

## *What We Fight For*

- ✦ PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.
- ✦ Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.
- ✦ Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society’s benefits and burdens.
- ✦ Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.
- ✦ Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.
- ✦ Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one party.
- ✦ Communism means the party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers – eventually everyone – must become communist organizers.

*Join Us!*

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# ATTACK THE SOURCE OF CAPITALISM'S SUPER-PROFITS:

## FIGHT RACISM!

Communist revolution requires an unswerving commitment to smash racism. As Karl Marx wrote a century and a half ago: "Labor in the white skin cannot emancipate itself as long as labor in the black skin is branded."

Marx was referring to the U.S. Civil War and the struggle to abolish slavery. But his comment remains valid today. A modern version might read: "No section of the working class can achieve liberation as long as the system can continue to super-exploit and super-oppress others." Our liberation requires unbreakable class unity against our common enemy. Nothing prevents this unity or cripples us more than racism. Our future as a class depends on destroying racism within our own ranks.

Capitalism invented racism. In the so-called "New World," the profit system was born from the corpses of tens of millions of Native Americans. It thrived on the blood and sweat of many more millions of Africans brought here in chains. It began to reach maturity on the backs of their descendants. It grew still bigger and stronger on the strength and toil of underpaid immigrant labor.

Today U.S. capitalism tries to rule the world by grinding down its domestic working class and by treating the rest of the international working class as fair game for its low-wage, maximum-profit schemes. On the home front, black, Latin, and Asian workers experience this oppression daily. Worldwide, workers reap the "rewards" of globalized U.S. racism: especially low wages, skyrocketing unemployment, the degradation of women, police-state terror and perpetual war. Iraq and Afghanistan are only the most recent examples of U. S. imperialist adventures. Since 1950, these "interventions" have murdered more people than the Nazis.

Racism has three components. The first is economic. Capitalists need more than average profit or even super-profit. They need maximum profit. Only maximum profit enables a capitalist to defeat his competitors. This is true not just for individual capitalists, but also for entire industries and countries. The ability to super-exploit sections of the working class — to pay lower wages to one group of workers for the same amount of labor power furnished by another — lies at the core of maximum profit. This is the dirty little secret behind the historic income inequality between black and white workers.

Despite the bosses' claims of "progress," the wage gap



between black and white workers continues to widen. In addition, the unemployment rate for black workers is at least double that for white workers. Consequently, huge numbers of black families live in poverty, even as those with jobs work increasingly long hours to eke out a living — 500 hours more annually in 2000 than in 1979. Finally, black workers are penalized for getting sick or old; they are less likely than white workers to have health insurance or a pension plan.

All the money from these racist differentials — amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars — goes straight into the bosses' pockets. Multiply this by the millions of Latino workers suffering from racist exploitation and the totals become astronomical.

The capitalists would love us to believe that white workers have an interest in perpetuating these inequalities. But in pure economic terms, this is a Big Lie. To begin with, workers know that a capitalist will pay the least he can get away with. The more he can depress wages for the most exploited workers, the more other workers' wages (and benefits) will drop as well; the lowest wages define the rest.

This logic is confirmed by the bosses' own studies of the largest Statistical Metropolitan Survey Areas, which show that a decline in wages and benefits for all workers accompanies every spike in economic racism. W.E.B. Dubois, founder of the NAACP, later to join the old U.S. Communist Party, wrote: "So long as white labor must compete with black labor, it must approximate black labor conditions — long hours, small wages."

From the 1969 Figure Flattery strike in the New York

City garment center to the daily struggles of 150,000 garment workers in Los Angeles today, the Progressive Labor Party has a long history of fighting racism on the job and in the unions. In 1973, PLP led over 200 autoworkers in seizing Chrysler's Mack Stamping plant in Detroit against racist speed-ups and deplorable health and safety conditions. In countless contract fights and union elections, PLP has fought racist firings and layoffs, plant closings and wage cuts, worker harassment and abuse. In healthcare, welfare and education, we've united with patients, clients, students and parents. We've pointed out how cutbacks at hospitals, offices and schools were really racist attacks aimed at workers and youth who use these services. In 1975, PLP politically and violently helped defeat the racist anti-busing movement in Boston. In all of these fights, we've proven how fighting racism is in the interests of all workers.

### FIGHT RULERS' RACIST IDEOLOGY

*This is the concluding part of the article on racism that began in our Nov. 19 issue. It dealt with the need to have an "unswerving commitment to smash racism," described how capitalism invented racism and how racism lies at the core of the capitalists' ability to reap maximum profits. It showed how PLP fought racism in the shops and unions and analyzed the economic basis of racism, the first of its three components.*

The second key component of racism is ideology. Racist super-exploitation could not survive without a smokescreen to justify it. The economic base, as Marx called it, needs a "superstructure" of ideas to make it appear rational and necessary. This ideology has assumed many forms throughout U.S. capitalism's brutal history. Native Americans were considered "savages," fit only to be killed. During slavery, the "Founding Fathers" and an army of scribblers considered people of African descent as three-fifths of a human being.

The triumph of industrial capitalism after the Civil War packaged this old poison in new bottles. Led by several generations of Harvard pseudo-scholars, racist theoreticians of the 20th century endorsed "biological determinism," the lie that genetic superiority or inferiority determine social behavior and hierarchy. If this filth resembles Hitler's ravings, it's no accident. The early U.S. "eugenicists" not only admired Hitler; they inspired him. The Nazis' racial laws of 1933 were modeled after U.S. scientists' "research" and recommendations.

After the world's anti-fascist forces defeated Hitler's Nazis in World War II, led by the Soviet Union and Josef Stalin, these academic racists had to lie low. But by the late 1960s, the "genes" gang made its comeback, with U.S. imperialism's Southeast Asian genocide in full swing, and militant rebellions by black and Latin workers

rocking U.S. cities. While the forms varied, the message remained the same. The arch-racist Arthur Jensen wrote that black kids scored lower than whites on IQ tests because black people had "fewer genes for intelligence" than white people. Richard Herrnstein declared that "unemployment runs in the genes, like bad teeth." Edward Banfield blamed the racist conditions of ghetto life on black peoples' lack of "future orientation." All these "experts," and a host of others, had tight Harvard connections.

In 1975, Harvard ant specialist E.O. Wilson did Herrnstein one better with the publication of *Sociobiology*, claiming that genes accounted for everything, from business success to imperial conquest.

PLP led massive struggles exposing these racists, many times literally driving them off the stages of campus auditoriums, and preventing them from spewing their murderous garbage. But today, these racist "theories" about genetic inequality, particularly "sociobiology," are taught at leading universities.

Far beyond the campuses, the print and broadcast media have popularized this ideological trash, 24 hours a day, in the movies, on television, at sporting events, in books and magazines and daily newspapers. People absorb it without even realizing it. The historic struggle to destroy racism must include a systematic, uncompromising fight against racist ideology.

The third component of racism is the rulers' ultimate use of state power, to savagely enforce their racist ideology with the iron fist of police terror. During slavery, the entire South became an armed camp to guard against slave rebellions. Most of the U.S. military's officer corps continues to come from the South. More terror can be found in the brutal policing of the inner cities, which have the highest percentages of black and Latin workers. The U.S. prison system, the world's largest with a population of more than two million, is two-thirds black and Latin.

The fight against racism requires mass revolutionary violence. Those workers and youth who understand this best are most open to joining and leading our Party. PLP's forerunner, the Progressive Labor Movement, cut its teeth by actively participating in the 1964 Harlem Rebellion against police terror. CHALLENGE became the flag of the rebels. PL members went to prison as a badge of honor for their participation.

In 1975 in Detroit, a rebellion erupted when a racist bar owner who catered to cops shot a black youth who worked for him. PLP was in the center of it, flooding the city with "wanted" posters, immersed in the rebellion in the evenings while holding daytime rallies at the auto plants and being watched by the police 24 hours a day.

In 1992, after the LA cops brutally beat Rodney King, PLP served on the front lines of rebellions against the racist police. Our May Day march defied a ban on demonstrations as we marched past, and fraternized

with, the National Guard troops that had been called up to stop the rebellion, spreading revolutionary communist ideas in the heat of battle.

The PLP-led International Committee Against Racism led hundreds of thousands of workers and youth — from New York and Chicago to Tupelo, Mississippi, and California — in violent confrontations with the KKK and Nazis. We integrated Chicago's Marquette Park and drove the fascists back under their rocks. The overwhelming police protection that the big fascists give the little ones to this day is a compliment to our unending war on these racist terrorists.

As U.S. rulers move more ferociously to establish a fascist police state at home and expand their imperialist massacres abroad, all aspects of racism will intensify. Our Party will build on its long history of bringing revolutionary leadership to the fight against racism. Smash Racism with Communist Revolution!

***Future articles: Nationalism — racism's deadly twin, the trap of "multi-cultural" identity politics, and how communists fight both racism and nationalism.***



## **THE EXTRAORDINARY SOLIDARITY OF THE 1902 TEAMSTER STRIKE AND CHICAGO REBELLION**

In the last half century of traitorous union leadership, virtually every group of striking workers — from air controllers to Greyhound bus drivers to Caterpillar, A.E. Staley, Firestone, Boeing and grocery workers — have been hung out to dry by the leadership of the AFL-CIO. In sharp contrast to this class collaboration is the 1902 strike by 526 Chicago Teamsters who transported beef from the Chicago stockyards, with its extraordinary lesson about the potential power of a united working class. Their struggle not only drew massive support from tens of thousands of that city's workers but erupted into a widespread rebellion against the Beef Trust and the city government carrying out its orders.

The general population's hatred of the big meatpackers was part of the anti-trust movement that had been building throughout the previous decade. Many felt the Beef Trust controlled their lives. The Teamster strike brought this anti-trust sentiment to a head and became the focal point for the rebellion that swept the city.

Meat was an important part of workers' diets. The average working-class family in Chicago was spending one-sixth of its total income on meat. Meatpackers like Armour, Cudahy, Swift and Morris were monopolizing this vital commodity, leading people to realize that these corporations had established control over production and consumption. Two weeks before the Teamsters' walkout,

the big packers had been charged in Federal Circuit Court with conspiracy in restraint of trade, unlawful combination, blacklisting, illegal cartage charges, an illegal credit agreement, creation of false marketing prices and illegal depression of the market.

A former manager of both Armour and Swift had stated that for nearly ten years the general managers of the "Big Six" packing houses had met on a weekly basis to coordinate operating practices, set prices, divide marketing territory and blacklist fired workers. All this was enough to merit the hatred of every working class family in the city.

### **The Iron Hand of the Beef Trust**

The Beef Trust's iron hand was mirrored in the conditions of their workers, specifically the Teamsters employed at the Chicago Stockyards who delivered meat to the city's distribution houses. They were forced to work 16 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week, with no overtime pay, for 16¢ to 25¢ an hour (only half the scale at the smaller unionized packers). The teamsters had to report to the barns early and work late, greasing and repairing horse-drawn wagons, cleaning and polishing harnesses and hitching and unhitching the wagons. Such time-consuming tasks were considered "necessary preparation for work" and performed without pay.

Finally these Teamsters had had enough. At midnight on May 25, 1902, they walked out, demanding a 5¢ to 7¢-an-hour raise, time and one-half for overtime, a 10-hour scale and a union steward in each barn to ensure that work-rules were enforced. They warned the bosses that if the latter refused to negotiate, the strike would be expanded to those workers transporting meat to the retail centers, creating a meat famine. The 526 Teamsters had the support of the Packing Trades Council (covering every branch of the packing industry in the stockyards) and of the downtown Teamsters, 22,000 strong.

With the strike underway, strikers surrounded packinghouse wagons and forced non-union drivers back to the yards. Pickets were posted at all ten entrances to the Stockyards and supporting crowds of workers gathered to ensure that no company wagons could leave. The beef business in Chicago ceased.

When the struck packers negotiated with the major express companies to move the meat, the 650 members of the Commission Drivers' Union refused to handle meat from any struck firms. The packers then appealed to the railroads, but freight handlers on the Wabash and Erie lines refused to load scab meat. Switchmen on the Belt line would not switch any cars for local consumption. Beef luggers at the Fulton Market refused to unload wagons belonging to the major packers. Over 200 boxmakers at the National Box Co. struck because they had been asked to make boxes for the packers who refused to sign the union agreement.

Ice wagon drivers warned retail butchers their ice supplies would be cut off if they dealt with scab drivers. Haulers who supplied the coal which fueled the refrigeration machines of the large Chicago hotels and the Fulton Market threatened to cut off coal supplies if those companies bought scab meat (which would also endanger the meat they had on hand). Strikers surrounded the supply houses to prevent retailers from hauling away even a pound of meat in their own wagons. Such was the extraordinary solidarity that enveloped the workers of Chicago in support of the 526 striking Teamsters.

After the first five days, 40% of the 1,600 meat markets in the city had exhausted their supplies; 70% of the restaurants had to scratch meat from their menus; Chicago's Jewish population of 85,000 were without kosher meat. Talk spread about a general strike of 40,000 stockyard workers to assist the Teamsters. Union members in Omaha, Kansas City, St. Joseph and St. Louis were notified to prepare to strike every packinghouse in the West belonging to the "Big Six."

## Scabs, Cops Attacked

Despite this overwhelming solidarity, the arrogant packers refused to budge. On the contrary, they advertised in many newspapers for scabs and began importing them from Peoria and other towns in southern Illinois.

Chicago's Mayor Harrison ordered the cops to "stop street disturbances. The police department is neutral," he lied, "and is to be used to suppress disorder." This "neutrality" was belied by police escorts of caravans of wagons to downtown distribution points. When 200 cops rode out with a meat caravan, strike sympathizers blockaded the convoy at sixteen points along the way. They forced the procession to make a 9-hour trip to supply depots and return to the stockyards. When the cops attempted to make arrests, crowds of workers attacked them and freed the arrested workers. One woman, Lizzy Malloy, arrested for throwing a brick, defended her action by simply stating, "I had to do it."

The police continued to club demonstrators, but crowds in the streets and from buildings threw bricks, stones, sticks and lumps of coal, cursing and jeering the police and strike-breaking drivers being escorted by the cops.

All this stiffened the resolve of Chicago's workers to "beat the Beef Trust." The struggle broadened into a city-wide fight. Daily lists were published of small slaughtering houses that had signed union-scale contracts, urging consumers to buy meat only from them. Other lists came out of firms that had violated the union picket line. The Teamsters' union circulated updated lists of local unions among the 370 in the city who didn't support the strike, labeling them traitors. Thousands of union members had sworn to uphold the consumer boycott on scab beef until the bosses agreed to terms. The machinists and the carpenters unions sent notices into all working-class neighborhoods telling their members to refuse to buy meat from the major meat companies.

Even the retail butchers themselves joined the movement, having suffered domination by the "Big Six" packers. Most refused to buy stock from the struck outfits. Over 200 small butchers closed their doors in the district southwest of the stockyards. Kosher butchers notified the strikers they had agreed not to buy meat until the strike ended.

The strike and the boycott supporting it was solid. As the price of meat climbed, workers switched to fish, cheese and other staples. Poultry sales doubled in the first week of the strike. Popular anger was building among everyone who saw the Beef Trust as their mortal, common enemy.

Then on June 2nd, the Chicago Federation of Labor published an open letter to the Mayor charging the packers with conspiracy against the public, reminding everyone that for years they had tapped the city's water mains and stolen the city's water; had evaded the equitable assessment of their property and bribed officials to get away with it; and had sold rotten and worthless meat during the Spanish-American War -- overall, engaging in a criminal conspiracy against 78 million people.

## Rebellion and Hand-to-Hand Combat

That day a rebellion broke out in Chicago's working-

class districts, continuing for several days. Beginning in areas bordering the Chicago River and on the Northwest side, teamsters driving coal and iron wagons blocked the packers' scab delivery wagons until the streets became impassable. Drivers left their wagons amid cheering crowds in the thousands, and joined the mass of "roaring and howling humanity." When the cops attempted to arrest a coal teamster who was blocking the path of a Swift Co. wagon, the crowd of workers tore the man away and surrounded his abandoned wagon.

Then the packers sent a police-escorted train of 35 wagon loads of meat into the downtown area, but workers stalked the caravan to the corner of Halsted and Division Streets where several thousand strike supporters engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the cops. By State and Adams, the crowd of workers had increased to 50,000. The cops sent in fire wagons to clear the streets. On the Lake Street bridge, the worker engulfed a scab driver, forcing him to abandon his wagon. At Fifth Avenue, three millinery workers threw "missile after missile" from a fire escape, shouting, "We are union men and have no sympathy for these [non-union] fellows."

Striking linemen, in sympathy with the Teamsters, cut all wires to the packers' North Side order departments and distribution depots. At Van Buren and State, volleys of rotten fruit and eggs were hurled at the scab procession and the cops. At Monroe and State, 20 wagons blocked the way as thousands of strike supporters controlled the streets in the center of the city.



*A blockade formed by union teamsters*

### **'Women are the most dangerous...'**

Leaning out of building windows along the adjoining blocks, men, women and children cheered the Teamsters and their supporters. "The waiting sympathizers of the

striking teamsters seemed to spring from the ground." Down in the street, people threw eggs, bottles and spools of thread at the cops and the scabs, many women taking an active part in the rebellion. Said Police Chief O'Neill, "The women are the most dangerous....They gather at the windows along the line of march and throw anything at the drivers or patrolmen." When one of the meat wagons attempted to make a delivery, women and men employed in the area's wholesale stores threw pieces of nailed plank, bottles and remnants of their lunches.

This solidarity uprising led to a compromise settlement when the Beef Trust that had previously refused to even talk to the strikers finally agreed to tacit (but not formal) recognition of the union; to raise wages from 18 to 30 cents an hour (\$12.60 to \$21.00 per 70-hour work-week instead of the pre-strike wage of \$13.50 for a 120-hour week!); and pledged not to discriminate against workers carrying union cards. The 11-day strike ended June 5.

Although the union didn't win formal recognition for itself and its stewards, it was a monumental achievement against a meat monopoly that had previously run roughshod, unopposed, over the whole country. It proved that militant, mass, working-class solidarity is a powerful weapon when mobilized to support even the smallest group of striking workers.

This class struggle occurred at a time when U.S. imperialism was in its infancy, before the ruling class felt the need to capture the unions' leadership and have the latter completely serve the bosses' interests. Once the rulers had turned around the militant, communist leadership of the CIO during the Cold War, these kinds of massive class battles became virtually extinct. The leaders of the shrinking trade union movement are now in the hip pocket of U.S. rulers, supporting their liberal wing at every turn. Any meager reforms that might be won are quickly reversed. If ever there was a time when revolutionary communist leadership is absolutely required, it is now — not seeking reforms in an unreformable system, but rather to overthrow it and put workers' communist power firmly in control.

*All information drawn from "The Chicago Teamsters' Strike of 1902: A Community Confronts the Beef Trust," by Steven L. Piott, in the Labor History Quarterly, Spring 1985, pp. 250-267.*

# Cuban Contradictions:



## A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Earlier this summer I traveled to Cuba to attend a conference on Marxism in the 21st Century. The conference had participants from over twenty different countries, as well as a goodly number of Cubans. While there was a lot of predictable worship at the shrine of the Zapatistas, the World Social Forum, and the “headless” mass anti-globalization and anti-war movements, there was also a lot of serious discussion of revolutionary organizing in the international working class. Marxism was by no means dead.

What I’d like to detail in this brief account are some of my impressions of Cuba, gleaned from both the conference and my experiences in the streets. Let me preface by saying that these impressions are necessarily fragmentary and superficial because (1) I don’t speak Spanish; (2) I was only in Havana, not the countryside; (3) I had only the most glancing of contacts with non-academic workers; and (4) I was in Cuba for only a week. But I was struck by some profound contradictions, social and political, that might be of interest to the readers of PLP’s Communist magazine.

PL has embraced all along the analysis that Cuba never really pursued the socialist path, let alone the communist one (see the 1969 PL Magazine article, “Is Cuba Socialist,” and the 1989 Communist article, “Cuban Smoke.”) And there’s no doubt that, ever since the demise of the Soviet Union, which did much to subsidize the Cuban economy, Cuba has not only dramatically increased its economic relations with European capitalist nations but also instituted a “dollar economy” in significant sectors of society.

The negatives of these multiple connections with capitalism are everywhere to be seen. Cubans who have contact with the dollar economy—even people who hold service jobs in hotels or drive taxis—are much better off than those who are restricted to the peso economy. One taxi driver of a “coco”—these are tiny taxis perched on motorcycles, great fun to ride in—told me that he was a civil engineer by training but that, because he had been paid such a low wage in pesos, he had taken to driving a taxi instead in order to support his family. The downtown area is being refurbished and overflows with tourists spending a lot on drinks as they try to soak up the Hemingway atmosphere. (Ernest Hemingway was a twentieth-century U.S. writer who was famous for loving pre-revolutionary Cuba and drinking a lot.)

And prostitution is rampant. Scantly dressed young women accost men—especially foreigners—up and down the streets and hang out in front of the hotels. One of the greatest—and most rapid—achievements of socialism has been, historically, the eradication of sex for sale; the situation of these young women is a cruel index to the increasingly capitalist nature of Cuban society. The many public images of Che Guevara look down on street scenes that embody so much of what the Cuban Revolution was fought to negate and supersede.

And yet...the people in all age groups look remarkably fit, well-nourished, and healthy (I have never seen so many straight and gleaming teeth in my life). The literacy rate is one of the highest in the world; I was informed that the teacher-to-student ratio is 19 to 1, the very best in the world. The teenagers I saw at the Cuban Ballet one evening, while spirited and flirtatious like all teenager, were remarkably well behaved and alert during the performance, which was a sophisticated blend of classical ballet and Afro-Caribbean themes. Moreover, the palaces inhabited by capitalists and landowners before the revolution have been divvied up into working-class housing. Everywhere in Havana one sees laundry hanging out to dry on ornate metal and marble balconies from which the rulers used to look down upon the impoverished masses.

These are mostly visual impressions. Let me now talk about Fidel Castro, “El Comandante,” who in fact turned up several times at the conference (and, unfortunately spoke at such great length that a couple of sessions had to be cut back or eliminated, which angered a number of participants who had traveled halfway around the world to share their views!). On the one hand, Fidel—he is commonly referred to by his first name—said a number of things predictably indicating his revisionist (that is, non-Marxist parading as Marxist) politics. He was full of praise for not just the nationalist social democrat Hugo Chavez of Venezuela but also Lula of Brazil, who is patently selling out the workers and peasants. He celebrated Cuba’s participation in the Latin American capitalist economic alliance called MERCOSUR. He also said at one point that the youthful protestors in Seattle, Quebec and Genoa—most of whom are in fact liberals and/or anarchists—were vanguard revolutionary anti-capitalist fighters (a position that placed him considerably to the right of many of the conference participants).

Yet, on the other hand, Fidel struck me as passionately committed to the welfare of the average person—and not just the average Cuban. One day he opened up a box of literary “tabloids”—Spanish-translation digest versions of progressive classic works of world literature—and held them up one by one, lovingly reading off their names and describing how they would be distributed around the country. He also spoke of how the Cuban government has sent medical volunteers to various countries to engage in mass inoculation campaigns where the existing capitalist governments show no concern whatsoever about public health. And he got into an open argument with the economic minister—who favors a Chinese-style institution of a market economy, and thus open capitalist restoration—by referring to the dollar economy as a “poison” to Cuban socialism. Fidel—along with the culture minister—expressed the hope that revolutionary culture would supply the necessary “antidote” (that is, cure) to this “poison”—a view that I myself think self-deluded at best. But he conveyed an unmistakable sincerity; I did not think the argument was staged.

Perhaps my most moving experience in the presence of Fidel occurred one evening at the cultural ministry—another former palace now used for popular purposes. In an un-air-conditioned room on a hot summer evening—in the presence of a group of foreigners like myself who were dressed in t-shirts, simple skirts and jeans, and were in status terms nobody special—he was asked to comment on the Cuban government’s then-recent execution of three “traitors” who had been colluding with the US government in Miami to topple the Cuban regime, as well as the incarceration of many dozens more for similar involvement. Periodically striking the table with his fist for emphasis, Fidel spoke passionately for about 1½ hours (it got very warm!) about why, it had been “necessary” to do these

things, even though such crushing of “human rights” was in total contradiction to what he thought socialism should be all about. It occurred to me that, regardless of whether or not one bought what he was saying—on any number of levels—it was nothing short of extraordinary that a head of state would engage in this kind of discussion of the politics and ethics of execution and imprisonment with a bunch of ordinary people. I thought of the illustrious leader of the US, who as governor of Texas ordered the pulling of the executioner’s switch scores of times, and who as president currently presides over a murderous empire that is beyond ethics altogether.

Cuba does not represent the future; those political groups that hold up the Cuban Revolution as a model for leftists around the world are on the wrong track. Cuba is the last surviving site of the twentieth-century struggle for socialism, and it embodies many of the weaknesses and limitations of that struggle. The movement to create a world based upon principles of equality is not being spearheaded by the Cuban government, which is on the road to ultimate capitulation to, or outright defeat by, the world capitalist system. We in the Progressive Labor Party are trying to rebuild that movement on the basis of fighting not for socialism but for communism; we want to bring the “better world” into being on the basis of a thorough criticism (which is also a self-criticism) of the international left’s limitations and failures in the last century.

But there is nonetheless much to be learned from observing the remnants and vestiges of socialism in Cuba today. One gets a glimpse of what fully realized human beings might look like, and of how the infrastructure created by capitalist exploitation can be turned to truly human purposes. I urge anyone who has the opportunity to travel to Cuba to do so soon, before these remnants and vestiges entirely disappear.

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## How Can Communists Do It?

VETERAN PL’ER POINTS THE WAY — BRING COMMUNIST POLITICS TO THE WORKERS

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*This is an updated version of an article that appeared in The Communist Magazine, January 1998. It is useful in the current discussion of making revolutionary politics primary.*

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**(A Letter to the Editor in Challenge-Desafío took the Party to task for not providing sufficient leadership. The following response explains the Party’s ideas on carrying out a communist line in the mass movement.)**

Challenge does contain articles on this question. For example, recent articles have shown how our Party is being built among workers in an East Coast hospital. Other

articles will improve on this as we evaluate how to make communist politics primary in our work. This has never really been done consistently. Too often we have made reform primary, and communism secondary.

First, a story. When I worked in a factory in Buffalo, NY, I was the “intermediary” for one of the Communist Party’s underground leaders. He asked me to see the organizer at Bethlehem Steel, to get a description of the work. The steel organizer told me, “I pick out the most backward worker in my department. If I win him, I can win anyone!”

When I reported this to the Party leader, he almost fell over. This is not the example we want to follow. Our work in shops or organizations should have a layered strategy. Our overriding aim should be to recruit, recruit, recruit and build communist clubs. In every grouping, we should increase Challenge readership, enlarging our base, which

will help us to recruit. Party clubs and study-action groups should be set up in order to win ourselves and our base to the Party's activities and line. This will also lead to more recruitment. We can't rely on anyone or anything but ourselves and the other workers. Revolution will not fall out of the sky. It will come from persistent long-range communist outlook and activity.

Communists must earn the leadership of the working class. In getting to know the "lay of the land," we should begin to single out the most politically advanced workers. This can be done in a myriad of ways. One is by seeing who reads *Challenge* and what they think about it. Another litmus test is, who seems ready to fight the bosses on any issue. Often an anti-racist attitude can go a long way in sizing up a person.

Regular social contact is a must for building the Party. If days go by without seeing workers outside of work, that's bad! In a shop or union, it's easy to be overwhelmed by economic reform issues. Among the many things we should keep in mind, within the economic issues, is how we can raise and pursue the idea that the factory does not belong to the boss. Whose factory is it, theirs or ours? A wage increase will not solve our problems. One way or another, the boss will take it away!

This leads to another question. Why do we have to beg, grovel, struggle for a wage increase, or against a wage cut, if the factory is ours? How does the factory get returned to us? Not only do we sometimes have to seize the factory, but also we must crush the bosses' state apparatus — their government. We must build our own state power and rely only on our own efforts. Previously the bosses dictated to us; now we can dictate to them and control our own destiny. We participate critically in reform struggles, but we make communist politics primary. Again, the factory is ours, they have taken it from us; we must take it back!

So an economic reform fight develops. We made all the points about who owns what, and who should run society. But the workers want that quarter raise, or don't want to take a quarter pay cut. Some workers agree with us and others don't. Do we support a strike, go on strike? Sure! We should make the action more militant, if we can. We should skillfully and patiently keep raising our communist ideas. We use the opportunity, both in a mass, public way and in discussions with particular workers, to raise the need to abolish the wage system, which binds workers to exploitation. We could raise the idea that a more intense prolonged strike, spreading the struggle industry-wide and nation-wide, could go a long way to building the Party, the road to power. We can become stronger than they are. They are few, we are many, and with communist ideology, we are eventually unbeatable. In other words, we should use every struggle to increase the confidence and communist consciousness of the workers.

In the course of any sharp battle, many issues come to the forefronts that allow us to raise communist ideas. Why won't the bosses give us a raise? This can introduce

our thinking on competition, internal contradictions, the real state of the economy. Class struggle can seriously question the rulers' ability to run society. A system that can't provide jobs or decent health care should be smashed with communist revolution.

Usually racism is a factor in any struggle. This can give us the edge to push class, multi-racial unity, to explain why racism exists, and to show that there is no such thing as "race." Often in a strike, the bosses call out the cops. This raises the role of the police and which class they serve. And, of course, this relates to the development of fascism. Building a communist base and involving ourselves with workers on a day-to-day basis, enable us to raise the whole ball of wax.

## WHAT WE ARE AFTER:

### LEADERSHIP OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND SOLDIERS

We're out to win the political leadership of masses of workers. Specifically, we need to build a base within the vital sections of the working class — auto, steel, electric, chemical, coal, transportation, etc. In addition to basic industrial workers, we must organize inside the rulers' armed forces, made up of mostly working class youth who can't find stable civilian jobs. This economic draft applies mostly to black and Latin soldiers.

If industrial workers and sections of the military were won away from the bosses and led by PLP, the rulers would be dead. Shorn of workers and a reliable military, the ruling class is impotent.

Some say, "This sounds so difficult, and unrealistic. There must be a short-cut." Usually, the so-called "easy way" means creating false hopes and illusions about the reform movement and its leaders. For years we've been saying and proving that the labor leaders and virtually all reform leaders are in the hip pockets of the bosses — they are agents of the ruling class, devotees of capitalism and rabid anti-communists.

Slowly but surely we must patiently build our forces in the shops, schools and military. More and more we must challenge capitalist ideas in the mass movement.

Perhaps we make a minor error in believing that labor leaders are "sellouts." They aren't. They never represented us. They have always served the bosses' interests, never ours. If they sold out, that would mean they were acting against their masters' interests. "With friends like this, who needs enemies?"

In most cases, militancy in the working class won't happen in a vacuum. How and why will workers become more militant? The bosses are locked in deadly competition for resources and markets with other rulers. Their servants (reform leaders) know this. The bosses have instructed



*Drawing of Lenin Addressing workers  
above the factory chimneys*

them not to rock the boat; otherwise it will decrease the bosses' ability to compete.

It's important for us to explain this to workers. We should show how economic competition among bosses is a process that ultimately must lead to war. And it is workers and their children who will have to kill and be killed for the bosses' profits. So, what is significant for us is not only to talk about sex, sports, the weather and other people, but also to talk about politics.

Strikes have dropped drastically. But, on occasion, some union leaders call a strike. They do this in order to pander to their members' anger. The strikes and occasional marches are attempts by the union leaders to hang on to what is left of their dues-paying members. They try to create the illusion that they help their members.

Union leaders without a base are of no use to the bosses, who are hell-bent on war and fascism. And, as you may recall, most recent strikes have been abandoned on terms completely favorable to the bosses. The most "militant" thing the union bosses do is serve the interests of the rulers. Real militancy can't come from the union leaders' activity. Militancy is essentially created by angry workers organizing with communist ideas for revolution.

Thus, the purpose of the reform struggle and reform leaders is to divert us from a revolutionary course of action. And, as if to rub it in, negotiations over reform demands involve us in settling with the bosses for something less than demanded. So at union meetings we should expose the leaders as the bosses' agents, who are negotiating away our interests. And it should be pointed out in shop discussions how international competition inevitably leads to war. The only recourse for workers is revolution.

The reform leaders are the enemies of the working class who involve us in reform struggle in order to maintain leadership over us and to divert the workers from revolutionary ideas and struggle.

Without the reform leaders, the ruling class would be in bad shape. Workers need revolutionary communist leadership, not capitalist leaders. In this period, reform struggle is inevitable. We should participate in reform struggle with critical support. We should point out that reform struggle is useless and diversionary. Workers can achieve meaningful militancy with communist leadership and use the reform struggle to build the communist movement.

## **BUILD COMMUNIST CLUBS AND GROUPINGS IN ALL INDUSTRIES AND IN THE MILITARY**

We can eventually build communist clubs and groupings in all industries as well as in the military. Over and over again we must show that you cannot reform capitalism. Basically, capitalism can only get worse and attack workers even more. And we can use the reform struggle — if it exists — to expose the failure of reformism.

Is it a contradiction to expose reformism but to be involved in reformist struggle? Yes, it is. But the only way to resolve this contradiction is by participation, not by abstention, and go on to a higher level of class battle in order to build the Party. By making communist politics primary we can handle this contradiction in a skillful way. But if we allow ourselves to grovel at the bosses' feet in reform, making reform primary, even if we win the reform, we lose the battle.

Is this complicated? Sure. That's why we need more and more practice and writing about our experiences in the reform movement.

To sum up: participation in, not abstention from, the reform struggle is necessary. Recruit, recruit, recruit is the order of the day. Serious militancy can only develop with communist leaders. Occasional spontaneous struggle for reform can be useful only if communists use them to win workers to the left by making politics primary and building the Party.

## **POLITICS CAN BE RAISED ABOUT EVERYTHING**

Sometimes we're reluctant to raise political issues on the job or within different mass organizations. Hesitation often stems from the mistaken belief that workers are not interested in things outside their immediate on-the-job concerns or daily living. As it turns out, workers are interested in international, national and local political issues.

A few reports in Challenge on workers' responses to articles on mass murder in Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa by imperialists and their local henchmen indicate there is fairly wide interest on this questions. Recent issues of Challenge have described the relatively large mass movement built by the Democrats and their liberal "left" stooges on the war in Iraq or the Patriot Act at home. There's little doubt that we can raise communist politics around such questions with other workers and friends in the mass movement. We can use these issues to slowly develop our communist leadership of groups of workers.

Baseball stars make millions, even tens of millions, a topic that workers discuss all the time. Yet workers in Costa Rica, for instance, make baseballs by hand for 11 to 14 hours day and are paid on average about 30¢ apiece. As the New York Times reported (1/25/04), "Rawlings Sporting Goods, which runs the factory, sells the balls for \$14.99." At that price, one worker told the Times' reporter, "After I make the first two or three balls a week, they have already paid my salary. Imagine that." What a perfect instance of being able to explain surplus value to our co-workers, to explain the source of profit and exploitation, to point to the need to abolish the wage system and the capitalism that creates it.

The Michael Jordans are phenomenal athletes, but typical entrepreneurs. Remember Jordan's coarse statements about Asian workers working for pennies on Nike shoes? In other words, Jordan couldn't care less, and said something to that effect when questioned about his relationship to Nike. The same is rue for Tiger Woods or any other multi-millionaire "sportsman."

What about "family values?" We're for close, constructive family values. But the rulers' hypocrisy around this question knows no bounds. From the philandering of Clinton and Kennedy to the filthy exploitation of women in all aspects of culture, capitalist family life is weak. Just look at the 50% divorce rate. What about low wages, no wages, or lower wages of women, black and Latin workers, which drag down the wages of white, male workers? All this, not to mention never-ending mass unemployment, destroys family life.

Once again war, fascism, and racism come to the fore. Almost every issue on and off the job can be connected to these questions. This is no exaggeration. For example: layoffs, ("downsizing," outsourcing) usually can be explained by the "crisis of overproduction," which increases

national and international competition.

The constant improvement of production methods results in increased productive capacity that can't be used. This crisis forces the rulers to bear down on workers, using racism, fascism, increased exploitation in one form or another.

This situation must lead to all types of wars, ultimately world war. Based on our plan of concentration in key areas and consistent communist work, combined with the growing inability of workers around the world to live in the old way, our Party will grow and grow some more. National and international PL organizations will eventually give us the leverage to move for power in one and another region. Using our base in one area can give us the ability to spread out.

But you have to start some place. Given the unevenness of all processes, there is always a first. A good critical letter in Challenge said, "The logical place to start recruiting is those workers with whom we

already have a tie of some sort." Presumably these ties will be political. Undoubtedly, since everyone is not the same, the workers with whom we have the closest political ties will be recruited. If we don't have political-personal ties, we won't recruit anyone. But that's not the case.

The ones, twos and threes we recruit now are crucial. Such recruiting can ultimately lead to mass recruiting. As our letter-writer points out, millions of workers will be open to communism. A small, cadre (leadership) Party is not what we're after. Millions of workers armed with some understanding of communism will enable us to take power and hold power more successfully than our predecessors.

The bosses said, "It couldn't be done." It was done in China and Russia! Power was lost by the workers in both countries. Again the bosses rail, "you see, we told you; it can't be done." Facts are stubborn things. We're slowly doing it. Our Party will take advantage of capitalist contradictions.

Fascism will enable our Party to take advantage of the glaring capitalist weakness. The Party can strengthen itself so that it can never be blown away, and it will grow. Capitalist wars will prove that you cannot live with the profit system. Workers are learning (maybe most have) that their interests have nothing in common with the bosses and will intensify the class struggle, with our leadership. Patient, persistent, more intense practice will win the day.

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**"RAWLINGS SPORTING GOODS ...  
SELLS THE BALLS FOR \$14.99...AFTER I  
MAKE THE FIRST TWO OR THREE BALLS A  
WEEK, THEY HAVE ALREADY PAID MY SALARY.  
IMAGINE THAT."**

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***"WITH FEET ON THE GROUND AND HEADS ON OUR SHOULDERS  
WE WILL VANQUISH ALL THAT STANDS IN OUR WAY."***

For over 500 years, Indigenous and African people in the Americas have suffered mass murder, extreme exploitation, plunder and the worst kind of racist discrimination. In this article we will deal with what the old communist movement used to refer to this as the "peasant question" since it mostly involved peasants in the Andean countries — Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador — and in Guatemala and Mexico (Indians or mestizos).

The "Indian question" exploded again in 2003. Mass rebellions shook Bolivia in February (see previous Communist Magazine) and again at year's end. Hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants and students fought the pro-U.S. government of President Losada (a multimillionaire). The last straw was a plan to ship Bolivian gas to a Chilean port for liquification and shipment to the U.S. market. The deal would have made billions for an international consortium while the people of Bolivia would have gotten zilch. Mass protests — including a march to La Paz, the capital city, by miners armed with dynamite, resulting in many deaths — forced Losada to flee to Miami.

The new President, Mesa, is walking a tight rope, serving the imperialists and local bosses while trying to placate the angry masses. Again, in Bolivia, like in the rest of the region, the movement's principal weakness is the lack of a revolutionary communist leadership. The main leaders of the Indian masses — Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe — talk a about a communal indigenous society and of socialism, but in practice they've done everything possible to preserve the system of capitalist exploitation and prevent the masses from destroying it.

## RACISM WAS BORN WITH CAPITALISM

Racism is a universal feature of capitalism. Capitalism gave birth to modern racism. At capitalism's inception, it used racism to justify the enslavement of Africans and Indigenous people in the Americas. This slavery differed from ancient societies — Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Aztec, Incas, etc. — particularly in inventing or categorizing "races." Non-white peoples were labeled "inferior" to Europeans (See "The Roots of Racism," PL Magazine, December 1982).

The communist movement first dealt with racism, especially against Indians or Indigenous people, at the First Latin American Communist Conference in the early 1920s. José Carlos Mariátegui, founder of the Socialist Party of Peru (later to become the Communist Party) reported: "We believe that what will turn Indians into allies of the non-Indian proletariat in the struggle for their demands won't be self-determination for the Indians, but the struggle for

their demands as an oppressed exploited class. This will turn the Indians into allies of other proletarians and give them a class character. This is the main task of Marxists.... In other words, we must take into consideration the racial problem, but it must be subordinated to the class question."

This was good but also led to many errors on the left (to be dealt with later in this article).

Another theory is "the two worlds line," pushed today by Quispe in Bolivia; the CONAIE (Federation of Indian groups) in Ecuador; the Mapuches fighting multi-national corporations exploiting their lands in Chile; Russell Means, the old head of the American Indian Movement and a current ideologue for the Indian movement throughout the continent; and to a certain degree by the Zapatistas of Chiapas, México. This idea demands autonomy for the Indians and their land, summarized in what the South American Indian Council called the struggle between two different worlds, the more collective Indian one and the Western one, predator of the land: "It is not just a problem of class struggle, of poor versus rich, of the left versus the right...but of two different systems in their attitude towards life and existence." A similar point of view is pushed among Aborigines in Australia and Maoris in New Zealand. Of course, this concept ignores the development of class societies throughout the centuries.

## THE WORLD BANK'S "MINIMUM STATE" AND CONAIE'S PLURINATIONAL STATE

CONAIE's idealist "plurinational" state in Ecuador (led by groups linked to the NGOs and the Catholic church) is still dominated by capitalism. In certain ways, this translate in many Indian lands in the U.S. housing casinos making billions, supposedly to be equally distributed among the Indigenous people of the various "reservations." Many of those casinos are actually managed by non-Indian corporations, some linked to the Mafia a la Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Reno, etc. Apparently the problems suffered by most Indigenous people in the U.S. haven't changed a bit. (This needs much more study.)

The World Bank and other imperialist institutions are now pushing "The Minimum State" in Latin-America wherein the central state delegates much of its responsibilities to regional governments and to the private sector. This decentralization resembles CONAIE's "plurinational" state in Ecuador since the mass Indian uprising of Inti Rayni in 1990. The bourgeoisie of Guayaquil, the economic center of Ecuador, supports the "Minimum State" because it would break with the bourgeoisie in Quito and turn Guayaquil

into a powerful city-state as in Hong Kong or Singapore, The Guayaquil ruling class believes its economic might will turn the poorer areas of Ecuador into its own internal colony.

Most of Ecuador's Indian population lives in the "sierra" (mountain region) around Quito, so the Guayaquil bosses have taken advantage of the Indian uprising to promote their own interests.

This wouldn't be the first time one section of Ecuador's ruling class used the "Indian question" (i.e., "the peasant question"). In 1964, the then ruling military junta established an agrarian reform, advanced by the mass peasant movement and by the needs of a section of the bourgeoisie to "modernize" the country. It was also part of the U.S. imperialism's anti-communist Alliance for Progress to counter Cuba's influence in Latin America. This agrarian reform created a class of small capitalists among the peasantry (mostly Indians). It also proletarianized and impoverished most of the peasantry. Many worked for wages at plantations and agro-businesses. In addition, mass migration to the cities ensued where many Indians became construction workers. The general crisis of world capitalism worsened this situation in the countryside and the cities, leading to the first mass peasant-Indigenous uprising in 1990 (Inti Rayni), and to many more rebellions and general strikes.

But the reformism of CONAIE and the union movement, along with the opportunism of the phony left, played into the hands of the various bourgeois forces fighting each other. In 1992, CONAIE led another mass uprising against President Rodrigo Borja, shutting down Ecuador and demanding the return of the land expropriated by Texaco and other oil companies. In 1997, CONAIE and the unions organized a general strike, forcing President Bucaram from office (also supported by the U.S. embassy). When the last uprising occurred in Ecuador in February 2000, CONAIE allied itself with a group of Chavez-type reformist military officers. Always looking for the "lesser-evil" capitalists, the officers turned to a general, who then turned to the U.S. embassy and the Army High Command, creating the shortest-lived National Salvation government in modern history (lasting a few hours). Quickly President Mahuad was replaced by Vice-President Noboa, and conditions for workers and peasants haven't changed since. CONAIE has been part of the history of betrayals of mass struggles in Ecuador in the last few years. In the 2002 elections, all these reformist groups and the phony left supported Col. Lucio Gutierrez, who promised to fight the IMF. The Colonel won, and some of the Indian and pseudo-leftist leaders joined his Cabinet. But as soon as the Colonel took power, he reneged on all his promises, implementing the IMF austerity measures and supporting Bush's policies in Latin America. The opportunists in his Cabinet eventually quit and now claim to be opposing the very same Colonel they helped bring to power.

## ERRORS OF THE OLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Returning to Mariátegui in the early 1920s, this became the basis of the communist line on racism in South America. It's true that racism is a class question, but sometimes this is used to avoid fighting racism. In the early 1980s, at a PLP conference on racism among public school teachers given by the Party in Oaxaca, Mexico, several participants, influenced by the old Communist movement, said the oppression was more of a class question, that racism was unimportant. This denial of racism just opens the doors for the "two worlds" line.

What should PLP say? While viewing racism as a class question, we must understand that the bosses use racism not only to super-exploit a group of workers (Indians are now mostly urban workers) to make super-profits — and simultaneously lowering the wages of ALL workers — but also see racism as a political weapon used by the bourgeoisie to divide workers, to stop us from uniting as a class against capitalism. Otherwise, reformists allied with one group or another of bosses or imperialists will co-opt the fight against racism (as is occurring). Already, the Reagan administration used the Miskito people to fight alongside the Contras against the Sandinista regime in the 1980s.

Today, some of the NGOs in South America are heavily influenced by European imperialism, and use the struggle for Indian rights to undermine U.S. influence in Latin America. Even the CIA, through the Summer Language Institute (and Protestant sects) organizes among Indian peoples. The SLI reported that many languages spoken by Native tribes are disappearing in South America because of the spread of Spanish and Portuguese and of the genocide of some tribes.

Our anti-racist, communist class line offers a real answer to the "Indian question," from Alaska to the Patagonia. Under communism, we will use the ancient societies' love of the land of to build a modern society where production is according to need and where racist acts will be dealt with accordingly.

Racism against black people, the descendants of African slaves, was crucial to the development of capitalism. In a mid-July series of courses in Extremadura, Spain, dealing with blacks in the Americas, anthropologist Jesús Guancho, from the Fernando Ortiz Foundation (Havana, Cuba), declared that although slavery was abolished in the 19th century, it is still practiced in the year 2000, "not only in the developing countries but also in the developed countries." He used as an example the fact that 250 million children are super-exploited worldwide. A 2001 Washington Post report confirmed that hundreds of thousands of 13 to 16-year-olds work 70 to 80 hours

a week on farms throughout the U.S. Not only are they paid slave wages but they're exposed to pesticides and other dangerous conditions. A 1938 law allows children as young as 12 to work on U.S. farms.

Guanche also added that the dependent domestic work and the double work done by women at their regular jobs and at home have "led to particular forms of slavery that lead to violent behavior" towards them.

Guanche estimated that from the mid-15th century to the end of the 19th, more than 13 million Africans were exported to the Americas. Some died during their capture

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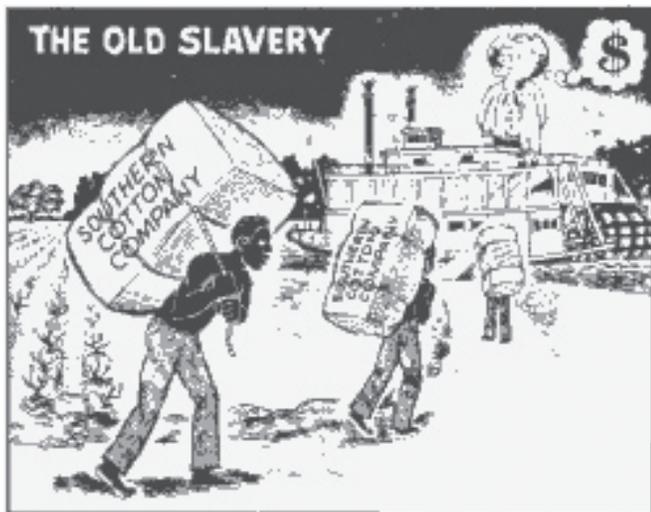
## Slavery: The Primitive Accumulation of Capital that Built Modern Capitalism

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and nearly one-fifth died during the trip here. The rest, he added, were enslaved on plantations picking cotton, coffee, cocoa beans, cutting sugar cane or used to fish for pearls "one of the most dangerous jobs," where the life expectancy of the enslaved diver was four years.

The first slaves were brought by Holland, France and England to work in their colonies in the New World. Guanche says Brazil was the biggest recipient of slaves, 5.7 million in three centuries. The Spanish colonies enslaved 2.5 million and the British Caribbean colonies 2.1 million. Some countries (Haiti) soon became inhabited by a majority slave population (89%). Guanche noted that the slave system and slave work on the plantations accumulated the capital that developed capitalism, especially in France and England. (The colonization of India also added to Britain's primitive accumulation of capital.)

The Catholic Church in the Spanish colonies played a leading role in this genocide, similar to the Protestant church in the British colonies. In some countries, especially in the Caribbean, when the Indian population was being decimated — by the first half of the 16th century most of the Native population of Haiti and the Dominican Republic had died because of hard labor, massacres and the diseases brought by Columbus and his gang — the so-called "Emancipator of the Indians," Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, asked the Spanish crown to bring in Africans to do the hard work that was killing the Indians.





## Bolshevik Revolution: The Most Important Event of the 20th Century

Eighty-six years ago, November 7, 1917, marked the beginning of the single most important event of the 20th century, the Bolshevik revolution. The working class of Russia, led by the revolutionary communists of the Bolshevik Party and its leader, Vladimir Lenin, freed 1/6 of the world's surface from the yoke of capitalism. They proved once and for all that it was possible to create a world without exploitation, a world where those who produce all value, the working class, can enjoy the fruits of their labor instead of having it stolen by a few parasitical bosses and their lackeys. The Soviet Union not only freed workers but also fought racism and liberated women from capitalist, feudal and religious oppression. Women from the Ukraine to the Asian Soviet republics were no longer slaves to religious obscurantism. Prostitution was unknown. Unemployment was eliminated.

The revolution frightened the world's bosses, who immediately sent armies from 17 countries to try to stop it in its infancy. From 1918 to 1925, millions of workers led by the Red Army fought the world's imperialist armies and their local lackeys. Nearly five million died to defeat the enemy, many of whom were the most committed workers the revolution had produced. Lenin himself died because of injuries inflicted by a hired killer.

But the revolution continued. When the entire capitalist world sank into depression, and millions worldwide were left jobless and starving (much like today), the Soviet Union was forging ahead building a new society without unemployment and hunger.

In 1941, the bosses again tried to destroy the revolution. Hitler, using all of Europe's resources and the largest military machine ever assembled, invaded the Soviet Union with four million soldiers. At first, the world's bosses gleefully believed the Nazis would destroy the Soviet Union. U.S. Senator Harry Truman, later to become President, himself said, "Let Germany and the Soviets bleed each other to death." But the Soviets, knowing the fascist Axis wanted the whole world for themselves, and understanding the nature of imperialist rivalry, realized that eventually the West and Hitler could be fighting each other.

Finally, the main bosses in the U.S. and UK decided

that the Hitler-Mussolini-Tojo Axis was the big immediate danger to them. The pro-Hitler forces in the U.S. and Britain — like Henry Ford and many in the British royalty— were isolated. But many U.S. companies like Ford, GM and IBM continued doing business with the Nazis while U.S. and German bankers met in "neutral" Switzerland during the war, planning for a post-war division of the spoils.

The Nazis invasion of the Soviet Union was no pushover as occurred in Western Europe. All the Quislings (pro-fascist traitors) had been eliminated, and any Japanese fascists' attempt to seize the Soviet rear (Siberia and Mongolia) was crushed in a brief but bloody 1939 conflict, before the Nazis invaded Poland (see CHALLENGE, 11/5).

Still, it wasn't until the Nazis were on the run following their defeats at Stalingrad and in the Battle of the Kursk (the biggest armored battle of modern history involving millions of soldiers and 6,000 tanks) that the U.S.-UK forces invaded Western Europe (June 6, 1944). The defeat of the Nazis, mostly by the Red Army, was the second most important event of the 20th century.

But this victory was very costly. The Nazis murdered over 20 million Soviet citizens, including many of the most committed and revolutionary workers. The Soviet leaders knew that the dropping of the A-Bomb on a defeated Japan was really a warning to them. The Soviets answered the Cold War by re-building the country and turning it into a mighty power. Many, including Stalin in his last writings and in the last Party Congress before his death, realized the new Soviet state had many political shortcomings, including an ideological weakness among the Party members. Once Stalin died, those weaknesses were used by Krushchev to turn the Soviet Union into its opposite, eventually leading to Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin.

The 1949 Chinese revolution, which first defeated the Japanese fascist army, then the fascist army of Chiang kai-shek, armed and financed by the U.S., was the third most important event of the 20th century. In the 1960s, another great historical event took place: the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guards tried to stop China from going capitalist. Young workers and students fought heroically against the "capitalist roaders." But the Gang of Four and

Mao Zedong compromised with the “roaders” and the Red Guards were defeated. Now, China has become the low wage manufacturing center of world’s capitalism.

Today there is no socialist camp. No country is ruled by revolutionary communists. But this is a temporary historical setback. We in PLP are learning from their mistakes and vow to lead the new mass wave of revolutionary struggles towards communism, a society where workers produce for their needs, not for the profits of a few. It won’t be an easy struggle, but it is the only way out workers have to end this capitalist hell of endless wars, racist/fascist terror, mass unemployment, starvation and poverty. Fight for communism!

## **New Communist International Movement Must Bury Dark Ages**

Our last issue explained how the 1917 communist-led Russian Revolution, which freed 1/6 of the world’s surface from capitalism, was the single most important event of the 20th Century. It was followed by the Red Army’s defeat of the Nazi war machine, freeing humanity from becoming one huge concentration camp. However, the third most important event of the 20th century for the world’s working class was the collapse of the old communist movement, marked by the rise of state capitalism and later free market capitalism in the former Soviet Union and in China.

Stalin said the destruction of the USSR and the International Communist Movement (ICM) would bring humanity back to the dark ages. History has proven him right: The former Soviet republics and socialist camp have been turned into a hell for workers. While a few became multi-millionaires, stealing the wealth built by workers in the former socialist bloc, the norm for the majority of people is mass unemployment, gut-wrenching poverty, war, prostitution, drug trafficking and chaos. The latest example is the power struggle over the billions to be reaped from pipelines in the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

While during the Cultural Revolution, left-wing forces in China tried to prevent the return to capitalism, this gigantic fight against revisionism (capitalist forces masquerading as communists) was defeated by the vacillations of the pro-Mao forces. Now China has become the world’s largest manufacturing center, based on tens of millions of workers being paid dirt wages. The return of capitalism has left hundreds of millions unemployed, with no social safety net.

The few countries that still consider themselves socialist, like Vietnam and Cuba, are basically building capitalism. To top it off, a U.S. navy frigate visited Vietnam last month for the first time since U.S. imperialist forces were kicked out of that country after murdering over three million Vietnamese.

The defeat of the old ICM also has affected workers in

the rest of the capitalist world. In Western Europe and the U.S., workers have suffered wage-cuts, union-busting and a decline in their standard of living as a direct consequence of the lack of an ICM strong enough to fight capitalism. The union hacks in these countries have sold out even more to capitalism since the defeat of the ICM.

Now unions represent less than 10% of the workforce in France and figures in the U.S. and other countries are approaching that. Germany’s powerful IG Metall Union’s strikes ended earlier this year without winning even small crumbs, something not seen in many decades. Workers have paid for the anti-communism of the union leaders — or reformism of the so-called “leftist” union leaders in Italy and France — in massive job losses and wage-cuts. The racism of many union leaders, especially in the U.S., has been deadly for workers.

## **Emerging from the Dark Ages**

While this era of wars, fascist terror, mass joblessness, diseases like AIDS killing millions in Africa and other areas, is upon us, every dark night has its end. PLP is a product of both the old ICM and the struggle against its revisionism. We are daily fighting to learn from its great battles and achievements and also from the deadly errors that led to its collapse, mainly that reformism, racism and all forms of concessions to capitalism only lead workers to defeat. Give a boss one centimeter and he/she will grab a mile.

CHALLENGE reflects that struggle, which must go on constantly since we live in a capitalist society which bribes a few to help oppress billions. Our job as communists is to bring our revolutionary politics to workers, not to create illusions that capitalism can be reformed. A mass base of readers and sellers of CHALLENGE can be the ideological tool to help turn workers’ struggles into schools for communism. But we cannot do this from the outside. We must be involved in every class struggle workers are waging, from the LA transit and Southern California grocery strikes to the recent violent mass strikes in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia; from the international anti-war movement to the fight against globalization (imperialism); from the fight against racist police brutality to the struggles against sexist exploitation of women workers in the world’s maquiladoras — but always with the outlook that the only way out of the Dark Ages is to rebuild the ICM and fight for a society without bosses: communism.

# Why Trotskyism Is Reactionary

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The Progressive Labor Party recognizes that Trotskyism is phony communism, also called "revisionism" – capitalist ideas in a left disguise. Many people, including many Trotskyists themselves, don't understand the reactionary essence of Trotskyism.

*In this pamphlet we'll expose the fallacies of Trotskyism in two ways.*

- *We'll discuss some facts about Trotsky himself that expose how reactionary he was.*
- *We'll expose the idealist\* – non-Marxist, anti-materialist – basis of Trotskyism.*

Trotskyist groups trace their beginnings in pro-Trotsky factions within the Bolshevik Party -- called the Communist Party of the Soviet Union/Bolshevik, or CPSU(b) – during the 1920s. When Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet in 1928, his supporters were also expelled from other parties in the Communist International, or 'Comintern', or quit on their own. Some of these groups formed new Trotskyist parties in various countries, continuing after Trotsky's assassination in 1940. They attracted some left-leaning and anti-Soviet intellectuals, though few workers. Their determined struggle against the Soviet Union and Comintern earned them publicity by the capitalists far beyond their numbers.

Khrushchev's denunciations of Stalin in 1956 and 1961, but especially with the end of the USSR in the early '90s, the pro-Soviet revisionist groups shrank in numbers and influence. The disappearance of pro-China communist groups after Deng Xiao-ping led the Chinese Communist Party swiftly to the right upon Mao Tse-tung's death in 1976 completed the collapse of the old Communist movement. Trotskyist political parties have become more prominent in a much smaller "left" no longer dominated by pro-Soviet groups.

## Cult of "Great Leaders" Always Reactionary

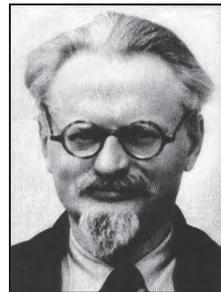
Even if Trotsky had been a great revolutionary and theorist like Marx or Lenin, Trotskyism would still be reactionary, because Trotskyist groups treat him as an unquestionable authority. In reality, Trotsky was a dishonest reactionary, whose arrogance and great ego led him to be one of the main founts of anti-communism for capitalist exploiters.

We in PLP do not intend to simply continue the "Stalin – Trotsky" battles of the past. In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels wrote that workers "have nothing to lose

but their chains." The working class has no reason to hang on to outmoded ideas, refight old battles, or embrace errors made by our heroic ancestors in the communist movement.

We have studied Trotskyism, ready to learn whatever we might find that was valuable. If Trotskyism, and Trotskyist parties, offered anything positive, we would embrace it. If Trotskyists were forces we ever could unite with, we would do so.

But we can't. Trotskyism has nothing positive to offer the world's working class and the struggle for a communist world. It is a reactionary, idealist philosophy.



**Leon Trotsky**  
**1879-1940**

Trotsky was a Russian radical Marxist, a fluent and prolific writer, a powerful public speaker and, until August 1917, a Menshevik. The Mensheviks believed that only after capitalism had industrialized a country could a socialist revolution be successful.

By the middle of 1917 the Tsar had abdicated and a government of big capitalists had taken over Russia. The working class in the large cities had proven open to revolutionary leadership. Trotsky and some others, the "Mezhraiontsy" or Inter-district committee, joined the Bolshevik Party, where Lenin immediately put Trotsky on the Central Committee. He played an important role as military and political leader during the four-year long Civil War that followed the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917.

Trotsky shared with Lenin and the rest of the Bolsheviks the view that the working class in Russia could not long hold power without revolutions in the advanced industrial countries of Western Europe. However, Trotsky was on the "right" of this continuum of views, believing more firmly than most that a failure of such revolutions would inevitably doom the socialist revolution in Russia. Others were less fatalistic.

This belief led Trotsky to advocate devoting all efforts to stimulating international revolutions. That, in turn, earned Trotsky a reputation as a "leftist". But note that this "super-revolutionary" attitude proceeds from a Menshevik -- an economic determinist, pessimistic, and ultimately "right" -- analysis: that capitalism still had a "progressive" role to play in industrializing Russia, unless this could be done with the aid of more advanced socialist countries.

## Trotsky's Arrogance

Many former Mensheviks became good Bolsheviks. All Bolsheviks had doubts and questions about how to develop "socialism in one country" if – as proved the case – there were no helpful revolutions in advanced capitalist societies. What determined Trotsky's reactionary political path were his class position as an elitist Russian intellectual, and his personality.

Intellectuals as a stratum of the petty bourgeoisie, were drawn to Menshevik analysis since it left capitalism and its relations of production, in place, and so justified a continuation of the relatively privileged position of intellectuals, and those with education generally, above workers and peasants. The Bolsheviks regarded this as a "necessary evil", a form of bribery to win technically-skilled intellectuals to help educate and industrialize the workers' state.

The Mensheviks went much further, rejecting the Bolshevik revolution as illegitimate in the absence of revolutions in more industrialized countries. Trotsky had abandoned the Mensheviks because he hoped the Russian Revolution would spark revolutions in advanced industrial countries like Germany, which could then help backward Russia advance.

Not all Bolshevik intellectuals took this line, however. Central to Trotsky's political career was his extreme individualism. Trotsky was convinced that he himself was a world-class genius and the only one who deserved to succeed Lenin as leader of the Bolshevik Party. Arrogant in his personal relations, he angered even his greatest admirers like Max Eastman. Arrogance is an extreme form of idealism.

Politically, this meant that Trotsky was constantly trying to gain power, forming alliances with other prominent Bolsheviks rather than supporting the party's line.

## Factionalism

During the 1920s the Bolsheviks had annual Conferences and Congresses in which they open debated the future course of the revolution. Trotsky's positions were consistently defeated. Trotsky's Menshevik ideas implied that, without further socialist revolutions in industrial countries, Russia's own revolution was doomed. Capitalism, Trotsky thought, was essential to industrializing Russia, which was too economically backward to do it alone.

Most working-class Bolsheviks recognized this as defeatist. Stalin and other Bolshevik leaders said the working class could industrialize the country by itself. This position won out in the great debates at the annual Party Conferences during the 1920s. Trotsky's line was overwhelmingly defeated. Since his great ego could not accept this, Trotsky continued to form secret alliances with other dissident communists, even after such "factions"

had been outlawed by a party vote in 1921.

## Democratic Centralism

According to Democratic Centralism, all communists must fight to put the party's line into practice once it has been decided upon by debate and vote. There is no other way to judge whether the Party's line is correct or not. For, if all members do not try to put it into effect with all their effort, who can say, in the case of failure, whether the line was incorrect, or whether it was correct but just never carried out?

Factionalism creates a situation where party members spend their time organizing around their own line, rather than vigorously trying to put the party's line into effect. It is similar to "democratic" capitalist politics, where different parties, and even different factions within a party, spend all their time trying to advance themselves by "beating the other guy." In a communist party, this is a recipe for disaster.

Trotsky was called to account time and again for his factional activity in the party debates of the 1920s. Each time he recanted, but went right back to doing the same thing. Eventually the exasperated Bolsheviks expelled him for incorrigible factionalizing.

Stalin was among the last to agree to this expulsion; Trotsky's later allies in the secret Opposition, including Bukharin, wanted to expel Trotsky much sooner! When he and some followers organized a counter-demonstration at the Bolshevik Revolution's 10th anniversary in 1927, Trotsky was expelled from the Party, exiled to a remote city, and finally deported from the USSR in January 1929.

## Trotsky's 'Cult of Personality'

Utterly lacking in modesty and self-criticism, Trotsky rationalized his factional activity by attributing his political defeats to dishonest maneuvers by his opponents – "stacking the votes", admitting "politically immature" workers as members, and counter-factionalizing. He never accepted that his ideas were, or could be, wrong. He had

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The Trotskyist movement  
was a caricature of a  
"cult of personality."

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no faith in the collective discussions and struggles of the Bolshevik party. He was out of touch with reality. In short, he was an idealist.

To account for his defeats Trotsky always complained

about a "lack of democracy" in the Party. But within the ranks of his own followers he tolerated no disagreement. The Trotskyist movement was a caricature of a "cult of personality." The "cult of Stalin" has long since been criticized – Stalin himself attacked it many times -- and is gone. But the "cult of Trotsky" has survived to the present day. No Trotskyist group publicly criticizes The Master. Trotsky's writings are said to be always right, unchanging – naturally, since Trotsky was killed in 1940 – and yet, somehow, still always valid.

Of course this is idealist nonsense. No ideas can be "forever correct", and Trotsky's were never correct in the first place. Trotsky owed his high position in the Bolshevik Party not to his ideas or writings, but to his organizational abilities, largely in the military. Here too, as in other key areas in which communist theory and practice might move ahead or be retarded, he took right-wing positions.

### Trotskyism A Form of Idealism

Marx once said: Criticize everything! That is the only materialist, scientific way to proceed. Trotskyist groups have no chance whatsoever of understanding reality correctly, much less of leading a working-class movement for communism, because they are devoted to a religious reverence for Trotsky's works.

This attitude stems from Trotsky himself. One source was Trotsky's own egoism. Another was his removal from political struggle. Trotsky had never been a worker; had, in fact, never worked for a living. He had long been divorced from contact with the working class, shown by his proposal in the early '20s to ban unions and put workers under military discipline. His following was overwhelmingly among intellectuals. After his exile in 1929, this divorce from practice deepened.



*Trotsky addresses Red Army soldiers in Moscow in 1918*

Communists know that, even with a thorough grounding in Marxism-Leninism, only devoted political practice in the working-class movement makes any kind of correct understanding of reality, and evaluation of theory, possible. The Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Tse-tung discovered – not by "theory," but through practice forced upon them by bitter necessity – that peasants could be the leading force for a working-class revolution and, therefore, that the dictatorship of the working class could be won in a basically agricultural country. But to faithful Trotskyists the Chinese Revolution, like that in the Soviet Union, was "doomed from the start," because it did not follow Trotsky's economic-determinist path!

A third result of Trotsky's own idealism and arrogance was his theory of "Stalin-as-devil." This is just the "great man" theory turned on its head. Since Stalin, a modest man of working-class background, had defeated him, the "great genius", it must have been through dishonesty. In reality, Stalin was a sound theorist and one of the most learned men of the century, as recent studies of his reading and library have revealed. Trotsky's self-portrayal as world-class genius simply indicates his extreme egoism.

Trotsky originated the false notion of Stalin as a power-hungry, all-powerful, malevolent monster who supposedly ran the USSR to suit his own paranoid fantasies. This version of the "great man" theory is simply a mirror-image of Trotsky's own inflated view of himself, and is equally idealist. Neither Stalin nor anyone else was or could be like this.

But this notion of "Stalinism" originated with Trotsky and his followers, who are its greatest champions. It was enthusiastically embraced by all anti-communists, and is the central version of anti-communism promoted by openly pro-capitalist writers today. Trotsky became the main fount of anti-communism. In all the many books he wrote while in exile in the '30s he – Trotsky -- is the hero, while Stalin is the villain.

Some bourgeois historians say Trotsky falsified his own role in the Revolution. Certainly all his versions of subsequent political struggles are dishonest, reducing the debates over the line of the world-wide communist movement to a duel between himself and the "evil" Stalin. His biography of Stalin opens with a racist account of Stalin's ancestry derived, as Trotsky himself admits, from – a Nazi!

### Trotsky's Corruption

During the mid-1930s three public trials were held in Moscow. Former

Bolshevik leaders, together with many lesser figures, confessed to plotting against the Soviet government in collusion with the exiled Trotsky. They also confessed to contacts with German and Japanese militarists. Twenty years later Khrushchev also said the charges were lies, and “rehabilitated” the “victims” – meaning, declared them innocent, but without any evidence. Trotsky and his followers seemed to be vindicated.

But after Trotsky’s archives (at Harvard) were opened in 1980, even leading Trotskyist researchers agreed that Trotsky had lied when he said he had not been in touch with prominent oppositionists within the USSR. Since 1991 a number of the confessions on which the Moscow Trials were based have been published. The circumstances surrounding them make it clear that they were not forged or obtained under torture. This strongly suggests that the original charges made against him in the famous Moscow Trials were – at the very least – mainly true. A dangerous conspiracy against the Soviet government really did exist. There is even some documentary evidence that Trotsky was indeed in contact with Japanese militarists.

Trotsky denied all these charges – he could hardly do otherwise. Meanwhile, he was

- calling for the overthrow of the Soviet government,
- trying to gain admission to the US so he could testify before the anti-working class House Committee on Un-American Activities,
- informing on Communists in Mexico to the FBI, and
- writing attacks on Stalin and the USSR in the American capitalist press, such as Life magazine.

This behavior cost Trotsky many of his bourgeois sympathizers, who after all believed that collaborating with the capitalist police was beyond the pale. Had he acted like Lenin, and admitted that he would take money and help from any capitalist in order to seize power in the USSR, he would have lost them all.

## Trotskyism Today

The Trotskyist movement reflects all the same idealist errors of its origins. To them, Trotsky’s writings offer “answers” to all the problems of the world’s working class – which are, of course, the same answers as Trotsky “discovered” in the ‘20s and, especially, the ‘30s, when he had little to do but write and plot.

The Trotskyists continue the “cult” of Trotsky. They never criticize him, and so never learn anything. They never doubt that Trotsky’s works were valid in their own time, which they were not and – given Trotsky’s alienation from the working class and any working-class based movement -- could not have been.

Trotskyists treat Trotsky’s voluminous writings as

though they were accurate, trustworthy accounts, instead of heavily biased, self-serving accounts. They would laugh or scorn anyone who took this attitude to, say, Stalin’s works, but they cannot see the same error when they make it themselves.

They are also “locked” into the “cult of Lenin”, which Trotsky shared with Stalin and the communist movement generally. Many of Lenin’s statements are similar to Trotsky’s. Many of Lenin’s statements also provided support for Stalin’s later policies. For Trotskyists, the “cult” of Lenin sustains the “cult” of Trotsky. Real Marxist-Leninists recognize that all such “cults” are reactionary.

They also “believe” Trotsky’s denials that he was involved in plotting the overthrow of the Soviet government, and in general everything Trotsky said. In short, Trotskyists’ whole political perspective is based upon refusal to question Trotsky, his writings, and his actions. Since they never question Trotsky, they are “locked” into Trotsky’s errors.

In practice Trotsky and his followers came to embrace many of the fundamental assumptions of the CPSU(b) and the Comintern. This is not surprising, since in many ways both Trotsky’s ideas and those of Stalin and other Soviet leaders can be found in Lenin’s works, and can be traced into Marx’s and Engels’ writings too.

Today the line of the Trotskyist groups is much like that of the revisionist, formerly pro-Soviet and Maoist, groups:

- support for nationalism, whether “progressive” or not, among “oppressed nations”;
- United Fronts with “liberal” bourgeois groups against fascism, or simply against conservatives;
- the promotion of “socialism,” meaning pretty much what the Soviets meant by it – social-welfare state capitalism, with great inequalities among managers and workers;
- a “multi-stage” theory of how to arrive at communism (in the rare instances when they even mention communism), and therefore
- no fight for communist revolution at all.

All Trotskyist groups adhere to the reactionary policies listed above. But there are many differences – sometimes very subtle ones – among the Trotskyist groups, which we will not attempt to summarize here. Factionalism remains a principle in all Trotskyist parties and groups. Consequently, Trotskyist groups are continually splitting into more groups. Each of these grouplets competes in the game of ‘Who follows The Master the most faithfully?’

The main political errors of Trotskyist groups are the same as they have been for many years. This is logical, since they cannot change their basic ideas in conformity with reality.

The main importance of Trotskyist groups for the capitalist ruling classes are the following:

- misleading mass movements into alliances with the “liberal” ruling class – the main forces of capitalist rule – against “reactionaries” and fascists;
- misleading honest people into supporting nationalism, rather than fighting for proletarian internationalism, even when those nationalists are overtly fascist.
- most important, spreading anti-communist lies, especially concerning the history of the Communist movement, and most especially, about Stalin and the Soviet Union in his day. This last point really characterizes Trotskyism, as opposed to other revisionist (phony communist) groups.

What Real Communists – the PLP – Are Like

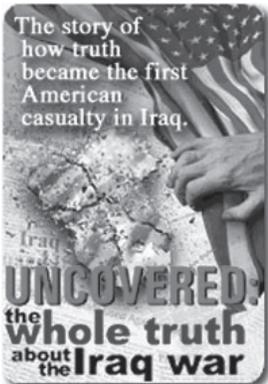
We in PLP are very appreciative of the history of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. The great communists movements

associated with these leaders’ names accomplished wonderful things for the working class of the world. We have much positive to learn from them.

At the same time, we are sharply critical of the errors these great leaders made. We have long made public our criticisms of Lenin, Stalin and Mao in Road to Revolution III (1971) and IV (1982), and in many articles in PL Magazine and The Communist. We continue to do this.

Communists in PLP believe that as workers we have no “sacred cows,” Lenin, Stalin, Mao, or anyone else, whom we hold beyond criticism. Despite their many successes, the communist movement represented and led by these great figures failed to build a classless, egalitarian society run by workers. We have to be the “dwarves on the shoulders of giants,” seeing farther than they because we build upon their successes.

*\* Idealism: here, the belief that knowledge of reality can be gotten from applying a fixed set of ideas, rather than through a scientific process of study and struggle. Trotskyism is one form of idealism disguised as Marxism-Leninism.*



## REVIEW OF “Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War”

Robert Greenwald’s new video, Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War, offers two major insights about the US invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The first insight is related to what the video presents. The second insight is more important: what the video neglects to present despite its self-important title of being The Whole Truth about the Iraq War and what it therefore reveals about Moveon.org, the video’s sponsor. As we hope to demonstrate below, this video leaves most of the Iraq War story untold. Its highly selective history is hardly an accident. In fact, it is eerily reminiscent of liberal opposition to the Vietnam War, which, we should remember, only emerged when victory was unobtainable and “quagmire” was undeniable. It is so selective because Greenwald, his sponsors, and the “patriotic” experts he interviewed -- many of whom could one day be sent to trial in the Hague for war crimes -- need a historic

treatment which suits their veiled political objectives. They want to draw millions with anti-war views off the streets and couches, into the voting booth to vote against George Bush based on his administration’s Iraq folly, and in support of the in-house, in the Beltway critics of the Bush-Cheney administration, especially if they come back to power through a Democratic president.

What these “good imperialists” might do with such a political victory is left unasked and unanswered in the video, other than our guess they would pray that their names will not emerge as American accomplices if/when Saddam Hussein is eventually put on trial. Nevertheless, it is clear to us that Moveon.org hopes to draw opponents of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq into the Democratic Party, and then into acceptance of the broader, long-term US imperialist goals and programs they advocate for the Middle East.

A full and honest history of the Iraq War would undercut this electoral means to a cloaked policy end in the Middle

East because it would show the Democrats to be as repugnant as the Republicans, and in some case worse. This is why a highly selective history of this conflict was Greenwald's and Moveon.org's only option. Their ultimate political challenge was to try to square this circle through repeated invocations of patriotism and detailed technical criticisms of the pro-war claims put forth by the Bush administration. Their goal was to convince people who are viscerally opposed to the Iraq War to support a pro-war political party, the Democrats, with their long record of directing American imperialism and with no openly stated program for addressing the current US occupation of Iraq. Unfortunately, the Democrats have extraordinary baggage which must be ignored for the video to achieve these ends. In addition to their long, 85 year history dating back to President Woodrow Wilson of designing and engaging in US military interventions, such as the Vietnam War, the Democrats have a recent history of unanimous or nearly unanimous support for some decidedly hawkish foreign policies:

- Iraq sanctions and no-fly zone bombing, the major Iraq policies of the Clinton Administration, which resulted in over 1,000,000 Iraqi deaths
- The Iraq Liberation Act of 1998
- Afghanistan War
- Patriot Act
- Department of Homeland Security, costing over \$40 billion/year.
- Expanded Pentagon budgets, now over \$400 billion per year
- Syria Accountability Act of 2003
- \$150 billion, so far, for the current Iraq debacle.
- Unqualified support for the Israeli government.

## WHAT THE VIDEO PRESENTS

The video consists almost entirely of interviews with retired officials from the CIA, Pentagon, and State Department who trumpet their years and types of experience in these agencies. The video itself was sponsored and is being widely circulated by MoveOn.org, an organization created in the late 1990s to rally support for President Clinton when he was being impeached for his affair with Monica Lewinsky. Recently the organization has been adopted by two billionaires, George Soros and Peter Lewis, both of whom recently donated \$ 5 million each to it, contributions which will expand its annual budget by many, many times. With this enormous cash infusion the video, in combination with television ads, is

being used as an organizing tool to build support for any Democratic candidate running against George Bush in the 2004 presidential election.

In the video, the intelligence veterans are sharply critical of the justifications given by Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Rice, and Wolfowitz for the current US invasion and occupation of Iraq. The experts' outlook could be described as critical patriotism, with the video featuring several references to a Mark Twain quote of supporting your country all the time, but only its

government when it is correct. By implication their critique of the Bush administration is therefore an endorsement of the policies of Bush II's predecessors, in particular Bush I and Clinton, their former employers. In both cases the policies and practices of the previous

administrations toward Iraq go unmentioned and uncriticized in the video, as does each expert's own rap sheet on Iraq during the same period. While their brief self-introductions imply a long record of open and secret US involvement in the Middle East, none of these details are furnished to the viewer.

Instead, their criticisms are entirely focused on the Bush administration and spoken with great technical authority. In reality, though, little of what these experts say is truly new. In fact, in the half year leading up to the US attack on Iraq on March 19, 2003, their points were previously made by many journalists, scholars, and

activists through the anti-war media. The rebuttal of all the official arguments for the war, which these retired officials only made in mid and late 2003, during the occupation phase of the Iraq War, were widely distributed through the Internet, alternative press, and a

few articles in mainstream publications during the last half of 2002 and early months of 2003. For example, the Institute for Public Accuracy ([www.accuracy.org](http://www.accuracy.org)) published paragraph-by-paragraph rebuttals of George Bush's televised, pro-war speech of October 7, 2002, and as well as his State of the Union speech in January 2003. Likewise, other groups, such as Foreign Policy in Focus ([www.fpiif.org](http://www.fpiif.org)) offered a detailed critique of Colin Powell's February 2003 speech to the United Nations repackaging the claims made in President Bush's October 2002 and January 2003 speeches. These critiques, as well, were based on the expertise of Iraq experts drawn from academia, journalism, and the ranks of anti-war organizations.

Similar, detailed anti-war arguments could be found on many mainstream (i.e., non-revolutionary, non-Marxist) web-sites, such as Commondreams, Antiwar.com, Truthout, Alternet, The Nation, Z Magazine, Guardian, CounterPunch, and Mother Jones) during this same time period, and have, in fact, been compiled in a new book (*The Five Biggest Lies Bush Told us About Iraq*) by Christopher Scheer, Lakshmi Chaurdy, and Robert Scheer of AlterNet.

## WHAT THE VIDEO NEGLECTS TO PRESENT

The greatest insights offered by Greenwald's video are, therefore, in what it doesn't say about the invasion and occupation of Iraq, not in what rehashes. When pieced together the experts present a chilling indication of what the multilateralist branch of US imperialism, represented by these veterans of US intelligence agencies, stand for, what previous policies they implicitly think were correct and justified, what they would likely undertake if given another chance to run US foreign policy in the Middle East, and which progressive forces are more than willing to promote their Wilsonian (i.e., liberal imperialist) outlook, as well as ignore their numerous historical evasions in going after the Bush administration.

Despite the video's one hour, the intelligence vets and/or director fail to mention nine painfully obvious points, most of which were made by different anti-war groups and analysts in the run-up to the Iraq war. In fact, the video's critique of the Bush administration, and then some, such as the omissions inventoried below, could have all been compiled into a similar video based solely on speeches at anti-war teach-ins and rallies in the months preceding the war.

### **1) No Mention of other reasons for the war, including oil:**

While the experts carefully rebut the case for war made by the Bush administration, they never even speculate on what the regime's hidden agendas were for going to war. The word oil is not uttered once in the entire video, and the position of the anti-war movement, that this was a war for oil supply, or more accurately for oil profits, is never mentioned. Likewise, other hidden agendas postulated by various anti-war forces are wholly ignored, such as construction contracts for administration cronies, justifications for military expenditures, broad geo-political control of the Middle East, new US military bases in Iraq, fortification of Israel's hold on the West Bank and Gaza, or a demonstration of shock and awe imperial power. After one hour of detailed criticisms, the viewer is still left with a mystery: why did the entire US government, including both houses of Congress and both political parties, and the corporate media, enthusiastically line up behind some extraordinarily foolish invasion and occupation plans and the summarily refuted arguments used to justify them?

Even obvious facts preceding the invasion, which suggest the true imperialist motives of the Bush team and the Democrats, who overwhelmingly supported them, are ignored by these experts. Most notably, in the year 2000 any new US administration, whether Gore-Lieberman or Bush-Cheney, would have faced

the same external challenge to the Iraq policies they inherited from previous administrations. Under their watch, U.N. supported sanctions against Iraq would have been finally lifted, and the United States would have become a spectator as France, Russia, and even China, got the green light to move on the extraordinarily profitable and strategically important oil exploration and development contracts they made with the Iraqi government during the 1990s.

### **2) No mention of missing evidence of Iraqi plans to attack the United States:**

The Bush administration and its boosters active and passive supporters among Congressional Democrats never presented any evidence, whether testimony from defectors, documents, or intercepted communications, that Iraq actually possessed plans or intentions to attack the United States, Britain, or anyone else with its alleged weapons of mass destruction (or even conventional weapons). In other words, even if the Iraq-war opponents were wrong and Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction and related delivery systems, there was still no basis for the Bush administration's claim that Iraq intended to use these weapons against the United States. This was a startling and glaring weakness in the case for war, which these experts completely overlooked in their otherwise meticulous critique of the Bush administration's case for war.

### **3) No mention of US and Israeli weapons of mass destruction in the region:**

The two countries with weapons of mass destruction and effective delivery systems in the Middle East are Israel and the United States, and the one country which openly spoke of its right to use these weapons was the United States, which made it clear that it was prepared to use nuclear weapons against Iraq (Los Angeles Times, 12/11/02 and 01/26/03). More to the point, the US had surrounded Iraq with new military bases and naval fleets largely established during the Clinton administration, many of which possessed chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, at a time when the US openly stated it was preparing to attack Iraq. In other words, the actual military threat was exactly the opposite of what the Bush administration and Congress proclaimed. It was the US which publicly threatened and then attacked Iraq, not vice versa.

### **4) No mention of aggression against Iraq under Clinton administration:**

The U.S. attack on Iraq initiated on March 19, 2003, was the third phase of a war waged by the United States against Iraq for over 13 years. During this entire period these policies has overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress and in the White House. The first phase was

the Gulf War of 1991, and the second phase lasted from 1992 to 2003. Phase Two consisted of deadly sanctions and almost daily US and British bombing sorties over the north and south no-fly zones in violation of the United Nations. Most of this devastation was prosecuted by the Clinton administration, which also initiated countrywide missile attacks on Iraq in 1993, 1995, and 1998. The last one, Desert Fox, was preceded by President Clinton's withdrawal of weapons inspectors from Iraq before firing about 200 cruise missiles at that country over a four day period.

The combined result of these bipartisan policies was not only the precedent for the March 2003 preemptive war against Iraq, but death and destruction throughout the entire country, which hit women, children, and the elderly particularly hard. UN estimates are that over 1,000,000 Iraqis died from these actions, and that the country was substantially debilitated as a military power prior to March 2003. It is particularly telling that these crimes of the Clinton administration are completely overlooked in the Greenwald video. The reasons, however, are not hard to discern. The interviewees not only supported the Clinton administration's policies, like they did those of the first Bush administration, but they were then US government officials who designed and implemented these very same policies. They are also a strong indication of what "Bush-like" policies lie in store if someone like John Kerry or any other Democratic presidential aspirant occupies the White House in January 2005.

This history explains why nearly every Congressional Democrat has voted in support of the Bush administration's Iraq policies, especially when they have been asked to pay for them. It also explains why their anti-war rhetoric is extremely unlikely to transform itself into anti-war policies and nearly all current policies would be continued if they regained the White House.

#### **5) No mention of Carter Doctrine or details of US support for Saddam Hussein:**

Prior to the first Gulf War, the United States had clearly staked out its military and economic interests in the Persian Gulf. This period is probably best known for the Carter Doctrine, in which the United States government adopted a formal policy of committing itself to the use of military force to assure access to Persian Gulf oil. But beginning in the late 1960s US policy also consisted of support of the more conservative Saddam Hussein wing of the Baath Party in order to promote its mass extermination of the pro-Soviet left in Iraq, as well extensive U.S. aid to Iraq in the form of weapons, food, and intelligence data during Iraq's 10 year war with

Iran in the 1980s. While the video, to its credit, does show Donald Rumsfeld, then an official in the Reagan Administration, shaking Saddam Hussein's hand, there is little more on the extensive relationship between the U.S. and Iraq during the 60s, 70s, and 80s, when the movie's interviewees were enthusiastically pursuing their careers as US intelligence agents and military officers with countless bloody assignments throughout the Middle East.

#### **6) No mention of US support for other repressive regimes in Middle East:**

In addition to US support for Iraq, the US has a long history of supporting other authoritarian and repressive regimes throughout the entire Middle East in order to shore up in position to control the region's energy resources. Except for Iran, which successfully forced the United States out in 1979, the US has continuously supported Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates for many decades. While most of these relationships preceded the Carter Doctrine, they have all been bolstered by it and, along with Iraq, reflect the broad, long-term, continuing involvement of the US in the Persian Gulf area, as well as the Caspian Sea littoral states and the greater Middle East. Furthermore, the video makes no call to change any of these policies. Given their bi-partisan support, including among the current Democratic contenders for the presidency, this omission, too, is hardly a surprise. It is, however, a portend of what is to come if they were to win the White House: a continuation of the same policies, but with periodic tweaking to coopt and deflect the advances of other imperialists, especially the Russians, French, and Germans.

#### **7) No mention or credit to anti-Iraq war movement:**

The role of the anti-Iraq war movement is also curiously ignored in this video. Even though this movement presented nearly the same arguments as these experts, sometimes even quoting them, in the run-up to the war, the millions of activists taking to the streets throughout the entire world got virtually no recognition. Likewise, the successful efforts of these activists through the auspices of the video's promoter, MoveOn.org, to flood Congressional offices with visits, snail mail, and e-mail presenting the case against going to war was ignored. Those viewing this video could, in fact, think, that these experts are presenting new, post-invasion revelations about the Bush Administration, when nearly the same arguments, plus many more, were presented in massive quantities to and totally ignored by nearly all members of Congress before the war began. Even now, when virtually every prophesy of the anti-war movement has come to pass, its pre-war analyses and warning are still ignored and forgotten by

both elected officials and the experts interviewed in the video, who, until recently, diligently served these same elected officials.

### **8) No mention of precedents for this war:**

While it is true that the invasion of Iraq was justified by a "new" policy or preemptive and preventative war, this has been the actual practice of the United States through most of its history. After all, except for Afghanistan, none of its modern wars have resulted from a certifying action of the United Nations Security Council or a necessity to thwart an imminent Pearl harbor-type military attack against the United States. For example, in the post WWII era there is a long list of U.S. military invasions of other countries not sanctioned by the United Nations or justified by a credible argument of military defense. These wars include the Bay of Pigs under Kennedy; Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon; Dominican Republic under Johnson; Granada and Lebanon under Reagan; Panama and Somalia under Bush; and Haiti and Yugoslavia under Clinton. Furthermore, the devastation inflicted on Iraq under the Clinton administration's policy of continuous bombing and periodic missile attacks was also an obvious precedent for the current US war against Iraq.

### **9) No mention of what they would do if back in power:**

If any obvious point is left unexamined by these experts, this is the one. Based on the historical record, it is most likely that a new, multilateralist US presidential administration, such as Howard Dean's, would maintain the US occupation of Iraq. The stakes, in term of oil profits, the geo-political value of Iraq, and the long-term strategic use of oil as an economic and political weapon, are simply too high for the United States to evacuate its military forces from Iraq in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, to do so would reveal the United States to be a highly overrated superpower to all of the competing great powers, as well as to local and regional powers whose allegiance to the United States is based on the myth of US invincibility.

For these reasons, the policies of a new Democratic president would most likely differ from those in Bush-Cheney at the strictly tactical level, not at the substantive level. To maintain the occupation, they might offer more reconstruction or oil development contracts to France, German, Russia, or adjacent countries, but they would not "cut and run" unless faced with a battlefield defeat of Vietnam proportions. Because such an analysis and prescription would repel the anti-war activists who this video is attempting to draw into the 2004 Presidential election on behalf of

the Democrats, any and all proposals being advanced by for the US occupation of Iraq are left unstated. The busy bees of the think tanks and departments of International Relations linked to the Democratic Party are no where to be seen in this video.

## CONCLUSION

When these nine omissions are pieced together, it is clear why George Soros and friends want to so extensively support MoveOn.org and promote the wide distribution of Robert Greenwald's Iraq war video. Soros,

Greenwald, and their kindred spirits among liberal financiers know that the Iraq War is a fiasco and could entirely undermine US imperialist initiatives through out the world. They want "preemptive intervention" to make sure that the anti-Iraq war movement does not revive under left-wing, anti-imperialist leadership in response to the escalation of both the U.S. occupation and the Iraqi resistance. If, in fact, a Democratic administration would maintain most of the Middle East policies of the Bush administration, including Iraq, then it is vitally important to win over a large portion of the prospective anti-war movement to support the White House before the activists can again coalesce as a forceful anti-occupation movement.

More to the point, through MoveOn.org and this video, Soros and Lewis want to make sure that the those critical of the war and sympathetic with the anti-war movement stay firmly wedded to electoral politics and the soft, feel good multilateral militarism of the Democratic Party, despite its despicable record on Iraq and the greater Middle East. MoveOn.org's political role is to make sure the base of the anti-war movement does not bolt to the left, as began in the run-up to the war, and embrace an anti-capitalist critique of all forms of US imperialism (not just its unilateralist variation). If this were to happen, many people might conclude that revolutionary communism is the only real political option for those who are anti-war, and tired of voting for a worn-out imperialist party, the Democrats, with its hasty election year make over ready to smear off at any moment.

# The Further Balkanization of Kosovo



**D**uring the 1999 bombing of the former Yugoslavia, Clinton-Blair-Gen. Wes Clark-Chirac-Schröder & Co. claimed they were making war against Milosevic and the Yugoslav government because Serb nationalists were carrying out “ethnic cleansing” against Albanians in Kosovo. But the real cause of the war was Milosevic and his gang’s plans for an oil and gas pipeline from the Caspian region to Western Europe, which conflicted with U.S. and Western Europe bosses’ plans. However, just like Bush’s WMDs, the ethnic cleansing of Albanians was exposed as a big lie. The Albanians in Kosovo began to flee en masse when U.S.-NATO planes dropped their bombs.

Kosovo is nominally part of Serbia and Montenegro but has been administered by the local UN mission since the 1999 war. It’s now home for 7,000 U.S. military personnel at Bondsteel, one of the largest U.S. military bases overseas.

Serbs comprise only 10% of the Kosovo population; the rest are Albanians. In mid-March, racist riots erupted in Mitrovica and Pristina, 28 people died and 500 houses and 42 Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries were destroyed. Some 3,500 Serbs were forced to flee their homes.

Major Tim Dunne, a Kfor (UN forces in Kosovo) spokesman, said the mob violence had been carefully orchestrated. “We stopped numerous buses carrying men aged 18 to 40 from going to Mitrovica,” he told the London Telegraph (3/29). The troops believed that the men [Albanian nationalists] were being bussed in to take part in the unrest.

The violence flared when three Albanian children drowned after allegedly being chased into a river by Serbs. Unrest spread quickly. One UN official said the “subsequent disturbances all over Kosovo, and their prolonged nature, point to widespread orchestration.”

There are doubts

over how the children came to drown. Suspicions grew that the blame had been wrongly placed on Serbs, an allegation made by a fourth child who survived. Yet during the violence a UN spokesman, Derek Chapple, said that police had no conclusive evidence. On March 24, senior UN mission officials ordered Chapple “moved to other duties” because he may have been “too frank.”

The Albanian nationalists in Kosovo — all coming from the Kosovo Liberation Army, the drug-running gang used by the U.S./NATO during the 1999 war — are trying to divert Albanian workers and youth there from the fact that five years after “victory” unemployment is even higher, as privatized factories are barely producing and social services have been cut. Meanwhile, the coalition gov. of Kostunica, the Serb leader picked by the imperialists to dump Milosevic (now on trial in The Hague), has no answers either. The imperialists rejected the Serbian army offer to go to Kosovo to “restore order.” Then the Serbian gov. backed rallies to “support Serbs in Kosovo” drew only a few thousand, mostly non-workers.

And the European Union’s “solution” is to Balkanize Kosovo even more, dividing Serbs and Albanians into “cantons.”

So nationalism has spawned unemployment, imperialist war and ethnic cleansing to the workers throughout the former Yugoslavia. After defeating the Nazis occupation, the Partisan movement led by Tito was able to unite all the ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia. When Tito was alive, the various extreme nationalists were held in check. But, unfortunately, Tito was one of the first Eastern European “communists” to turn to state capitalism and then to private capitalism. When the Soviet Union imploded, the imperialists — led by Germany — used their “national liberation” movements (many led by WW II Nazi collaborators) in the various republics of the former Yugoslav Federation to divide them even further into “independent” countries. Slovenia and Croatia, the first to break away, are now basically German spheres of influence.

The seeds of working-class unity were destroyed by this deadly combination of fake leftists, nationalists and imperialists. Once Tito died, all hell broke loose. Milosevic and all the other nationalists in the former Yugoslavia used nationalism to build their base and profits. Workers in the former Yugoslavia need to unite and rebuild an internationalist communist Party to smash all the nationalists and their imperialist backers.



*U.S. Secretary Albright greets Hahim Thaci, leader of the Albanian armed rebels (UCK) August 1999.*

*After the Nato deployment many Serb workers were killed by UCK extremists in the West seen as freedom fighters and alliers.*

# “Antagonistic and Non-Antagonistic” Contradictions

March, 2004 - Revised

The most important idea in communist philosophy is the concept of dialectical contradiction. The theory of contradiction is an indispensable guide to understanding the development of society, political movements, knowledge and nature. Failure to understand the dialectics of contradiction correctly has held back the development of the communist movement and contributed to the victory of capitalism in the old Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. This essay describes the history of a false and extremely harmful conception of contradiction that was invented in the Soviet Union and made worse in China, the concept of a “non-antagonistic contradiction.” This kind of contradiction was supposed to describe social conflicts in socialist society that either die out on their own or can be managed without becoming more intense. We will trace the history of this concept and show the theoretical errors in its various formulations and the disastrous practical policies and actions that it helped justify. First, however, we will review the concept of dialectical contradiction as it was described by Marx in some of the classics of communist philosophy, as well as some of the reactionary alternatives to communist dialectics.

## Dialectical Contradiction

To explain what a dialectical contradiction is, we will use the terminology of “organic” relationships, borrowed by Marx from German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. Things are said to be organically related (or internally related) when the nature of each of them is partly determined by its relationship to another. For example, since both a child and its parents are influenced in fundamental ways by the parent-child relationship, that relationship is an organic one. A child with different parents would be a different person, and a child separated from its parents a birth would be a different person, since their organic relationship would be broken. The things that are linked together in an organic relationship are called sides or moments. Because of the mutual connection of the sides, we say that they interpenetrate each other.

When there are two organically related things, each of which has properties that exclude the other, the relationship between them is called opposition. The relationship between the north and south poles of a magnet is an example this kind of opposition, which is sometimes called polar opposition. A north pole cannot exist without a south pole and vice versa, but nothing can be both a north and a south pole.

A dialectical contradiction is a polar opposition in which the two sides actively interfere with each other. This active interference is called “struggle of opposites” or “negativity.” Hence we could define a dialectical contradiction as an organic relationship of opposites in

which the opposites struggle against each other, a unity and struggle of opposites. This concept of dialectical contradiction is different from contradiction in the ordinary sense of saying one thing and then saying something else that is inconsistent with it, although the two concepts have features in common. In particular, ordinary contradictions only occur in thought or language, while dialectical contradictions also occur in the social or natural world.

One example of a dialectical contradiction is a basketball game. The polar opposites are the two teams. Each of the teams not only tries to score, but plays defense. They blocks shots, prevent passes, and steal the ball, etc., to interfere with the opponent’s game. This interference is part of the negativity of the contradiction, the struggle of the opposite sides. If either side strengthens its offense or its defense, the contradiction becomes more intense.

The most important example of a dialectical contradiction is the relationship between the working class and the capitalist class in the capitalist system. Each class has the characteristics it has partly because of its relationship to the other, but the two classes struggle and interfere with each other.

In his book *Capital*, Marx gave a description of the contradictory relation between use value and exchange value, the two forms in which the value of a product is expressed in a capitalist economy. His description also gives an accurate definition of dialectical contradiction in general. The two sides of the relationship are

“...two mutually conditioning, inseparable moments which belong to each other, but are at the same time mutually excluding, actively opposing extremes, that is, poles of the that value expression.”

The main reason contradictions are important is that they produce movement and change. For example, in the process of the exchange of products, contradictory conditions have to be met, conditions that capitalist commodity circulation does not lessen or cancel out. These contradictions “create a form in which they can move themselves. This is the general method by which actual contradictions solve themselves.” Contradictions “move themselves” because the activity of the struggling opposite sides within the contradiction is directed into motion as the contradiction is worked out. That is, the source of the motion that the contradiction causes is internal to that contradiction.

This process of solving or working out contradictions is not unique to social contradictions, but also takes place in thought and in the natural world. As an example of how a contradiction can direct motion into a particular path, Marx cited the elliptical curve in space, which is approximately the path a planet takes as it moves

around the Sun. The planet's two tendencies of motion, to continue in a straight line and to be pulled by gravity toward the Sun do not cancel out, but produce a kind of motion that is influenced by both tendencies.

The process of working through the motion that a contradiction causes eventually comes to an end, usually when one or more of the contradictory opposites no longer exists. This process of ending a contradiction is called resolving, overcoming, or dissolving it. The most important example of the working out of a contradiction is the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class. This contradiction will eventually be resolved by revolution and the establishment of communism. But the destruction of capitalism is only one example of the general pattern of the resolution of contradictions. The contradiction in a basketball game is resolved when the buzzer sounds and the game is over. For capitalists in competition with each other, and capitalist empires in conflict with each other, however, their dialectical contradictions tend to be come more acute. These contradictions drive then toward war and fascism, and are only resolved when one or both sides are destroyed.

Marx regarded dialectics--that is, the theory of dialectical contradictions and the development that they cause--to be "in its essence critical and revolutionary," because it recognizes "the inevitable breaking up" of the existing state of things. There are rivals to revolutionary dialectics, however, that are designed to conclude not that the political, economic, and military contradictions of capitalism will sharpen and make it more ripe for revolution, but that capitalism will become more harmonious and stable, and less prone to crisis. One of these rival views was developed by 19th century defenders of capitalism and adopted by Social-Democrats (anti-communist "Leftists"), and by an influential group of philosophers--called "mechanists"--in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

## **Mechanist "Dialectics"**

The model for the mechanist view of contradiction is the clash of physical forces, forces which can cancel each other out if they are aimed in opposite directions. This happens, for example, if two teams pull on each end of a rope in a tug-of-war. The rope will not move at all if the force pulling on one side is equal to the force on the other. British sociologist Herbert Spencer claimed that so-called social or mental "forces" also tend to cancel out, resulting in a kind of social balance or equilibrium in which further change cannot happen. Spencer claimed that everything is moved by "antagonist forces," that is, "forces" which are aimed in opposite directions:

"In all cases then there is a progress toward equilibration. That universal co-existence of antagonist forces ...[that] necessitates decomposition of every force into divergent forces at the same time necessitates the ultimate establishment of a balance...."

This theory has the consequence that capitalism not only has no tendency toward crises that provide the potential for revolution, but that its internal conflicts tend

to gradually balance out and disappear. From the 1870s on, Social-Democrats like E. Bernstein, M. Adler, and K. E. Dühring attacked Marx's dialectics and praised mechanist views like Spencer's. Marx's collaborator F. Engels attacked mechanist "dialectics" in his book *Anti-Dühring*, but unfortunately that did not assure the adoption of the dialectical point of view, even inside the communist movement.

In the USSR, the influential leader N. Bukharin defended the mechanist idea that contradiction is "the antagonism of forces acting in different directions," rather than a unity of opposites that interpenetrate each other. Mechanists saw contradiction as the product of "forces" which may not have any organic, internal relationship to one another, and can thus cancel each other out partially or completely.

The mechanist understanding of contradiction is wrong many counts. It implies that one side of a contradiction could be removed without changing the other at all, since the two sides are not organically connected. In that case, for example, the removal of the capitalist class by revolution would not have to make the working class change, too.

In this non-organic, "external" way of understanding contradiction, every contradiction would automatically be "antagonistic" because the mechanist definition of contradiction requires that every contradiction consist of antagonistic forces, that is, forces that push in opposite directions. It is a mystery what "antagonism" could possibly mean, however, when you go beyond physical forces (which point in definite directions) to "forces" which are social or natural processes.

A more important defect of the mechanist view is the idea that there is no negativity or struggle of opposites inside a contraction that makes it produce movement. That would mean that all change would be caused from the outside, a claim that Bukharin makes explicitly. This view flatly contradicts the Marxist idea that class struggles, which are conflicts inside society, are what make history develop. The mechanist view also fails to understand the dialectical relationship between capitalists, whose competitive, "struggle of opposites" relationship with each other drives them to imperialist war. The U. S. wars against Iraq, for example, do not just aim to get access to the oil for the giant U. S. oil companies, but also to hold back European and Chinese capitalists by controlling the oil they need.

The most important error of the mechanist version of contradiction is that it implies that powerful opponents can make peace with each other if their opposite "forces" cancel each other out. Bukharin argued, for example, that agreement between imperialist powers is possible without one defeating the other when there is "equality of forces." Hence what the mechanists called 'antagonism' really implies the possibility of reconciliation, that is, of opposite "forces" canceling out. The supposed tendency of these "forces" to balance out would mean that contradictions tend to die out on their own, as Spencer claimed in so many words.

Communist dialectics, on the contrary, recognizes that the contradictions of imperialism always produce intense struggle, eventually leading to war, whether

the rival imperialists are equally matched or not. Even when imperialists are not directly at war with each other, they sponsor intermediaries to fight for them. This took place, for example, when the U. S. armed the Islamic fundamentalists to overthrow the USSR's puppet government in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

## Hegelian dialectics and mediation

Mechanism is not the only theory of contradiction that tries to argue that contradictions don't have to become more intense. German idealist philosopher G. F. W. Hegel thought that the struggle of the opposites in a contradiction could and should be lessened by "mediating" them, that is, adding additional links ("mediations") between the opposite sides so that they interfere with each other less. Hegel claimed for example, that the government could mediate the contradictions of a capitalist economy, and that the legislature could mediate between the head of state and the people.

These examples already show the absurdity of idea that contradictions can always be effectively mediated. Despite the best efforts of the Federal Reserve Board and other government bodies in the U. S., the internal contradictions of the capitalist economy drive it into recession and crisis roughly every eight years. The impeachment attempts in the Clinton administration show that a legislature can increase the contradictions between the head of state and the general public, but is not effective in mediating them in capitalist society.

Marx argued that contradictions can be mediated only in the limited situation where the two sides are essentially unified in the first place, when they belong together but have come into contradiction with each other. "Real extremes," he said, "cannot be mediated precisely because they are real extremes... they are opposed in essence." Marx criticized Hegel for maintaining that intensifying the struggle of opposites, having them "fight to a decision," was "something possibly to be prevented or something harmful."

## "Unity is Conditional, Struggle is Absolute"

The central idea of the Hegelian strategy for reconciling contradictions is that the whole, which is created or strengthened by adding mediating links between opposite sides, dominates the opposite sides inside it and reduces the intensity of their struggle. Another way of saying this is that in an organic relation, the unity of opposites always is or can be made to be stronger, more effective, than the struggle of opposites. The truth is just the opposite of this. The typical behavior of a dialectical contradiction is that struggle of opposites eventually dominates their unity. As Lenin described it:

"The unity (coincidence, identity, equal actions) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute."

Against this communist viewpoint, a practical version of this philosophy of mediation is often advocated by liberal politicians, trade union leaders, and various fake leftists, who want to mediate contradictions between the working class and the capitalists, contradictions which cannot be mediated in fact, and should be intensified instead. "Opportunism" in politics could be defined pretty accurately in just these terms: it means trying to mediate the essential contradictions of capitalism, rather than intensifying them.

Even when individuals or groups do have strong common interests, that does not mean that there will be no contradictions or that those contradictions will not become more intense. Their differences in interest or viewpoint can make their conflicts grow, despite what they have in common.

## What "Antagonism" Means

We have already seen that the mechanist account of contradiction uses the term 'antagonism.' We will also be using this term later in other contexts. Thus it is useful to ask what this term means outside the mechanists confused use of it. As Marx used the term, 'antagonism' means the social relationship between enemies. It describes situations that tend to produce open conflict, anger, resistance, rebellion, violence, repression, revolution, etc. This is the sense in which Marx claimed that capitalism is the last antagonistic form of social production:

"The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from individuals' social conditions of existence—but the productive forces developed within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism."

This sense of the term 'antagonistic' only makes sense for social relationships, and cannot be applied to the dialectics of knowledge or to natural science. The Bolsheviks (the communists of the old USSR) started to use the term "non-antagonistic contradiction" as a category of dialectics about 1930, and they also used its political counterpart, the concept of a "non-antagonistic class relationship." By 1936, they had declared that "there are no longer any antagonistic classes in [Soviet] society" and that economic and political contradictions among the working class, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia were "declining and becoming obliterated."

In order to understand what is wrong with the concept of non-antagonistic contradiction, it is essential to understand what was wrong with the idea of "non-antagonistic classes," which is the key idea in the concept of socialism. The Bolsheviks had the idea that socialism was to be a system in which classes still existed and were in contradiction to each other, but the relationships between these classes were to be gradually increasing cooperation and harmony, based on their common interests. V. I. Lenin, the main leader of the Bolsheviks until his death in 1924, wrote that

"Antagonism and contradiction are not at all the same thing. In socialism, the first [that is, antagonism] will disappear, but the latter [that is, contradiction] will remain."

The first of these two statements is true if antagonism is understood--as it should be--as the relation between enemies. Since there are contradictions between friends, and even contradictions that have nothing to do with people at all, antagonism and contradiction certainly are not the same thing.

The second statement--that antagonism will disappear under socialism--is false, however. It was proved false by the historical experience of socialism in the USSR and China. Socialism was an antagonistic system, a system containing capitalist social relations. As it was practiced in the USSR and in China before capitalism was restored in those countries, socialism was a compromise between the working class and the capitalists that kept many features of capitalism: working for wages and the inequality that goes with it, the division between manual and mental workers, material privileges for leaders, etc. Along with tremendous economic and social achievements, and a heroic struggle that defeated Nazism, both countries had violent, "antagonistic" internal struggles--collectivization and the "purges" in the USSR, and the Cultural Revolution in China--as well as other political, philosophical, and artistic battles over capitalist ideology.

Both the Soviet and Chinese communist parties failed, however, to fight crucial battles against capitalist ideology that justified inequality, privileges, and toleration of private ownership. The capitalist features of socialism constantly regenerated and reinforced capitalist social relationships and eventually led to the restoration of capitalism in both countries. The primary vehicles for this restoration in both cases were the Soviet and Chinese communist Parties, which by then had turned into their opposites, that is, into capitalist parties. If these old movements had fought for communism right after coming to power, they would have eliminated a main source of capitalist relationships, and probably could have kept capitalism from coming back. Even if they had done this, however, the struggle to finally overcome capitalism and its ideas would have been long and hard, and would still have involved the bloody external battles against other, capitalist countries that actually took place. Communist revolution and the initial seizure of state power are only the first steps in a long struggle to defeat the ideology of capitalism and destroy capitalist antagonisms forever. Even when this battle finally succeeds, other contradictions in society will still remain, however, contradictions that will become intense.

To understand how the idea of non-antagonistic classes and contradictions was developed, we need to review some additional events from Soviet history. A few years after the Soviet communist movement was victorious in the 1917 revolution, the Bolsheviks decided to respond to the desperate economic situation, which had resulted from the long civil war, by making major concessions to capitalists in the so-called New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP meant that from 1921 until the 1930s, the Bolsheviks allowed capitalist relationships to continue

to exist in the countryside and, on a smaller scale, in the towns. "Kulaks," who were peasant capitalists who exploited labor, and urban businesses were allowed to exist but were heavily taxed. Those peasants other than the kulak capitalists were correctly declared to be the allies of the working class, although in contradiction to it. The working class had conflicts with the non-kulak peasants, for example, over the question of whether the price of what the peasants produce should be high or low. High prices would benefit the peasants, but hurt the working class and hold back the development of industry.

Bukharin's line on the kulaks was that the working class should be nice to them. It was not necessary to defeat them, Bukharin claimed, since the kulak "nests" would "grow into" the socialist economy and the kulaks "will have to submit to our general system." This is another illustration of the mechanist idea that conflicts tend to die out on their own. In the late 1920s, the Bolshevik leadership came to the opposite conclusion. They began to understand that as a result of the NEP's concessions to capitalism, the kulaks had grown stronger, were actively resisting the Soviet government, and would have to be eliminated as a social class. One of the problems that they faced when they "liquidated the kulaks as a class" was the danger of alienating the large number of peasants who were not categorized as kulaks, but still made their living as small business owners. The Bolsheviks tried to solve this problem by distinguishing sharply (and somewhat artificially) between the exploiting kulaks and the "middle peasantry," which did not exploit labor or did so only in a limited way.

As part of the policy of attacking the kulaks while reassuring the other peasants, the Bolsheviks declared the contradictions between the working class and the poor- and middle peasants to be "non-antagonistic," while the contradictions between the working class and the kulaks were called "antagonistic:"

But not all contradictions are antagonistic.... The relation of the proletariat and the peasantry does not have the character of antagonism--in both classes, we have a number of common interests."

Bolshevik philosophers made a number of attempts to define what an antagonistic contradiction was supposed to be. Various proposed definitions claimed that antagonistic contradictions were those that were resolved by becoming more intense, or by violence, or by the two sides becoming independent of each other. Some of the definitions were quite complicated. The main characteristic that was supposed to distinguish antagonistic from non-antagonistic contradictions was the way in which these contradictions were to be resolved. Antagonistic contradictions, like those between capitalists and the working class, were supposed to be "irreconcilable," so that they could only be resolved by revolution. But this was a mistake: All contradictions are irreconcilable, not matter how they are resolved. It is the mutual exclusion of the two sides that makes them contradictions in the first place.

Non-antagonistic contradictions were claimed to be capable of being resolved gradually, without becoming more intense, under the leadership of the party:

"Because of their non-antagonistic character, and thanks to the correct politics of the party, the contradictions between the working class and the laboring peasantry are being abolished and are disappearing. In this way, there are before us examples of two completely opposite types of contradictions. They are different in their content, in their form, in the tendencies of their development, and finally, in the character of their resolution."

This claim, that class contradictions can die out gradually, was a big change in the Bolsheviks' line from the earlier period when they were struggling against the kulaks. Stalin in particular had insisted that intense class struggle must remain until all classes are abolished:

As long as classes exist we shall never be in a position to say: "Well, thank God, everything is all right now." ... that which is dying refuses to die quietly; it fights for its existence, defends its moribund cause. But that which is being born does not come into the world quietly; it comes in squealing and screaming, defending its right to existence."

In the course of the fight to collectivize agriculture, however, the Bolsheviks abandoned this correct line and invented the "non-antagonistic" contradiction, the class contradiction that does "die quietly." The historical evidence shows that the claim that contradictions could be resolved gradually and without out becoming more intense is simply false. In fact, the various contradictions between the working class and the peasants were never fully resolved in the Soviet system, and the methods for attempting to resolve them included—and had to include—class struggle that sometimes became intense, with the usual signs of antagonism that go with class struggle. It was not, however, the worker-peasant contradictions that led to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR under Khrushchev, or finally brought about its destruction.

## Non-Antagonistic Contradiction and "Socialist" Dialectics

In the passages quoted above, the alleged distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions is a compromise between the revolutionary dialectics of Marx and a concept of contradiction that accommodates itself to capitalism. That is, it combines the incompatible ideas that contradictions can and should be resolved by intensifying them, and the idea that they will die out on their own or can be gradually managed out of existence.

In one way, the non-antagonism theory resembles the mechanist view, since it says that the contradictions between the working class and the working peasantry had a tendency to die out gradually. Advocates of the non-antagonism view did not claim, however, that these contradictions would die out entirely by themselves, but only under the proper management by the Communist Party. In effect, it was the party, not merely the common interests of the workers and peasants, which was supposed to be the mediating link that made their contradictions

become less intense, a view more like Hegel's than Bukharin's.

The advocates of the non-antagonism theory also denied the mechanist view that moving toward equilibrium or reconciliation brings about development. They correctly claimed that only the struggle of opposites produces change. In fact, the idea of several kinds of contradictions with radically different courses of development was developed in the USSR by both mechanists and Hegelians. Bukharin advocated the idea of two kinds of contradiction as early as 1926, and Soviet followers of Hegel (the so-called Menshevizing Idealists) developed their version, which became the official line of the Bolsheviks in the early thirties. Stalin was also an active advocate of the non-antagonism idea, arguing that unlike worker-capitalist contradictions, the contradictions in the collective farms ...[are] bound to disappear in the course of time" as the farms obtained more machinery.

Since philosophical ideas are closely connected with political ones, the philosophical compromise between incompatible views of contradiction is just what should be expected to arise under socialism. Socialism was a compromise between capitalism and communism, an attempt to combine irreconcilable systems that was bound to fail and did fail. The concept of non-antagonistic contradiction is the heart of a socialist "dialectics," a bogus philosophy that tries to defend socialism's impossible combination of working class power with capitalist social relations, and claims that that system can work, that it won't be split apart by its increasingly intense contradictions.

In the USSR and China, the theory of non-antagonistic contradiction undermined the struggle for communism by claiming the inequalities and conflicts of socialism aren't destructive, don't need to be struggled against, but will die out by themselves. It continues to do harm in the contemporary communist movement, claiming that when people have common interests, their contradictions die out. The truth is the opposite: only resolute internal struggle moves the communist movement forward, resolving its contradictions by intensifying them.

## The Chinese Communist Version of "Non-Antagonistic" Contradiction

As the theory of non-antagonistic contradictions was developed further in the communist movement, it got worse. The only virtue of the concept of non-antagonistic contradiction as this was developed in the USSR in the 1930s was that it did assert that the contradictions between capitalists and workers are antagonistic, and must be resolved by revolution. We will see how this correct theory was undermined in practice, however. Policies of the communist movement like the Popular Front (discussed below) amounted to an alliance among those who were supposed to be in antagonistic contradiction with one another. The version of the theory of non-antagonistic contradictions that was developed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) included several new features designed to justify these alliances.

The first change was that the CCP claimed that non-

antagonistic contradictions could become antagonistic, and vice-versa:

"In accordance with the concrete development of things, some contradictions which were originally non-antagonistic develop into antagonistic ones, while others which were originally antagonistic develop into non-antagonistic ones."

The aim of this formulation was to be able to declare that contradictions between workers and capitalists could become non-antagonistic. The contradictions between the working class and the so-called "national bourgeoisie" were declared to be non-antagonistic:

"The contradiction between the national bourgeoisie and the working class is one between exploiter and exploited, and is by nature antagonistic. But in the concrete conditions of China, this antagonistic contradiction between the two classes, if properly handled, can be transformed into a non-antagonistic one and be resolved by peaceful methods."

To make it easier to give a philosophical justification for a variety of opportunistic alliances, the CCP introduced the concepts of "contradictions among the people" and "contradictions with the enemy." Contradictions among the people were said to be non-antagonistic, and those with the enemy to be antagonistic. The convenience of this terminology was that the content of the category "the people" could be shifted whenever the CCP wanted to make a new political deal. "The people" then became whoever agreed to cooperate with the communist movement, including capitalists and landlords. During the war against the occupation of China by Japanese imperialism, for example:

"... all those classes, strata and social groups opposing Japanese aggression came within the category of the people, while the Japanese imperialists, their Chinese collaborators and the pro-Japanese elements were all enemies of the people that we mentioned."

This use dialectics thus attempted to justify a fundamentally corrupt policy.

For a while in the 1950s, the line of the CCP, that antagonistic contradiction could become non-antagonistic, and vice-versa, began to be adopted by the Soviets, too. Borrowing from Mao, official Soviet philosophy claimed the "peaceful transformation of antagonistic contradictions into non-antagonistic ones .... is not excluded, as China's experience shows."

Watering down the theory of contradiction was not the only change in dialectics that the Soviets made. Stalin's 1938 essay "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" omitted Engel's dialectical principle of the negation of the negation. This principle says that dialectical transitions, for example, the resolution of a contradiction, are eventually followed by a further dialectical transition, with a result containing some (but not all) features of the situation before the first transition. In 1950, Stalin watered down another of the dialectical laws defended by

Marx and Engels, the principle that qualitative changes result from quantitative ones, and vice versa:

"It should be said in general for the benefit of comrades who have an infatuation for outbursts that the law of transition from an old quality to a new by means of an outburst .... does not necessarily apply to a society which has no hostile classes. In a period of eight to ten years we effected a transition in the agriculture of our country from the bourgeois, individual-peasant system to the socialist, collective-farm system."

The abandonment of dialectical principles in its official philosophy is a significant symptom of the transformation of the Soviet Union from a revolutionary into a capitalist power. Rather than a philosophy of consistent struggle against capitalism and capitalist ideology, they ended up with a philosophy of complacency, based on the idea that the major battles were in the past, outbursts were no longer possible, and a rosy future was guaranteed to result from gradual quantitative change. The reality was to be just the opposite, however, the reversal of workers' power in Russia and China.

## How Contradictions are Resolved

A contradiction is only resolved when it stops being a contradiction, when the opposite sides of the contradiction stop struggling against each other. Study of the various theories that have been put forward about how contradictions are resolved, including the analysis of the evidence available from a variety of sources, including the practice of labor, class struggle, war, and natural science, etc., lead to the following conclusion: Contradictions that human beings can influence can only be resolved or moved toward resolution by intensifying the struggle of their opposite sides, increasing their negative relationship to each other.

Right now, the costs of a wrong philosophical understanding of the nature of contradiction are particularly high. The international working class can only liberate itself from capitalist slavery and all that implies, that is, war and fascism, by understanding and taking advantage of the contradictions of capitalism. Thus the main political task the working class has is to intensify the contradiction between itself and the capitalist class, in order to move that contradiction toward resolution by revolution. Intensifying this contradiction means increasing the working class's ability to fight by strengthening its commitment, knowledge, and organization in a variety of ways. The key element of this process is the struggle against capitalist ideology and the fight for a communist understanding, carried out in a variety of contexts. This means increasing the party's connections and influence within the working class, fighting racism and nationalism, exposing other forms of fascist ideology, organizing the united action of workers of different trades and countries and fighting for communist ideas within those actions, organizing in the army, and recruiting to the party.

## How to Intensify Contradictions

Strengthening the working class movement and intensifying its contradiction with the capitalists does not always mean waving the red flag or denouncing capitalism in public. Quiet conversations in an army barracks or a worker's living room may do more to sharpen the contradictions between the working class and the capitalist class than public agitation alone would.

On its side, the capitalist class can also move to intensify the worker-capitalist contradiction by increasing police terror, lowering wages, wiping out civil liberties, spreading fascist ideology and racist propaganda, and promoting patriotism and loyalty to the "homeland." It can also strengthen itself by disciplining its members and supporters and purging those that undermine its credibility: the Enron and World.com crooks, pedophile priests, etc.

A more intense contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class will often show up in demonstrations, violence, arrests, turmoil, and in casualties on both sides. This intensifying contradiction can only be resolved by revolution, but revolution or violence is not necessarily involved in resolving all social contradictions. One Soviet attempt to define "non-antagonistic contradiction" was based on this idea. A contradiction was declared to be non-antagonistic if it could be resolved without violence, for example, by discussion, by criticism and self-criticism. It is a mistake, however, to identify intensifying a contradiction with violence. The way a contradiction is made more intense depends on the particular things or processes which come into contradiction within it, as well as on the reasons for resolving it, the other means available, etc. Relations between enemies are often violent, but involving violence does not describe some special type of contradiction, but only a particular way in which a contradiction can become more intense.

Although the means for doing it are discussion and criticism rather than violence, resolving a contradiction within an individual person or inside the party does not avoid making it more intense, and often involves one or more abrupt, qualitative changes. Contradictions within people and collectives are not resolved by waiting for them to die out, "mediating," or "managing" them, and while these contradictions remain, they can drive a person or political organization in the wrong direction. Unresolved contradictions continue to act and cause change whether they are ignored or not. Frank and honest discussion in which contradictory viewpoints, practices, and tendencies, confront each other intensifies these contradictions, but just for that reason, it moves them toward resolution. In most cases, this intensification does not have to involve lecturing, yelling, rudeness, or disrespect—much less violence--and if it does involve any of these things, the result will often be to create more serious contradictions.

Although the means for making a contradiction more intense are not the same in these cases as they were in the contradictions between classes, the basic strategy of "resolving by intensifying" is the same. Hoping that conflicts will go away by themselves, or making a pact that "I won't criticize you if you don't criticize me," does not resolve contradictions among friends and comrades,

any more than it resolves the contradictions of capitalism. "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones" should not be our motto. We move forward through comradely criticism and self-criticism.

## Should Contradictions Be Resolved?

We have said contradictions are only resolved by confronting and intensifying them, and unresolved contradictions cause change, whether they are recognized or not. It does not follow from this that all contradictions can or should be resolved. Some contradictions, like those in the basic constitution of matter, are not in our power to resolve, even if we wanted to. Some contradictions within people, like contradictions between their values and the evils of capitalist society, drive them to do good things, and should not be resolved, at least not right away. Some contradictions are too unimportant to resolve, and in other cases the process of resolution might do more harm than good. Not every married couple with serious conflicts should get a divorce, even if that seems to be the only way to resolve their contradictions.

If a contradiction is to be resolved, however, intensifying it is the way to go. This is not only the way to resolve contradictions, however. It is also the method for producing qualitative changes by shifting the dominant side of the contradiction. If you fight for the correct line in any political group, you may be able to strengthen the side that agrees with that line, even if the opposite side still exists and still fights for its line. Intensifying the struggle between the opposite sides moves toward resolution, but can produce good results even when it does not achieve resolution. Only resolution, however, can prevent the opposite that is not dominant from "biting back" and becoming dominant later on. Communist revolution is a decisive change in the worker-capitalist relationship, one that reverses the dominant and subordinate sides of that relationship. Revolution does not immediately resolve this worker-capitalist the contradiction, however. That contradiction can only be resolved when the capitalist class and its ways of thinking are finally wiped out, a process that will take a long time.

## Alliances with the Enemy in Soviet Politics

The fundamental lesson from the Soviet experience of the NEP is that the Bolshevik policy of taking the pressure off the kulaks during the NEP was wrong. The Bolsheviks partially corrected this error by getting rid of the class of kulaks in the early 1930s, but they never recognized (or admitted) that by compromising with capitalists to make their contradictions with them less intense, they made a mistake that came close to destroying the USSR in the late '20s.

The theoretical justification of this policy was always a sore point in Bolshevik politics. Right after the October Revolution in 1917, Lenin claimed that there could be no "honest alliance" or coalition between workers and capitalists, because of the "radical divergence of interests

between these classes.” The idea of the NEP, however, was that both the working class and the kulaks would benefit from it. Hence the NEP was supposed to be a kind of alliance for mutual benefit, despite the contradictions between the kulaks and the workers and working peasants.

Unfortunately the policy of making concessions to the kulaks is only one among a number of important examples in the history of the communist movement of opportunistic attempts to make alliances with capitalists. One of the most costly was the United Front Against Fascism, which was begun in France in 1934, and became the official policy of the world communist movement at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935. The United Front was a reaction to the Nazi Party’s coming to power in Germany in 1933. The essence of the Popular Front line was to try to make an alliance between communists and a supposedly “anti-fascist” section of the capitalist class, including the pro-capitalist Social-Democratic parties and trade-union leaders.

Since fascism is a capitalist strategy for continuing capitalist rule, one that capitalists need to adopt when they are in crisis, there is no section of the capitalist class that has more than a temporary and tactical opposition to fascism. By trying to prevent violent working class opposition to fascism, the Social-Democratic parties were in fact allies of capitalism in imposing fascism in Europe. So the idea on which the Popular Front was based, that fascism was the “common enemy” of workers and “anti-fascist” capitalists was a complete illusion. The more fundamental point, however, is that the strategy of trying to reduce the intensity of the contradictions between the working class and capitalists in order to make a temporary alliance with the enemy was not merely a bad idea in this particular case, it is strategy that historical experience has proved to be a disaster for the communist movement.

In the case of the Popular Front, the price of the alliance with “anti-fascist” capitalists and Socialists was to stop advocating and organizing for the overthrow of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to end communist exposures of the Social-Democrats’ betrayal of the working class. Experience proved that by trying to make the contradictions between the working class and capitalist forces less intense in this way, the communist movement weakened itself and the working class more than it weakened the capitalist class. In fact, this attempt to moderate the contradictions that divided the working

class from the capitalist class and its Social-Democratic junior partners signaled an opportunist turn from which the old communist movement never recovered, despite the heroic struggle that it waged against fascism during the Second World War.

This opportunist outlook was particularly influential in the so-called “national liberation” movements in many countries, including China and Vietnam. The political line of these movements was that in countries dominated by foreign imperialist powers, the working class and many of the capitalists of the dominated country have a common enemy based on their common “national interests.” The conclusion that was drawn from this nationalistic reasoning was that communists and “anti-imperialist” capitalists should moderate the contradictions between them and join forces against the “main” imperialists. This strategy was tried in many countries under a variety of conditions, and produced a perfect record for the capitalists. Capitalists won everywhere, and whatever opportunities for profit that imperialism temporarily lost on the battlefield, it was able to get back through investments in the “liberated” countries.

As fundamentally harmful as these alliances with the enemy proved to be, the Bolshevik version of antagonistic contradiction theory, even if it had been correct, would not have justified the policy. We saw above that the Chinese communist version of non-antagonistic contraction theory was employed to justify alliances with the enemy, but did so only by making the theory more incoherent.

Regardless of the details of its formulation, the theory of non-antagonistic contradictions and the policy of allying with the enemy do have a crucial error in common: They both involve trying to resolve contradictions or make them less dangerous by attempting to make them less intense. Historical experience shows that this idea is wrong, and that the dangers of trying it are immense.

In an era of increasing inter-imperialist rivalry and thus of imperialist war and fascism, we must remember that the old communist movement adopted these policies out of fear of the intensifying contradictions of the 1930s, and the illusion that it would gain capitalist “allies.” The mistakes they made were ultimately fatal to the old movement. Learning from their errors (and not repeating them) is vital if we are to move toward the ultimate victory of the communist movement.



# MAY DAY




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*PLP celebrated May Day, the International Working Class Day, with marches and dinners in the U.S. and contingents at trade union marches in several Latin American cities. Here are some of the speeches given at many of these events drawing important political lessons for the world's working class and its allies...*

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## ★ STATE OF THE WORLD ADDRESS KEYNOTE SPEECH AT ONE PLP MAY DAY EVENT IN NEW YORK CITY

There is good news -- and bad news:

The bad news is that capitalism is still here. Class struggle is hardly on the radar screen for now, and workers still hold very dangerous illusions about reform.

The good news is that communist ideas and the Progressive Labor Party are alive and well and we are slowly, but surely, growing both in the United States and internationally.

Communists have the ideas and the practice that can turn bad news into good news for the working class. The main contradiction in the world today is between the most powerful capitalist ruling classes, who are in a dog fight for world domination. Because of this we are facing imperialist war and fascist oppression. A contradiction that we can use against the ruling class is their self-serving arrogance. These murdering bandits think they are all powerful, and history teaches us this is a fatal flaw.

The US rulers and their British allies had hoped their latest invasion into Iraq would give them the needed stranglehold on Middle East Oil reserves and the needed edge over other bosses in Germany, France, Russia, China and Japan. But this hold on the Middle East is still shaky at best. Everyday, news of larger and larger numbers of soldiers dying, whittles away at the invincibility of US power. It is truly unfortunate that the forces behind the fight back in Fallujah, Basra, and Baghdad are almost all religious, nationalist and reactionary.

Lies about US style democracy are wearing thin. Massive demonstrations have, more or less, identified the Middle East War with imperialist control over oil. "How did our oil get under their sand" was just one of the clever slogans carried by the demonstrators. However, except for the thousands of Challenges and leaflets we distributed, the political forces opposing US and British imperialism are reformist, nationalist and reactionary. This is, in great part due to the collapse of the old communist movement and the fact that PLP's ideas have not yet caught on with the masses of people needed to turn the tide of fascism. The US bosses understand this, and the media's present treatment of Bush is intended to suppress more militant responses in favor of reform. The most recent mass march in NY against US foreign policy was little more than

a campaign for the Democrats. But again -- there is good news -- there is opportunity: The world-wide upsurge of anti-war sentiment contain the seeds of revolutionary growth and of a new and improved communist movement -- people are angry, and they are open to communist ideas. Key to this growth is increasing militancy, sharpening the contradictions, which is essential for overcoming our dangerous illusions.

The Iraqi oil fields are the second largest in the world and oil is not just another commodity. Major industries, armies, navies, transportations systems, and overall -- modern capitalist society cannot run without it. What ever power controls that oil has a major advantage over rival bosses. Oil, therefore, is not just a major source of profits - but necessary for world dominance. For today, this control directly benefits US corporations such as Exxon/Mobil and Chevron/Texaco, and the banks that back them -- but the sands are shifting! US rulers also require that the money paid for this oil be in US dollars, instead of Euro dollars. Presently the exchange rate favors the Euro dollar is costing the US bosses big time billions. This very well might lead the Euro dollar in replacing the US dollar as the dominant currency - resulting in huge amounts of invested capital to be taken out of US corporations.

The US bosses are in a crisis mode. This has made other international bosses wary of playing second fiddle to the US capitalists forever. Communists, and friends of the party, need to expose, in our mass work, the laws of inter-imperialist rivalry, and the patriotic/nationalist ideology that aids each group of bosses in convincing workers to kill each other while the bosses roll in the profits from our blood. Inter-imperialist rivalry, for the control of labor, markets, and resources is a given under capitalism. The European Union moved toward an anti-US position before the Iraqi War to secure its own ruling class interests.

Remember I mentioned dangerous illusions. This point exposes another weakness in the ideology of those leading the massive reaction against US imperialism. Siding with one imperialist gang against another imperialist gang is a deadly nationalist mistake. Without a revolutionary class analysis -- a communist analysis -- all reactions against imperialism, here or there, will lead to repression, death,

and defeat of our class.

These dangerous illusions also dominate the “anybody but Bush” movement. Of course Bush is an open liar and a mass murderer – but Bush and Kerry are more similar than different. Imperialist war costs the working class in many big ways – not only in the masses of war dead – but in the loss of almost 3 million jobs since 2001 and massive cutbacks in social services which is a direct result of the US bosses drive to stay on top.

Kerry, unlike Bush, is slick and understands that workers in the US are angry. Kerry places the blame for cutbacks and job loss only on those companies who move production outside the US. Kerry does not criticize Boeing, which has downsized tens of thousands of workers from their Washington State and Missouri plants, while moving some of that production to US prisons. Kerry would NEVER make the link between the soaring war budget and job loss - or the racist and sexist nature of slave labor which is enabled by welfare reform and an overflowing prison population - the largest in the industrialized world. This is because Kerry likes to portray himself as a progressive. WE KNOW BETTER! Kerry supported “welfare reform” - “immigration reform” - “counter terrorism” and the “effective death penalty laws” all of which created the legal basis for the Patriot Act and US fascism. And, Kerry criticizes Bush for not building the homeland security police state fast enough, and well enough.

Kerry wants to send more, not less, troops to Iraq. His “national service” plan is a trick to win more people into the military. That is because Kerry, like Bush, like Clinton, like Nixon, like Johnson, like Kennedy, like FDR, only serve the needs of the ruling class, especially when it comes to controlling the working class, vital resources and key strategic military positions. And, Kerry, like Bush, both serve and belong to the capitalist ruling elite. Their interest is fundamentally opposed to the interests of the working class.

Dangerous illusions also exist about reforming capitalism through unions. The economy looks pretty good to the rulers. Internationally, corporate profits are up – an additional \$223 billion in the last year alone, while the worker of the world are facing uncertainty, dislocation, poverty and death. Racism, sexism, nationalism and religious fundamentalism are false solutions to these problems.

The collapse of the old communist movement - was in

part – due to illusions about the true nature of reform - that of good bosses versus bad bosses: As if there is such a thing as a good boss! Today, corrupt, pro-capitalist unions, here and around the world, have greatly aided corporations in slashing millions of jobs, and cutting wages and benefits.

In the 1930’s and 40’s, the Soviet Union served as a beacon to the world workers and communist led unions fought the bosses valiantly. Today, these reformist misleaders barely make a peep. Internationally, bosses super-exploit cheap labor, even in Russia and China, which was once unthinkable.

The Red Armies of the Soviet Union and China once freed the workers from the chains of fascism; today, the working class is again subject to fascist oppression. Daimler/Chrysler’s boss Jorgen Schrempp echoed Hitler when he said: “We have a clear edge today in the world; we have Poland, we have Hungary, and we have the Czech Republic!”

Well, what do we have? --- WE have the Progressive Labor Party...WE have communist ideas...WE have the international working class and its allies with a world to win. Whether Bush or Kerry, Aristide or Putin, from South Africa to Haiti, from the US to the EU, workers need to dump all their oppressors.

We must up the anti and struggle with others in mass organizations, or wherever there are people who want to change the world but who have dangerous illusions. People are open to more militant ideas; our struggles in Morristown and Boston prove this. More people must read Challenge/Desafio. We need to sharpen the class struggle in order to use the contradictions of capitalism to our benefit.

Our job is not easy, but it is essential. We are part of the red line of history, and an international movement for a communist revolution. From the Paris Commune to the Haymarket Massacre, from the Bolshevik Revolution to the South African struggle against apartheid, from the Long March in China to the world wide movement against US imperialism in Vietnam, workers gripped by revolutionary ideas have fought, and died for the interest of the international working class and the hope of a communist future. We have a world to learn – and we have a world to win! FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM - POWER TO THE WORKING CLASS!

## ★ **SPEECH AT A NEW YORK CITY MAY DAY EVENT**

(How I joined the communist movement “many times,” influenced by World War 2, the many imperialist wars since then, the frame-up of the Rosenbergs, Anti-Racist Rebellions and PLP’s Anti-Revisionism)

When thinking about how and why I joined the communist movement — and the Progressive Labor Party specifically — it occurred to me that I didn’t join only once but actually did so many times, on many levels, each one more advanced than the last one.

I guess I was lucky to have been born to parents who were communists themselves. This was 74 years ago today. Before I was three years old, my mother was teaching me the alphabet from the headlines in the Communist Party’s newspaper, the Daily Worker. I suppose you could say I was truly a “red diaper” baby.

I was too young to enlist in the army during World War II, but I avidly followed the progress of the war, especially on the Russian Front, the main battle area. On the wall

of my room I had a map of that Front that I'd bought in Woolworth's 5 & 10¢ store. It came with little flags, one set of red ones with hammer and sickles and one set with Nazi swastikas. I would listen to the radio reports of the battles and then move the flags accordingly. Suffice it to say that after the Battle of Stalingrad, I only moved the flags in one direction -- westward to Berlin.

In 1945, at 15, I marched in my first May Day parade, part of an immense throng of 250,000 workers and youth, starting on 8th Avenue and 34th Street, south to 14th Street and east to Union Square. It began at 10:00 a.m. and the final marchers reached Union Square near midnight. And, coincidentally, the Red Army captured Berlin the next day.

In 1947 I was asked by my mother's section organizer to join the CP. However, as important a step as this was in my young life, it did not resemble joining PLP. I was part of a CP "recruiting drive." Each CP organizer had to fill a quota. This one never inquired what I knew about communism, whether I had even been in a study group or met with a club. He was out to fill his quota, and took a salesman's approach, which in fact is what he was — a shoe salesman.

Still, I joined and a year later became part of an anti-racist struggle at City College which shut down the school for a week, demanding the firing of two racist professors.

But one of the most defining moments of my communist life came in 1953, when, in a sense, I "joined" again, but on a more committed level. I had been working in garment and printing shops when becoming involved in the worldwide movement to free Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. As far as we knew at the time, they were being framed as "atomic spies" in an orgy of anti-communism during the McCarthy period. When they were executed, I concluded that had the labor movement — which then, as now, was run by pro-capitalist union fakers — organized mass protests and strikes, their lives might have been saved.

The CP had a correct policy of industrial concentration, asking members to get jobs in basic industries whose workers had the most power in the society, if they were but to use it. I decided if such workers were influenced in a left-wing direction, they could move mountains (and maybe could have saved the Rosenbergs). So I became a railroad worker, an active rank and filer and local leader for the next ten years, until we were all laid off in 1963.

Now it may seem strange to you but the policies of the CP had become so reformist that, out of the fear of "isolating ourselves," we were told not to tell anyone we were communists! It's pretty hard to recruit anyone if you can't tell them this fundamental fact. Thus, in ten years on the railroad our entire section of 65 communist rail workers on 13 different railroads recruited no one!

It was out of such a policy, which reflected a host of other accommodations to capitalism — advocating the "peaceful road to socialism," trying to push the Democratic Party to "the left," amending the U.S. Constitution to abolish private property — that impelled me to attend a meeting of about two dozen CP members in the Fall of 1961 to discuss the formation of a new communist organization, basing itself on the working class, on the open advocacy

of communism, on the fight against racism, and on the necessity to smash the ruling class's state power and establish a workers' state.

So I was lucky enough to participate in the founding of the Progressive Labor Movement — the PLM — which three years later became the Progressive Labor Party. I guess you could say I became a "born again communist."

Again, I was "re-joining" the communist movement on a still higher level of commitment.

I should mention that I realized the enormity of the reformist error of never telling any railroad workers that I was a communist when, during the 1964 Harlem Rebellion about 40 PLM members were summoned to a Grand Jury so-called "investigation" that was charging us with having organized the Rebellion. (Unfortunately, that wasn't true.) Anyway, we would hold demonstrations each time one of us was forced to appear. Of course, we refused to cooperate with this anti-communism.

Before I was supposed to testify, I telephoned a bunch of my former railroad buddies to come to the demonstration. In line with our open advocacy of our ideas, I explained they would be defending a communist. To my astonishment, over 20 of them took the day off from their new jobs to join the Foley Square picket line, the first pro-communist picket line of their lives. Then it dawned on me how wrong the CP's "don't-tell" policy had been. Had I been functioning with the base-building line developed in PLP, I certainly could have recruited a goodly number of workers to the Party in the course of a decade.

Since then I have been privileged to become a communist many times over, through the ever-advancing ideas of PLP: the rejection of nationalism in the late 1960's; the understanding of how and why the Soviet Union had returned to capitalism by 1969, 20 years before the Berlin Wall fell; the rejection of the Chinese CP's 2-stage road to socialism in 1971 and the advocacy of fighting for communism from the get-go; the adoption of Road to Revolution IV which advanced the idea of a mass Party, that every worker can be won to communism; and the understanding that Revolution, not Reform, is the foundation stone of a true communist party. The central task of PLP is to participate in the class struggle so we can develop the ties that will produce ever more communists, building the Party rather than tripping on the treadmill of trying to win reforms in a capitalist system that CANNOT be reformed.

So now I hope you can see how I became a communist over and over and over again.

To all of you in this May Day audience that are my comrades in PLP, I say thank you for having joined and helped to maintain and build for a new international communist movement, standing on the shoulders of the giants of the past, but learning from their errors to be able to fight for a communist future. And to all those here who are friends of PLP but have not yet joined, I say, "jump in; the water's great!" Be part of a movement in which, as Karl Marx said in the Communist Manifesto over 150 years ago, "We have nothing to lose but our chains, and have a world to win!"

## ★ MAY DAY SPEECH AT ONE PLP WEST COAST ACTIVITY

Anti-Imperialist Resolution Sparks Intense Political Struggle at National Conference (Excerpts from a speech given on May Day)

Last year I came to May Day to tell everyone about a resolution against the war in Iraq that was passed at a conference of a well-known national student organization, of which I was a member. I outlined the events of the conference, which included a workshop on Marxism and a rally that (almost) resulted in a march. At the time, I spoke about the potential for winning the students that were part of this group to fight with us for a strong political line and maybe for winning them to become communist fighters themselves.

I did not speak untruly, for even now I see the potential. In fact, I see even more potential. This year, after a year of intensifying political contradictions throughout the world, as well as a lot of intense local struggle, we submitted a different resolution. Instead of just talking about the war in Iraq, this resolution hit on many more points. It talked about Imperialism. It talked about Fascism. It talked about working-class solidarity. It talked about Racism. But mostly, it talked about soldiers. The resolution listed as primary in the fight against Imperialism the struggle to win working-class soldiers to understand what it is that they are forced to do, what system they are forced to uphold and how much power they have in resisting that so-called "force".

As expected, this resolution sparked a lot of debate. The arguments were varied, but our region passed it unanimously. This decision came after a regional conference where PLP students worked tirelessly to put on workshops, spark debate and intensify the contradictions. A PLP worker gave a great speech at this conference. She talked about the racist and sexist conditions at her workplace and explained our need for working-class solidarity. Not only did she get a standing ovation, but she also had every last one of the high-school and college students that were at this conference chanting "men, women, workers, students, and soldiers united will never be defeated" all together.

When this resolution was brought to the national level, though, the debates were much sharper. Actually, this resolution sparked the only intense debate at this national conference. It became clear soon enough that the real debate was whether or not soldiers truly believe in what

the U.S. was doing overseas and in this country. Many people from our region defended the resolution against the idea that all soldiers believe that they are doing the "right thing" and, therefore, can never be allies in the fight against Imperialism. Even though the resolution didn't pass nationally, many people came up to us later to thank us for bringing up the resolution and offering to help us re-write it for next year, the year after that, and as many times as necessary until it gets passed.

Even though it was disappointing to hear later that day that the resolution didn't pass because this organization was "under a lot of pressure, and to have this [resolution] associated with [them] would hurt [their] chances to get funding from the university", there were many promising things that came out of this struggle. The most promising thing, though, was the struggle itself. Because the people of our region struggled all together to defend the resolution, we became closer politically. Ten of us went to PL's local May Day dinner together, six of us went to the May Day march in LA together and one joined the party while we were there.

We did all of these things together because we saw the difference between the ideology of PL and the ideology of those who did not want to pass the resolution. We saw the difference between an ideology that shouts: "Capitalism is the Disease, Revolution for Communism is the only Remedy!" and one that needs funding from the bosses' universities. We saw the difference on May Day when we marched where the working class could hear our voices and join our march, instead of in a rich neighborhood where the only thing we could do would be to beg scraps from the bosses!

It is because we saw this difference that we marched with PLP, some of us deciding once and for all that becoming a Communist or learning more about Communism was the most important decision of our lives. Not just one, or two, but all of us are thinking about joining the party. We ask everyone now to make the same decision, to find out more about the PLP and to join us. PLP is the only group in the world today that speaks to the heart of the solution, that acts every second of every day to smash Capitalism and build a Communist world. In order for this dream to become a reality, we will need a large, organized cadre ready to lead us into battle. We will need you. Join PLP!

## ★ KEYNOTE SPEECH AT CHICAGO PLP MAY DAY DINNER

The good news is, it's MAY DAY and we're going to win, no matter how long it takes. The bad news is, it's going to get worse before it gets better. Capitalism is proving every day that it can only provide the world's workers with endless imperialist wars, mass racist poverty, fascist

Homeland Security and police terror, famines, "ethnic cleansing" genocide and more. This is the "triumph" of capitalism, and it will continue until it is smashed by communist revolution. This is the main task for workers, soldiers, students and youth and today, it is harder than

ever because of the Dark Ages brought about by the collapse of the old communist movement.

#### IRAQ

First, I want to talk about Iraq. One year ago Bush flew onto an aircraft carrier Lincoln and said, "Mission Accomplished!" Can you believe it? What an asshole! And before the war, Rumsfeld said the Iraqis would welcome US troops and throw flowers at them. Instead they've been showered with Rocket Propelled Grenades and roadside ambushes.

The "Go It Alone" gang in the White House is drawing US imperialism very close to a major defeat in Iraq and an even greater strategic setback in the Middle East and South Asia.

The Jihadist war against US imperialism appears to be spreading. Over the past few weeks there have been car bombs and shoot-outs with the police in Saudi Arabia, the main oil producer in the world. One section of the Saudi ruling class backs bin Laden and wants the huge oil profits for themselves, rather than ExxonMobil.

The US is in a tight spot. They want to move their bases from Saudi Arabia to Iraq, because their presence is what has sparked the attacks in the first place. But if they leave, it's very possible that the Saudi royal family could be overthrown.

This past week there was a car bombing in Syria, the first in 30 years, and an attack was stopped in Jordan aimed at the UN and US embassies. The longer the war drags on, and the more US imperialism shows its brutality, the more the masses in the Middle East turn against it. And to top it off, Bush embraced Israeli fascist Sharon, who has butchered thousands of Palestinians. Apparently no one in the White house or the Pentagon knows that in order to get out of a hole, you first have to stop digging.

This May Day, US imperialism faces the specter of a strategic defeat in the Middle East, which threatens their position as the top dog among imperialists. And the billionaires of Europe, Russia and China are licking their chops at the prospect. It's possible that "Mission Accomplished" could end up with the fundamentalist revolutions in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and a nuclear Pakistan.

It's possible the US can prevail, or make a deal with the EU, Russia and China to share the spoils in return for some badly needed help. But a few things are clear. Their "aura" of "invincibility" has been badly shaken. And the morale of US troops and the US working class is deteriorating as the body bags pile up. The Vietnam Syndrome is very much alive, and US rulers may never be able to get past it.

But the main point is that whatever happens, in the Middle East or the upcoming elections, there will be no victory for the international working class. The Muslim fundamentalists are anti-communist murderers who are want to seize the oil profits and cut their own deals. Kerry, McCain, Hillary Clinton and the NY Times are attacking Bush for his failures, and are calling for even more troops and a long stay.

The only solution to imperialist bloodbaths is international communist revolution, and that's why we're here today.

#### FALLUJAH

Now I just want to say a few words about the US attack

on Fallujah this week. I was staying close to home for health reasons, and happened to be watching MSNBC when the assault began. The cameras showed huge explosions in the middle of the night as the reporter described how AC-130 gun ships and Apache helicopters were "raining death down on this city" of 300,000. Civilians who had fled had just been allowed back the day before.

One hour before the assault, leaflets were dropped saying, "Surrender or Die! You're last day was yesterday!" All that night and the following days, Bush and the military claimed, and the media reported that, "The cease fire is still in effect." They said this was "just a defensive response to being fired on." And across the bottom of the TV screen it said, "See Live Video [of this slaughter] on MSNBC.COM."

Now, I'm not the bravest guy in the world, but I don't scare too easy. But this scared me. Here they're showing you the slaughter and telling you, "The cease fire is still in effect!" And every commercial was Tony Bennett singing, "What a Wonderful World." This was way beyond Orwell. I started to think my medication was affecting me.

And it goes on. They cry "horror" at the burned bodies of four "contract workers" hanging from a bridge. Supposedly that's what sparked the attack on Fallujah. They're "contract workers" all right, they're mercenaries, paid assassins trying to cash in on "contracts" on the Iraqi people.

And this latest bit of hypocrisy, 60 Minutes showing the pictures of naked Iraqi prisoners being tortured and humiliated by US prison guards. The generals cry, "This is terrible, this isn't my Army," while they bomb and gun down tens of thousands of Iraqi men, women and children, and these arrogant racists don't even keep a body count. Not to mention the fact that black and Latin workers and youth are tortured and beaten inside the police stations and prisons in the US, every day.

But, another thing about Fallujah. Despite all their superior firepower and high-tech weaponry, despite their ability to "rain death down upon the city," at least for the moment, the US was forced to retreat.

Why? Because politics is primary over weapons, even bad politics. The fact that the Jihadists and other anti-US forces were able to hold out and keep fighting was turning popular opinion across Iraq, the Middle East and much of the world, against the US.

Now again, let's be clear. The Jihadists, nationalists, liberal Democrats, they have no solutions for us. Saddam, Bush, the Taliban, Kerry and Co., they all represent one or another set of billionaires. But if we fight to make communist politics primary, we can build a mass international PLP, from Chicago to Baghdad.

#### WELCOME TO THE DARK AGES

Revolutionary communist leader Josef Stalin warned that the defeat of the Soviet Union would usher in a new Dark Ages. Boy, was he right. The collapse of the old movement was the worst defeat the working class has ever suffered. Recovering from it is taking generations. Without a center for the world communist movement, the international working class is suffering levels of poverty, hunger, war and disease, unprecedented in human history.

The most important error our Party made was to

underestimate the significance of this defeat, brought on by the old movement's own internal weaknesses. We knew the Soviet and Chinese revolutions had been reversed and capitalism restored. We were fraternal parties with the Chinese and the first to break with them after the defeat of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's. But we failed to understand the devastating consequences this would have on the international working class, and the new life it would give to U.S. imperialism. Again, politics is primary.

The defeat of the old movement has given the rulers a blank check to attack the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and anywhere else they choose. And it has had a devastating effect on class struggle, especially in the U.S.

At the height of the Vietnam War, large sections of the U.S. military were in open mutiny. Rebellions by black workers rocked every U.S. city. Campuses were in revolt and a strike wave raised the possibility that the working class could challenge the rulers for power with revolutionary communist politics. In France, in 1968, a general strike of workers and students almost toppled the French government until the French CP sabotaged it.

I remember in July, 1967, I had just graduated high school and was beginning to be moved by world events. The historic Detroit Rebellion erupted when the racist cops raided an after-hours party welcoming home two black Vietnam vets. It just so happened the Yankees were playing the Tigers in Detroit that weekend, and I remember watching the game on TV and seeing huge clouds of black smoke rising outside Tiger Stadium, and the announcers making vague references to "the disturbances" taking place there. It kind of struck me like my recent experience with MSNBC. How can they be playing baseball in the middle of an armed rebellion? What's going on?

A few weeks later Mao Testing, leader of the Chinese Communist Party, proclaimed, "We support the black rebels in Detroit!" "Wow," I thought, "Who are those guys?" That kind of bold revolutionary leadership against racism did a lot to point me towards the road to revolution.

But revisionism sabotaged the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese workers, there's a Ford plant there now, and turned ghetto rebellions into campaigns for black politicians, bosses, cops and Chicago fire chiefs.

Internationally, inter-imperialist rivalry has become the main contradiction in the world and the main form of class struggle. This rivalry among bosses, big and small, has led to the ethnic cleansings in Bosnia, the murder of 800,000 in Rwanda, a current genocide in Sudan, 14 countries invading the Congo, just to name a few. And the key forms of opposition to U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan, Iraq and throughout the Middle East are thoroughly reactionary, nationalist and religious.

This is a different situation from Vietnam, when communists led the resistance to U.S. imperialism. And for all their weaknesses that eventually defeated them they inspired millions around the world. The same cannot be said of the current war in Iraq.

WHERE IS THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT?

Which brings me to another scary point. Where the hell is the anti-war movement? Where is the big March on Washington this May Day? Where is ANSWER and NOT IN

OUR NAME, the two major anti-war mobilizers?

Usually springtime is a high point of student activity. A few days ago I went to a meeting at the U of C, where nurses have taken a strike vote. There was a worker-student speak out. Being a former UC hospital worker and current patient, I had to go.

When I got a chance to speak I tried to link the nurses' struggle to the war by pointing out that UC plays a major role for US imperialism. Its graduates include Paul Wolfowitz, #2 at the Pentagon, Attorney General Ashcroft who is implementing the fascist Homeland security police state, and Ahmed Chalabi, who the Bush gang wants to install as the leader in Iraq. And I pointed out how at least 3 members of the Board of Governors, including the University President, are on the Council on Foreign Relations. They don't call it the Rockefeller Chapel for nothing. I said that if the nurses strike, they will be fighting a war maker and strike-breaker, and politically would be on a par with a strike at a Humvee or missile factory. I said the best things students could do was to strike against the war.

People liked it, and afterwards I asked a few students why the campus was so quiet. Well, it gets back to the lack of a fighting world communist movement, and the fact that the opposition to US imperialism is not inspiring the masses.

But also, the anti-war forces are caught in a trap. The main goal of the anti-war movement is to dump Bush, which means supporting the Democrats. And you can't have it both ways. You can't call for the defeat of US imperialism, or even to get the US out of Iraq, when the political leadership of the movement is committed to electing the Democrats, who are calling for more troops and permanent military bases.

PREPARING FOR THE SEIZURE OF POWER

One of my favorite cartoons shows two guys in a dungeon with no shirts, unshaven, and manacled to the wall. One turns to the other and says, "Now here's the plan." That's not too much of a stretch from where we find ourselves today. So here's the plan.

Our job is to play the hand we've been dealt, and prepare for the seizure of power by the Party and the working class. This vision must be burned into every fiber and dictate how we live our lives and how we relate to each other. This process takes years, and even then must be reinforced every day through struggle with each other, our co-workers, family and friends, and through struggle against the class enemy. This is a marathon, a life-long commitment.

We live in a culture infested with subjectivity and individualism. Every member and leader of our Party suffers from these diseases, starting with myself. On the other hand, we have powerful tools at our disposal, which, if we use them correctly, can help us advance.

We have the Party and its line. And we have the strategy of building a base in the working class. The Party, with all its shortcomings and weaknesses, teaches us to be objective and to serve the working class rather than ourselves. We have a lot to offer the workers in terms of political understanding. But it's a two-way street. The workers have a lot to offer us, maybe more. By having confidence in the workers, and the patience to win them

to the Party, we can build unbreakable ties with many workers, on many levels, that will not only sustain us through hard times, but secure the Party against fascist terror and ultimately destroy imperialism. Relying on the workers, and organizing your life around those you are trying to win, will make you a better communist and make us a stronger Party. We can't hope to win any other way.

We can overcome the errors of the past and build a Party that will move mountains. Every Party club can recruit, spread CHALLENGE and our ideas, and pick a fight against the racist bosses. New revolutionary conditions will eventually emerge. Sharpening our line and practice will determine our ability to make the most of them.

WW I gave birth to the Bolshevik Revolution. World War II gave rise to the Chinese revolution. If war is one of the pre-requisites for communist revolution, there's plenty of it coming our way, each one bigger and deadlier than the last. The capitalists will do their part.

But without a communist movement, war will only lead to more war. We must provide the revolutionary movement, with the deepest of ties to masses of workers, soldiers, students and youth, across all borders that can turn imperialist war into communist revolution. This may

take years to develop, but at some point, the pace will quicken.

After the Chinese revolution, US communist leader William Z. Foster, maybe the best organizer ever produced by the US working class, wrote a long two-page open letter to Mao Tse-Tung in the Daily Worker. He went on and on about the difficulties his party faced and seeking solution from Mao. A month later the Daily Worker printed Mao's response. It said simply, "Comrade Foster, dark night shall have its dawn."

On this May Day, we recommit ourselves to a lifetime of revolutionary struggle for communist revolution. Our modest May Day activities in NYC, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco and LA, in Mexico City, El Salvador, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Chile and elsewhere, all point the way out of imperialism's new Dark Ages. We invite every participant to become a member, and every member a leader, both in the Party and within the mass movement.

Given the circumstances, and with all our weaknesses, starting with mine, we are on the right track. We can do a lot better. We are marching down the road to revolution. Fight for Communism! Power to the Workers!

## ★ SPEECH AT PLP LOS ANGELES MAY DAY

I am a veteran from the Vietnam era, though I never had to go to Vietnam and I did not see combat. I want to talk about resistance in the military.

From Oct. 2002 to March 2003, the largest anti-war movement in history protested the US government's imperialist invasion before the horrid days of shock and awe on March 20, 2003. Most important was that never in all of history had such significant antiwar activism occurred before the assault (on some weekends 10 million protested worldwide, including many in this room). However, we all remember how so many lost their will and their way when the war began, and it was painfully clear that the street demonstrations had done effectively nothing to stop the war from being waged. Many protesters became cynical and depressed.

A great historical lesson is about to be relearned. And that is that the soldiers and sailors inside the military itself must take up the resistance against imperialist war. Indeed in a very meaningful sense the history of such resistance among soldiers and sailors as well as among industrial workers is the history of revolution itself.

I want to talk about four levels of resistance inside the military.

Level one: reluctant fighters

The vast majority of enlistees or drafted troops are reluctant fighters. Those soldiers who join the military for economic reasons never make the most committed fighters. Most National Guard troops and reservists brought into the Iraqi fight never dreamed they would go into battle. These troops by and large just try to survive to get back home in one piece. The imperialists have tried to offset the limited political commitment by utilizing the highly technological army that inflicts heavy casualties

from afar—what some have called war as video game. As we see in Iraq, tech superiority does not win wars. More boots on the ground are required. The Pentagon reports sending 20,000 additional troops to Iraq recently.

The first stage of resistance is usually passive resistance, an avoidance of combat generally, and routine complaining about conditions. Pentagon studies suggest that in some wars less than half of ground troops actually fired their weapons in battle.

I recall one of our favorite sayings when I was in the army was FTA or "Fuck the Army". We also had this weird practice of greeting each other with the three letter word "rot", meaning we were rotting away in the army.

This passive resistance can quickly change to become limited active resistance, or level 2. Soldiers and their families begin questioning the military mission. Morale is low, AWOL's increase. Open criticism mounts. We are already at this second level of resistance in the Iraq war. Last summer, reports of serious morale problems among US troops surfaced. An officer of the 3rd infantry division (the largest Army contingent in Iraq) said, "Make no mistake, the level of morale for most soldiers I've seen has hit rock bottom."

Now less than a year later, the resistance by US soldiers, mostly army and marines, grows. Usually resistance increases as casualties increase. But it all depends, of course, on the ideology of the troops. Sec. of Defense Donald Rumsfeld actually said, "Death has a tendency to encourage a depressing view of war." And Sect of State, Collin Powell conceded recently in Denmark, "April (2004) has been a particularly bad month. This causes people to think and reflect. "What are we doing?" The April casualties for US troops have been devastating. 134

US soldiers killed and 800 wounded. A Washington Post article by Karl Vick noted that a high number of wounded were head injuries and that these soldiers were effectively brain dead.

The Veterans for Peace claim that on April 24, 2004, there were 717 US dead and 3466 wounded. Ted Koppel's Nightline indicated that there were 737 dead. General Tommy Franks, a ranking US General claimed "we are not interested in body counts." Presumably he meant Iraqi body counts. But he might also mean US soldiers. Indeed the body count of war is of great interest to the working class, from which the soldiers come! Body counts can start to spell quagmire, as a recent Newsweek article suggested. And quagmire can mean "Vietnam syndrome", a phrase I define as "workers and soldiers critically thinking about imperialist war."

The US imperialist regime has tried to hide body counts in another way by trying to prevent pictures of the flag draped coffins. "Old Glory" is now a symbol of death.

The number of Iraqi dead is difficult to measure because the media work overtime to keep this from us. But over 10,000 civilians and soldiers have been killed since the US invasion. Hundreds of thousands more were killed from the sanctions and bombings during the Clinton administration.

Letters from soldiers emphasize dissension in the ranks. One soldier noted the alarming increases in the Iraqi opposition: "Things are getting very bad, and they're going to get worse." Soldiers are having their time in the combat zone extended. As a veteran myself, I can tell you there is nothing like the disappointment of thinking you are going home on a certain day and then having your term extended.

Brenda Pearson, a soldier's wife from Tennessee, said her husband's unit was scheduled to leave Kuwait but they were held back at the last minute. Said Brenda, "They are totally demoralized, since this was not the first time they have been told they were going home and it didn't happen. In my opinion, they are now being held as hostages by their own 'democratic' government."

As a recent Washington Post article put it, "Gung-ho mood is gone at Camp Pendleton" The Army admits to about 700 desertions since the war started (about 1%).

At the same time, Veterans' benefits have been cut! Since the first Gulf War, the Veterans' Administration has received 208,000 claims of injury or illness out of a total of 500,000 military personnel who served in the Gulf war. Thus, approximately 40% of US soldiers have filed claims! A good number are claims related to symptoms of illness related to use of Depleted Uranium in US weapons. The rulers, whether Democrat or Republican, don't give a damn about the wellbeing of the working class when it comes to fighting for their empire! This capitalist system needs the working class to fight their wars and to produce their weapons, but as a famous poem says, the soldiers and workers have brains. We can think!

For war to be halted, military resistance must go to the third level. The resistance of US soldiers in Vietnam and the resistance of soldiers during WWI are two good examples. During WWI, German and British soldiers as

well as other European and Russian soldiers fraternized with each other, refusing to fight and even playing soccer games with each other. This fraternization hurt the bosses' war effort and was part of the build up to the first great socialist revolution, in Russia in 1917.

Level three resistance exhibits soldiers' outright refusal to fight for the imperialist agenda. This occurred in Vietnam. Incidents of insubordination were rampant. Enlisted soldiers challenged their officers in heated exchanges. Increasing discipline problems were reported. By 1966, the US army prison in Vietnam, Long Binh jail and Da Nang Brig held 5000 US army soldier prisoners. By 1969, just three years later, there were 20,000 rebels/prisoners in jail! These were US soldiers!

Whole platoons and companies mutinied. Assassinations of Sgts and high ranking officers by enlisted men occurred: what the military calls "fraggings". Underground newspapers offered rewards if certain officers were killed, as happened in the famous Vietnam battle of Hamburger Hill. Black soldiers led a rebellion at Ft. Hood and refused orders to oppose protests in Chicago. Generally, intensive political consciousness raising among soldiers and sailors and struggle against the brass was carried out at many military bases. This kind of resistance saw the whole war machine break down! This kind of resistance must occur to stop a war and to prevent the military from firing on its own people who are protesting the war. Class conscious soldiers have refused to carry out the imperialist mission

At the same time, in the Vietnam era, other US troops fired on protesters at Jackson State and Kent State. Reservists and Guards were called upon to do duty in dozens of US cities in rebellion. Could we see such actions again? Most certainly!

Of course the rulers have been working hard to build racism and patriotism to try to win the soldiers to side with them. Resistance to imperialism needs to be built by class conscious organizers. While the third level of resistance sends capitalism into crisis, in the long run, a full revolutionary army must emerge to confront the capitalist system. Soldiers must become convinced that they are not just against a corrupt and unjust system, but that they are for a new communist system. All the great revolutions in history achieved this phase—especially the Soviets and the Chinese. Where this failed, horrendous slaughters occurred as in El Salvador in 1932, in Indonesia, and in Chile.

Today the anti-war movement is at an early stage. There is every indication, however, that more boots on the ground will be needed. The US imperialists will not give up their efforts, literally at any cost. The potential of a national service (currently called for by Kerry) would mean even more reluctant soldiers. Thus the common soldier and sailor will become the focal point of the battle between fascist ideas and practices and anti-fascist ones, for class consciousness and the struggle for a far better system, a communist system. We must communicate to our brothers and sisters in the military and prepare for the very serious struggles ahead. It will be difficult and daunting, but it is absolutely necessary. Thank you.

## ★ SPEECH FROM AN INDUSTRIAL WORKER

When they asked me if I wanted to give a speech for May Day, it seemed easy to say yes. But as the date got closer, it was getting harder and harder to remember everything that I wanted to say. However, I'm going to talk to you tonight about wars.

Under capitalism wars are inevitable. The ruling classes have to keep themselves constantly in wars, both internationally and nationally. They fight on the international level to plunder the wealth of others and nationally they fight to repress any attempt by the working class to improve our conditions.

If we go back in history a little, we'll see that the US ruling class has been in wars almost all the time. To mention a few: Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Vietnam, etc. That's why we shouldn't be amazed or surprised about war. What should amaze us is that these wars only benefit the bosses. These wars only serve to increase the wealth of the Rockefellers, Morgans and other members of the top ruling class. While the bosses benefit from these wars, we workers have to pay more for food, rent, gas, and the price of housing is going through the roof! How can a garment worker buy a house? But it's us, the workers and our allies the students, farmworkers and intellectuals who will personally or through our children die in these wars. It's the workers of this country, like those of Iraq, who are spilling their blood in this war of plunder for profit. That's why it's very important for workers to understand communist ideas.

But the history of the working class is the history of class struggle. The slaves rebelling against the slave masters, like the struggle led by Spartacus against the Roman empire. The serfs fighting against the feudal lords, and the working class fighting against the capitalists. This shows that the oppressed, in this case the working class, have always fought and will continue to fight. Even if we no longer existed as a Party, the working class would have to rise up and fight again. So the problem is not whether the working class will fight or not. The problem is who will lead that fight. That's why it's so important that our party develop an aggressive struggle to win the leadership of the working class, of the students, the intellectuals, the farmworkers and the soldiers. We have to politically educate the working class so that as the class struggle heats up, they aren't fooled by false leaders, whether democratic party politicians or the treacherous union leaders. That's why our newspaper Challenge plays a key role in taking revolutionary communist ideas to the working class. We have to make sure that workers understand the important role of our paper, make sure that workers read it and develop an aggressive struggle to distribute it.

I'm one of the so-called "better paid" industrial workers. Someone could say that these workers don't need to fight, that they earn enough. However, we're still affected by the cut backs. The labor insecurity that increases today affects us. For example, the bosses are trying to force us to pay \$200 a month for our health insurance. Before

we paid \$6 a month. But we also have our "friends", the labor leaders, who "defend" us. They tell us that they're fighting so that instead of paying \$200 a month, we "only" have to pay \$190.

A few months ago, we were on strike. It's ridiculous to see the way the unions conduct a fight. On the picket lines, they stopped the scabs for 3 minutes before letting them go in. This is due to a concession the union leadership gave to the bosses. Before, they stopped the scabs for 10 minutes, which is no big thing either. This reflects the sellout thinking of these traitors. By orders of the union representatives, shop stewards, there was never a lack of Bar-b-Q and beer. This is to try to keep the workers away from political questions. But the members of the party and our friends were the only ones who brought in a political tone and led more class struggle.

With a group of workers from the base we decided to organize a picket line in front of the company's main offices. And we got out literature in the different shops. We extended the literature to the workers in other classifications, who the leadership of the union try to keep separate from the other workers. And that's how more than 200 workers came to the first picket line. We took advantage of this to give political speeches, sell Challenge, and make contacts. The union leadership was afraid to openly attack this picket line since it had the support of so many workers. But they refused to participate, even though many people asked, "Why aren't they participating?" They used a lot of excuses to "explain" why. We kept up the protests for several weeks because they gave us the opportunity to organize worker-student solidarity and most important because a group of workers from different classifications came to support us.

From this struggle have come study groups and a bigger base for the party. Tonight I thought there would be a large group of workers here from this base, since we invited about 50 workers, which is a good thing. But with many of them, the same thing happened as with me and my speech. At first, they bravely said "yes", but as the date got closer, they started giving excuses. Among the most advanced workers, some openly admitted they had fear. And I won't lie to you, my wife is here and she can tell you its true, before coming here one of the workers closest to me called and said that on the way to the dinner, his wife got sick and they had to turn back. He couldn't tell her he was coming anyway. The workers understand the seriousness of the struggle and know that joining the party means commitment, discipline, and that's why they're still thinking about whether they're going to enter all the way or not. This shouldn't demoralize us, because the bosses will squeeze us more, tighten the rope around our necks, and sooner rather than later they will see that we represent the alternative to this. And, despite these setbacks, tonight there is a group of young workers from our job who represent the strong potential to give leadership to the party in the future.

In these study groups, workers have expressed doubts about the real possibility of whether we can make a

revolution that maintains the ideals we have now. Many think that upon taking power we'll become dictators or a new oppressor class. Others think that the workers are cowards and won't fight. But I tell them that we shouldn't see the Russian and Chinese revolutions only as failures but as great experiences in struggle in which thousands of workers forgot their fear and took to the streets to fight for a society that they thought would be better than capitalism. That's why I insist that our party investigate, analyze and put into practice the positive experiences of the past revolutions. We should throw out the bad. We are committed to recruit thousands of workers to have communist consciousness, because we understand that this is the best antidote against possible deviations or corruptions. Only the working class and its allies under the red banner of our party and affirming the revolutionary communist ideas will be able to win a society in which everyone will give according to his or her capacity and everyone will receive according to their need. Winning it and maintaining it is our task.

To end, I would like to tell you the story of a union leader in El Salvador. He was a very honest person, committed to defending the workers' rights, but the Salvadoran ruling class killed him in the decade of the 1970's, after not being able to buy him off economically. After his death, many well intentioned people told his mother that in spite of his good intentions, it was a useless death because in El Salvador the majority of workers were cowards and they would never rise up to fight. But 10 years later, thousands of workers were in the streets confronting the repressive forces of the bourgeoisie. At first they fought only with their hands, their chests and their backs. They were shot, beaten and arrested, until they began arming and confronting both the local rulers and the imperialists. If they had had real revolutionary communist leadership, the final story would have been different. The workers are going to fight in this country and all over and that's why, when the workers rise up, we have to be there, in front, to lead the struggle for communism. Thank you.