

CHALLENGE-DESAFIO

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THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY FIGHTS FOR SOCIALISM. Socialism means liberation for the entire working class—the destruction of the bosses—a society of abundance and full employment—an end to exploitation—a secure and creative future for all workers—and an end to the racism, fascism and wars that are all products of capitalism.

In order to achieve socialism, the capitalist system, the bosses and their dictatorial government must be crushed. This cannot be accomplished peacefully through elections.

It can only happen when the majority of the exploited unite behind communist leadership, violently overthrow the bosses, and install a new government of revolutionary workers—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Members of the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY are devoted to this goal. They dedicate their lives to actively building, promoting and organizing for the cause of revolutionary communism.

The Progressive Labor Party and its newspaper, CHALLENGE, are dedicated to the U.S. working class and the working class of the entire world—black, Latin, white, Asian and Native American.

Our newspaper, CHALLENGE, strives to present the unconditional truth of class struggle, so our class can learn from experience how to win.

Lessons of 1964 Harlem Rebellion

In the last issue of CHALLENGE, we reported on a government / ruling class estimate that ghetto rebellions are inevitable and imminent. To meet these rebellions, the bosses have developed fascist plans—mass, open terror is at the heart of their schemes. To understand how to fight this fascism, it would be helpful to review some of the events surrounding the 1964 Harlem rebellions.

During this initial uprising, our Party was active (as the Progressive Labor Movement—PLM) and we learned some important lessons. At that time we were considerably weaker than we are now. However, despite our newness (only two years old) and lack of great numbers, we were able to play an important role in: (1) at least partially encouraging the rebellion, and (2) trying to give a certain amount of working-class leadership.

The front-page headline in the very first issue of CHALLENGE-DESAFIO (which appeared only six weeks before the rebellion broke out) warned: "Police War on Harlem." This was followed in succeeding issues by many other C-D articles exposing police terror against black workers in Harlem. Additionally, in this entire period our limited forces were able to conduct consistent mass agitation throughout the streets of Harlem. C-D and our agitations helped encourage the mood of rebellions; we openly called for revolution as the answer to a system which breeds racism and terror against minority people.

The rebellion itself was finally triggered by the murder of a young black child, James Powell. He was shot down in cold blood by Gilligan, a cop. Immediately PL went on the offensive. An allied organization which we helped set up—The Harlem Defense Council—mobilized the people to fight police terror. It issued a big poster in large numbers entitled, "Gilligan the Cop—Wanted for Murder." This drove the police berserk, thousands of workers in the rebellion used the poster and C-D as their banners. They lined the streets shoving the poster and our paper into the faces of the cops. Within 48 hours over a thousand people had come into the PL office in Harlem seeking literature and ideas about which way the rebellion should go.

In retaliation, the ruling class hounded and arrested our leaders and members. A front-page article in *The New York Times* outlined an FBI report signed by J. Edgar Hoover who characterized PL's involvement in the rebellion as harmful to the bosses. The ruling class was working on the assumption that if they attacked PL and simultaneously inflicted brutal terror on the masses, they could quell the rebellion. It



themselves in fighting the police.

Additionally, PL organized many support demonstrations in communities, at central police headquarters, the UN, schools and some work places. At the time of the rebellion, a Commissioner Murphy headed the police in N.Y.C. We hung the tag of "Bull" Murphy on him, inspired by Bull Connors, a Birmingham, Alabama fascist Sheriff who was notorious for terrorizing black workers. Eventually, Murphy resigned. At the police communion breakfast where he announced his resignation, he tearfully claimed he was no longer able to function, because "PLM has saddled me with the name 'Bull' Murphy."

Years after the rebellions, the now famous "Gilligan The Cop—Wanted for Murder" poster still adorned the walls and buildings of at least the two major rebellion areas in N.Y.C.—Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant. This poster had been printed on the front pages of various N.Y.C. papers as an example of what evil communists do.

In the course of the rebellion, we made several errors which had to be defeated. First we viewed nationalism as a "progressive" development. This weakened our efforts at internationalism and our ability to make a sharp fight for the unity of the working class. Secondly, the major aspects of our line—on a day to day basis—was for reform, not revolution. This was right opportunism and tailing behind the masses who were in a more revolutionary mood. Finally, because of nationalism and a general weakness in building ties with other workers, we did not grow sufficiently in Harlem and elsewhere, given the important efforts we made. These are weaknesses we are still fighting to overcome.

However, the most important lesson is that a small, militant, cohesive organization which supports and encourages rebellion can enter into the fray. Such an organization can earn the confidence of the masses. A revolutionary party—PLP—can grow and can lead the working class to revolution.

Progressive Labor Party Editorial

didn't work. As the rebellion intensified, ALL the nationalist, liberal and fake "communist" organizations told the workers of Harlem to "cool it." They, along with the cops, begged the workers to "get off the streets and go home." PL called for a mass demonstration on a Saturday to demand jobs, and end police terror, disarming the police and other demands.

As a matter of fact, the demonstration which we called for defied a ban against all demonstrations imposed on Harlem by the cops. Immediately after we called for the demonstration, in the teeth of the ban, 86 organizations—including every nationalist, liberal and so-called "left" group—issued tens of thousands of leaflets beseeching the workers of Harlem not to demonstrate. The leaflet was signed on the back by these 86 groups.

On the day of the demonstration, over 10,000 police with tanks, armored cars, helicopters, horses, dogs, etc., were rushed into Harlem to prevent the PL demonstration. Thousands of workers lined the streets ready to march. As the moment the march was to begin, this entire armada of cops moved in to break it up. PL leaders and members were arrested. However, thousands of people involved