The opposition seeks to open divisions in the government and Venezuela's armed forces in hopes of bringing it down. For the last couple years, opposition forces have taken advantage of the ravages of today's unfolding capitalist economic crisis, exacerbated by their own obstruction against Maduro's efforts to ameliorate the effects on working people.

Soaring inflation — estimated to reach 720 percent this year — and constant shortages of everything from food to toothpaste to diapers grind down on working people, forcing them to spend hours daily to try and meet the most basic needs of their families. Government corruption has deepened the problem.

Maduro responded that he "won't be intimidated" by international pressure and that the July 30 vote will be held as scheduled.

To maintain pressure on the government, MUD has called a 24-hour general strike for July 20. Fedecámaras, the bosses' federation, has backed the action. Fedecámaras' outgoing President Francisco Martínez cynically said that the bosses' association will "stand alongside the workers."

The government says the Constituent Assembly is needed to restore stability to the country. The 545-member body will have the power to revise the constitution and pass laws, bypassing the opposition-controlled National Assembly.

The turnout on the July 16 vote gave a glimpse of the existing polarization in the country. According to MUD leaders, 6.5 million of the 19.5 million registered voters in the country participated in the symbolic referendum. They were joined by 700,000 living in the U.S., the EU and elsewhere.

Some 71 percent of Venezuelans believe the opposition has no plan to tackle the country's economic problems, according to a July 13 poll conducted by Hinterlaces. In June the poll found that "56 percent of Venezuelans would prefer that President Maduro solve the [country's] problems."

MUD has threatened to form its own parallel "government of national unity" without Maduro if it doesn't cancel the July 30 vote. And it says it will appoint its own members to the pro-Maduro Supreme Court. Many have warned of the danger of an escalation of the conflict, and the consequences on working people.

The government of revolutionary Cuba, which has thousands of volunteer internationalist doctors, nurses and teachers in Venezuela providing low-cost medical care and literacy programs to working people there, has called for an end to foreign intervention.

In a July 14 speech to Cuba's National Assembly, Cuban President Raúl Castro defended Venezuela's "legitimate right to resolve its internal problems peacefully and without foreign intervention."

"We reaffirm our solidarity with the Venezuelan people and the country's civic-military union led by Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros," he said.

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