The Vital Role of Our Party in the Struggle for Workers' Power

Our party, The Progressive Labor Party, has developed in spite of the collapse of the international communist movement. The history of our party is one of swimming against the current. Not only has our party developed in the face of betrayals by the Chinese and Soviet parties, but it developed at the point U.S. imperialism was at its height. As the communist parties of the world went to the right (revisionism), our party moved to the left. We steadily strengthened our ideological outlook, and in general we developed a sounder revolutionary position. Our present stage marks a qualitative break with reformism. We are developing practice in which our revolutionary points are in the forefront. This gives the working class a clear-cut choice between reformism and revolution!

This is no small achievement. It is crucial to the international working class that the banners of Marxism-Leninism are flying despite the adverse winds of imperialism and counter-revolution. Our growth is modest, but our members are learning how to stand their ground in the face of all forms of attacks. More importantly, our party is expanding its ties with vital sectors of the working class. We are organizing revolutionary forces, from the farmworkers of the U.S. (Texas and the San Joaquin Valley) to the steel and auto workers in the U.S. and to the textile, rubber and hospital workers in New York. We are truly a nationwide party as our forces reach out across the country and are active on many fronts. Wherever workers are attacked, our party is to be found putting forward the line of revolution, and organizing the workers to sharpen the struggle by fighting back.

Progressive Labor Party Editorial

Most importantly, we have an international outlook, developing ties with workers in other countries. Marxism-Leninism is an international development. Revolution has no borders. Comrades in Canada and Mexico as well as other lands march hand-in-hand with us to our revolutionary goal. We all realize that these are small but important steps in restoring the international communist movement.

Our development has its roots in the history of the working-class movement and the international communist movement. The fundamental lessons of revolution—the dictatorship of the proletariat—were taught by a long line of revolutionaries like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Gradually our party is becoming steeped in the rich history of the communist movement. This enables us to draw strengths and lessons so that we can have a future. The PLP is guided by the positive aspects of the communist movement. These are its primary features. But we also learn from others' past mistakes, as well as from our own. The point is that, by ourselves, we could never develop into a serious party. We rely on the lessons of the working class past, present and future.

People inside and outside of our party take our existence casually; they are unable to evaluate the importance of a communist party. Too many people judge things superficially. They see things statistically— as they are. And they do not know or understand history. The picture often given is that the PLP is "O.K. but its small so what can it do?" They are cynical or disillusioned by the sellout of the large Soviet and Chinese communists parties and are overcome by the seemingly powerful U.S. imperialists. In sum they feel you can't fight city hall.

In all probability a similar picture could have been drawn just before the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution and prior to the war against the Nazis. It wasn't too many years ago that various bourgeois forces were quaking in their boots about the "invincibility" of the Hitlers. And many of these same forces and others were later convinced of the "invincibility" of U.S. forces in Korea and Vietnam. Contradictions between imperialists and the class struggle produce constant change! And often things change faster than seem possible. Marxism-Leninism, among other things, is based on the laws of change; that "there are contradictions in everything."

As our previous editorials have pointed out, we are living in the period when imperialist rivalries, especially between the Soviets and the U.S., are in the forefront. The U.S.-Soviet rivalry is leading to war and fascism. But, as our past articles have pointed out, we have great possibilities to intervene in this situation and enable the working class to come out on top, through the revolutionary process. Every day there is more evidence of the positive prospects for us and our class. These are both objective and subjective. At the moment, U.S. imperialists are having a tough time fielding a reliable military force. An article in the Dec. 11 New York Times makes this point graphically; "Navy Desertion Rate Hits Peak... is the headline. It states; "The Navy suffered its highest desertion rate on record during 1976... and Navy officials don't know why. The article says the Army is doing better and the Marine Corps has the "highest desertion rate of all services." The ruling class may be able to straighten things out for a while. But the goals of the U.S. bosses and its military are opposed to the interests of the workers in the U.S. and all over the globe. Only recently our party and its allies were able to participate on the side of the black Marines and their anti-racist struggles at Camp Pendleton, Calif. These Marines were fighting the organization of the KKK on the post. Obviously, the KKK was known to, and approved by, the brass. But the fight put up by the black Marines exposed this development and forced the Marine brass to retreat. However, our party and friends were able to quickly react and join in the struggle. This important anti-racist battle can also give our party the opportunity to raise revolutionary consciousness. We know that racism can never be defeated within the framework of capitalism. Additionally, many military forces, both black and white, will learn and approve of the action on this vital question.

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Review: Roots, The Say's of an American Family by Alex Haley, published by Doubleday. $2.50 (available at libraries)

A young boy sat on his grandmother's porch in Tennessee, turned his face to the morning sun, and thought about his family that tended their way back through slavery all the way to his great, great, great-grandfather, "the African." Roots is the descendants of the black heroes of Haley's family. It is a striking and moving account, based on oral history passed down from generation to generation in both the U.S. and Africa.

The PEOPLE IN ROOTS ARE REAL PEOPLE, not the childlike, racist stereotypes found in much literature about African and American slaves. They stand in contradiction to the predominant feeling of the American's image of "happy slaves" and "good masters," making it crystal clear that the slaveowners were the only savages. The characters in the book repeatedly remind each other and the reader of something called "a good master." They show the under-the-surface resistance that was a characteristic of slavery.

With pictorially rich illustrations, the book also makes rooters"—the roots of the racism in the U.S. Black people were brought to this country exclusively for one purpose: to make their masters rich and their labor. And it is the profit base of capitalism that makes racism so necessary for the bosses to continue to use them against the people.

Another thing that is bothersome is how Haley's evident view that American blacks have had it good since emancipation. His families' actions are put forward as evidence of this. The blacks are little racists or hardship from the Civil War on. The post-Reconstruction Jim Crow period of intense repression against black and white.

However, it goes deeper than these two things. The book is a press this book so hard, excerpts, a planned TV series. The answer is that Roots is the true picture of the slaves' heroic fight-back.

Vital Role of the Party

(Continued from page 2)

Recently, our party and friends were able to react with some vigor in a black ghetto in Brooklyn when a racist cop murdered a black youth. Within this important anti-racist fight, we pushed our political line: the revolutionary line that we laid the groundwork for a long-range struggle in this area. At the moment we are involved in an important battle for the workers under revolutionary leadership as opposed to the dead-end Caesar Chavez-type leadership. Ultimately most workers and their unions must be under communist leadership, not only to try to win their demand, but to make revolution. A social revolutionist is the only way workers can win their struggle.

Since our inception our party has been a fighting party, and despite our small size, it has had an important impact on political developments. The student trips to Cuba were one of the most important anti-imperialist blows of the sixties. Support for the Hazard, Kentucky miners brought national attention to their fight and laid the basis for worker-student unity and for the first time a national movement by black workers. Organizing the first anti-Vietnam war demonstration paved the way for a national movement. Our party's efforts in front of House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) led to the end of this committee, which had terrorized many people for years. During the past few years we have intensified our anti-racist efforts and organized the campus racist masquerading under false genetic and sociological "theories." And currently we are fighting in the fields, the shops, communities, and schools for our revolutionary line. Additionally, we have brought thousands of people's attention to the attacks on foreign-born workers; within this fight we are carrying the line of "smash all borders," "workers of the world unite—it is the bosses who are illegal!" The last as East Africa became a focus during the sixties, South Africa is becoming a focal area of the seventies in the battle between the Soviet and U.S. bosses. We support the workers and students that this book is a darling of the bosses, and with good reason. Use the class hatred that it arouses to continue the undermining rebellion that is our real

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trying to fight. He becomes his master's happy slave, and becomes an easy source of news from the outside world from the 1770's through 1800. During that time there were many, many slave revolts. With this book, Kunta, the first character, Kunta Kinte, fights heroically all the way through his fourth abortive escape attempt. After that, he basically gives up to act as if they never happened.

And so it goes down through the generations. Kinte's grandson George (the generation in between was a woman, a lovable, kind soul, who had a fighting gamewatch, and as such also traveled all over the place with his master. Haley does mention Denmarks Vassy and the Nat Turner rebellion, but what about just south of where George lived in North Carolina, where in 1830, slaveowners petitioned the legislature for aid because their "slaves are becoming almost uncontrollable. They go in and when and where they please, and if an attempt is made to stop them they immediately fly to the woods and they continue for months and years committing depredations." [From Aptheker] Or in 1831, when blacks and whites plotted rebellion, or 1835 similarly? Haley's great-grandfather, portrayed as a hard-working, reserved man with thoughts of buying his family's freedom somehow didn't think about the two nearby, well-publicized plots in 1860, involving 300 slaves and some public wires. Haley shows in his book that the notion of current events was swept under the carpet.

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