

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Elections' Primary Goal: WIN WORKERS TO WAR, RACISM, POLICE STATE

The Obama-Clinton battle in the Democratic Party primaries has spread the illusion that positive change results from voting to reform the profit system rather than from militant, revolutionary struggle to smash the bosses' dictatorship. High voter turnouts for Barack Obama's surprise victory in Iowa and Hillary Clinton's New Hampshire comeback signal a dangerous development for the working class.

Liberals push the myth that Obama and Clinton mark a decline in racism and an advance in women's rights in the U.S. Obama is "fashioning a positive change in the very character of the nation," gushed NY Times' black columnist Bob Herbert. (1/12/08) A Times article the next day said, "Whoever wins the nomination....the victory will be a benchmark moment for the American promise of equality." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Obama and Clinton, in fact, will intensify the oppression of workers — male and female, black, Latin, Asian, Arab and white. Illinois Senator Obama didn't lift a finger when thousands of mostly black workers were laid off in Chicago's Cook County hospitals, simultaneously slashing health-care for a mostly black and Latino patient population. And Clinton voted for war in Iraq and for the military "option" against Iran.

Both Democratic front-runners represent a U.S. capitalist class seriously challenged by rivals from Iran to China. In the coming period, U.S. bosses will need millions of troops to kill and die in their expanding racist wars. They need to transform a debt-ridden, declining economy into a wartime one by slashing workers' living standards and creating a police state. Obama and Clinton are vying, not to promote equality, but to become the chief executor of the rulers' deadly plans.

Obama Lures Youth to Fight and Die in Wider Wars

Contrary to Obama's capitalist-fed worshippers at the Times, racism, the rulers' main tool for splitting and weakening the working class, remains rampant in the U.S. By every measure and in every area — income, unemployment, education, housing, health, arrests, imprisonment, deportation — black and Latin workers suffer the most, and this super-exploitation worsens conditions for all workers, under every Democratic and Republican presidency. Obama's role is to mask that reality with the falsehood of "equal opportunity." He follows in the footsteps of ruling-class protégés Colin Powell and Condi Rice.

As Obama lures young people to the system, one job he can attempt for the rulers (win or lose) is to help reverse the 58% plunge in black military enlistment since 2000. "Man-of-the-people" Obama turns out to be a tool of the top U.S. imperialist financiers. He "has raised nearly \$100 million in campaign contributions, nearly as much as the Hillary



Clinton money machine. Three of his four largest groups of bankrollers are executives of Wall Street giants Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers and JPMorgan Chase." (NY Daily News, 1/11/08)

Clinton Team Drips With Serbian, Iraqi Blood

"Pioneer" Clinton aims to be the first woman to lead U.S. imperialism in war. She has constantly lobbied in the Senate to increase the size of U.S. forces. Her campaign advisors include a host of war criminals from her husband's administration — Madeleine Albright, Sandy Berger and General Wesley Clark, who all helped orchestrate Clinton's terror bombing of Serbia and softening-up of Iraq with missiles and starvation-inducing sanctions.

Opportunistically seizing on people's disgust with the Bush regime, Obama and Clinton babble about "change." But the change they have in mind is bad for workers. They want changes like those called for by the Clinton-appointed 1999 Hart-Rudman commission. It demanded a huge re-vamping of the state apparatus with vastly broadened police powers to put the nation on a war footing. It sought a government that could enforce the sacrifice of workers' blood and bosses' profits needed in global conflicts to preserve U.S. supremacy. Bush failed at this; Obama and Clinton hope to lead that effort.

Voting Never Solved Anything: Only Red Revolution Can

The best changes for workers in the last century — establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Russian and Chinese revolutions of 1917 and 1949 — did not occur in a voting booth. They grew from class-based armed struggle in the streets after years and decades of painstaking organizing in workplaces, schools, neighborhoods and the army and navy. Our Party's long-term goal is to repeat those true working-class triumphs while correcting the political errors that led to their reversal. ☸

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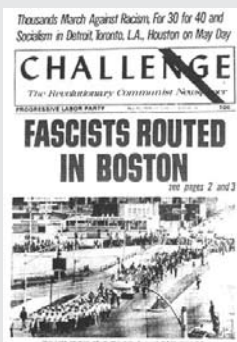
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Black, Latino Youth Balk at Fighting Racist U.S. Bosses' Wars

U.S. bosses have failed to win masses of working class youth — especially black and Latino — to kill and die for imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan. On October 31, the Army announced that it had started the October 1st recruiting year with the lowest level of "delayed entry" recruits since the beginning of the all-volunteer forces in 1973. The Boston Globe reports that in the military overall, recruitment among blacks has dropped by 58% since 2000 ("Military Sees Big Decline in Black Enlistees." 10/7/07).

Racism within the U.S. — especially against lower enlisted black and Latin troops — undermines the bosses' ability to win workers to fight their wars in the first place. Blacks make up more than 22% of the army and only 12.3% of the total U.S. population. But Michael O'Hanlon, a senior advisor to the military, says that the trend of serving in the military is "at risk in the black community."

The Globe reports that the racist response to hurricane Katrina, the legal lynching of the Jena 6, and the history of disproportionate black deaths in Vietnam has spurred black youth to decline military service in higher numbers. To win more blacks to serve, politicians and media are trying to mislead and fool workers, promising anti-racist reforms like revamped hate-crime legislation. They only want to direct anti-racist anger away from the capitalist system.

In 2006 an Army report recommended increasing the pool of black officers in the combat arms branch of the Army office corps in order to build "the capacity for a long-term, sustained level of conflict." And this past October, two months after



two nooses were found at the U.S. Coast Guard academy, the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Elijah Cummings (Dem.-Maryland), and Coast Guard Admiral Thad W. Allen, decried the incidents. What they feared was not more racist attacks on students and officers-in-training but rather the effects on "the strength of unity" within the officer corps that imperialism requires to keep U.S. workers killing Middle Eastern workers.

One way the bosses are trying to win black youth is by running Barack Obama as a serious contender for president. But Obama wants to expand the war on terror and shift the center of combat from Iraq to Afghanistan in order to free up troops for possible attacks on Iran, Pakistan or the Sudan. According to lower-enlisted black and Latin troops in contact with PLP, Afghanistan is more accepted than Iraq because troops are not as likely to die there, along with the perception within the military that the U.S. is winning. But Obama is looking out for U.S. imperialists' interests, not for lower-enlisted troops.

According to a recent Army War College report entitled "U.S. Interests in Central Asia and Challenges to Them," U.S. imperialists need Afghanistan as a base to project military power and to fend off Russian and Chinese imperialists' influence over oil/gas-rich states in the region, regardless of who becomes president. Already, the "good" war has killed thousands of Afghans and over 600 coalition troops.

No matter what the bosses do to win workers

to fight, overall recruitment trends continue to fall short of the troops the military needs to relieve the strain of current deployments. In October, the Senate voted down the DREAM Act, a Pentagon-backed bill that targeted hundreds of thousands of undocumented, mainly Latino, youth for recruitment. Lawrence J. Korb, a top strategist for U.S. imperialism, say the U.S. needs 100,000 more troops the next few years and warns, "If we cannot get sufficient numbers of the right people on a volunteer basis, as Lt. General Lute, President Bush's war czar noted, returning to the draft will have to be considered."

PLP and friends must link the racism of the justice system and imperialist wars to local bosses and to the capitalist system. Within the military, we need to influence troops to do what they can to resist killing for imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the bosses building

to expand support for the "war on terror," fighting racism, especially against Arabs and Muslims, becomes even more important.

Union mis-leaders have told PL unionists that raising the war distracts from bread-and-butter issues. Anti-war groups have told PL'ers that racism is a related but separate struggle. And soldiers won to bosses' ideology say the main enemy is those who are planting IEDs (roadside bombs), not the bosses pitting workers against each other to fight their wars. It's up to PLP to combat these lies and win our base to take action that exposes capitalism for what it is — a racist, sexist, imperialist system that must be destroyed.✪

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WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

★**Progressive Labor Party (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.**

★**Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**

★**Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight 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 profits. Everyone will share in 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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U.S. IMPERIALISM: KILLER BY SUICIDE

There are many ways in which U.S. imperialism kills people. One of the least know is GI suicide: one veteran soldier commits suicide every 84 minutes — 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.

A CBS-TV report (11/13/07) on figures from 45 of the 50 states revealed that in 2005, 6,256 veterans committed suicide: 120 every week, 17 per day. If the other five states had reported, the final figure might approach 24 per day, or one every hour.

In the 20-24 age group, the suicide rate is

up to four times the civilian average.

The onset of symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress-Disorder is often delayed for decades, but it has reached epidemic proportions, which the Pentagon denies and refuses to even count.

Most youth do not enlist because they want to kill civilians. But experiencing the carnage in Iraq and Vietnam, among other imperialist wars, leads to another type of murder by war: GI suicides. ✪

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Profs Fight for Right to Teach Anti-Capitalism in Classroom

CHICAGO — The situation in U.S. higher education mirrors the increasing crisis and growing ferocity of U.S. rulers against other parts of the working class. They raise the rate of exploitation, aided by the complete sellout by the trade union leadership. Huge cutbacks in state and federal money mean that even “public” colleges are so expensive that they are scarcely public any longer. Students take 5-6 years to graduate, and graduate students take almost a decade to get their doctoral degrees.

Almost three-fourths of college classes are taught by graduate students, part-time, and adjunct faculty who work for less than a living wage, normally with no benefits and no job security from year to year. A campaign funded by “conservative” ruling-class forces to intimidate teachers away from criticizing capitalism and its horrors has been so blatant that many of the more secure full-time and tenured faculty recognize that some form of opposition is needed.

PL members and friends carried the campaign against these abuses and for communism to the annual convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA), the largest convention of college teachers in the world. As in the past we worked with our friends in the Radical Caucus (RC) to recruit more faculty and graduate students to class struggle and ultimately to the Party.

The RC’s reform struggles focused on three resolutions to the MLA Delegates. The first, on the relation between super-exploitation of teachers, their lack of job security, and lack of freedom to teach anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, passed with some debate.

The second resolution, urging freedom to criti-

cize Zionism in the classroom, was sidetracked by a backstage agreement between one delegate who is also head of the liberal American Association of University Professors (AAUP), supposedly an “academic freedom” group, and the MLA leadership. The explicit defense of those who teach anti-Zionism was replaced by a general statement that all teachers should be free to teach as they wish. This ignores the big attacks against those teachers who criticize Zionism — and that was the AAUP leader’s goal. A third resolution, against the politically-motivated firing of University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill, was watered down to be passed in a weaker form.

The “liberal” AAUP leader and the “liberal” MLA Executive Board were exposed as failing to stand up for those faculty who want to attack U.S. imperialism and Zionism. We need to stress this more, and prepare better for next year.

We met many new, good people who will help build our struggles. We had some good discussions about the Party and communism, and are following up. We should have organized to leaflet the convention itself, as in previous years. We were also weak in distributing CHALLENGE. That error is being corrected now in post-convention contacts.

We have renewed our determination to make explicit anti-capitalism, along with anti-racism, the “bottom line” of all our public statements in sessions and meetings. A modest beginning must be improved in future years.

Most of our friends believe that a “humane” capitalism without imperialism and war is possible. They think, and want to believe, that U.S. bosses can be won to making the U.S. like what they think

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Denmark or Switzerland are. This is impossible, but most of our colleagues “want it to be true.” The Democratic candidates for President are feeding those illusions with promises of “Change!” and “Dump Bush!” Revisionists — phony “communists” and “socialists” — are building those illusions, leading our class down the path to world war. We have to win more and more teachers to seeing that there is no hope in capitalism, and that they need to join PLP, to smash capitalism with revolution for a communist world.☺

Striking Miners Battle Mexico’s Bosses, Cops, Union-Busting Government



CANANEA, SONORA, MEXICO, January 14 — The miners of Cananea — whose struggle marked the beginning of the 1912 Mexican Revolution — are again fighting back against their bosses and the bosses’ state. This past week hundreds of state and federal cops attacked copper miners who have been striking for almost six months. Twenty miners were injured, some seriously, and many have been arrested.

The mine, owned by the Grupo Mexico (GM) capitalist group — which also owns two mines and a smelter group in Arizona — is raking in huge profits from high copper prices on the world market. Yet it refuses to grant workers a decent wage hike, reopen a hospital serving them and their families, and improve mine safety and working conditions. GM’s chief financial officer is a former executive of a Kimberley-Clark subsidiary in Mexico. That’s the paper company founded by the family of Wisconsin Congressman James Sensenbrenner, sponsor of the racist anti-immigrant bill that sparked mass mega protests in all major U.S. cities in 2006.

The bosses are trying to break the strike by declaring it “illegal.” On Janu-

ary 12, the miners won an appeal against such a declaration.

The miners are also battling government and company plans to bust their union and bring in a company union. It has become the longest walk-out in the history of the Union of Mine, Smelter and Allied Workers, surpassing the 2006 Lazaro Cárdenas, Michoacan, strike when workers beat back an attack by an army of cops and soldiers. Miners’ strikes have spread since February 19, 2005, when 65 miners died in a huge explosion in the GM-owned Pasta de Conchos coal mine in the northern state of Coahuila.

The 1912 Mexican revolution didn’t free Mexico’s rural and urban workers from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism. Today, all the contradictions in Mexico are sharpening. Now, a nationalist section of the local capitalist class, led by López Obrador, wants to use the anger of workers and youth to fight for a bigger share of the capitalist pie for their own interests. Obrador lost a fraudulent election in 2006 to the current President Calderón, a pro-U.S. lackey. The country is being militarized, with Pentagon help, under the guise of “the war against drugs.” For workers, the only way out of this hell is to turn their struggles into schools for communism and join and build the internationalist communist PLP.

PLP calls on workers and students in the U.S. and Mexico to denounce this attack on the Cananea miners and unite in international workers’ solidarity.

Growing PLP Club in Spain Links Study and Action

SPAIN — “I didn’t know that an international party existed that was so concerned about the workers of the entire world,” said a friend, a student from France, when I showed her CHALLENGE-DESAFIO at a meeting of a club formed in one of the largest cities here. Our club began with a Turkish worker and myself, an immigrant worker from El Salvador. Now we’re more than ten workers of different nationalities. We’ve joined marches organized by the transit unions and other mass reform groups fighting for better transit city-wide.

We met to review international events. It became complicated because two workers from Ireland didn’t understand much Spanish, but a youth from Venezuela translated our discussion on dialectical materialism. One was very excited because he hadn’t understood before why — if the communist line was correct — the old Soviet Union failed. Then he read a CHALLENGE explaining some of the errors committed then. We all concluded that in order to establish a system in which we’re all equal, instead of fighting for socialism as a stage between capitalism and communism, we must fight directly for communism.

Our French friend was quite taken with the recent workers’ and youth mass protests back home. Then when we read CHALLENGE, she saw the title headline saying when workers unite, we can stop the whole capitalist machinery. She took several copies to continue sharing communist ideas with her fellow students in France.

We met a week later in an area “occupied” by squatters to celebrate a member’s birthday, which led to turning a bad thing into a good thing. While discussing the racist police repression here against immigrants and social groups in general, the cops knocked at the door. Someone had called them to report a group of “disorderly” squatters in the neighborhood.

The good thing: we organized everything in a way that seemed natural. Two people left to talk to the cops. One stayed to guard the doors to bar their entrance, and another pair organized the rest to make a plan. The police said we couldn’t meet here, to go elsewhere. So one group left for the park and the others (immigrants without “proper” papers) stayed. Then we got the police to leave.

Afterwards, we all returned and initiated a sharper discussion. We said we need to print more leaflets and try to organize struggles with revolutionary, not reform goals.

These friends of the Party are now excited because they understand communist ideas more clearly, including the significance of union struggles for reforms and the real struggle that all workers must carry out worldwide, the fight for a communist system, organized by the only international communist party, PLP. We must fight to build more CHALLENGE readers’ clubs everywhere.

An internationalist communist worker

Red Mechanics Needed Detroit: Totaled by U.S. Capitalism



DETROIT, MI — “There are not enough park benches in the state to accommodate all the homeless people that are being created.” That’s how one worker who faces losing her home described the sub-prime mortgage crisis that is affecting one out of every 21 homeowners here. Another said, “It doesn’t matter if you’re white or black. All working-class people are going through the same thing. We’re all just one step from being on the corner asking for food and money.”

The home foreclosure rate here is the second highest in the country, and eight times the national average. Fifty years ago, when GM, Ford and Chrysler ruled the auto world, Detroit had the highest rate of home ownership of any major city in the U.S., and the highest median income. Today, with those same auto bosses fighting for their lives, and being increasingly challenged on their home turf, Detroit is one of the poorest cities in the U.S., with a median household income of only \$35,500. Gambling casinos have replaced closed factories and there is hardly a supermarket or movie theater within the city limits. This is one of the clearest examples of the racism that is built into the profit system, as about 75% of Detroiters are black.

Since 2000, the metro area has lost 126,000 jobs. Many of those affected by layoffs and the recent wave of UAW-negotiated auto contracts are also facing foreclosure. In August, foreclosure notices were served on 260 homes per day. In the fall, the Wayne County treasurer’s office published a 121-page list of foreclosures. According to the Detroit News, more than 70,000 homes in the tri-county metro Detroit area entered some phase of foreclosure between January 2006 and September 2007. In some Detroit neighborhoods, the rate was 1 in 7 homes. This represents more than 250,000 active and retired workers and their children. Another wave of foreclosures will hit in March 2008, when

many more adjustable mortgages will reset to a higher rate.

HELP WANTED: IN IRAQ

On December 14, hundreds of workers lined up for the “Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicles Job Fair.” The Army was seeking more than 500 civilian welders, heavy mobile equipment mechanics, production controllers, administrative assistants, supply technicians and quality control specialists. The workers were hoping to earn between \$138,000 and \$212,000 for working 12-hours a day, seven days a week for 366 days in Iraq! The deputy chief of staff for personnel at the Army’s TACOM Life Cycle Management Command said, “When an economy is down, we have more opportunities to get qualified applicants.” The young black worker, who makes \$50,000 a year working two full-time security guard jobs said, “...the neighborhood I live in, it’s no different than Iraq. I’m not scared.”

This is a long way from the 1967 Detroit Rebellion, where Army brass was literally under fire, from Vietnam to Detroit, from Vietnamese and U.S. soldiers. It’s also a long way from the role played by young black Vietnam vets and auto workers who rebelled in solidarity with their Vietnamese brothers and sisters. But the collapse of the old communist movement gave the bosses a new lease on life. It opened the door to decades of massive racist attacks with little or no fight-back and very little class consciousness.

CAPITALISM WON’T FALL ON ITS OWN

This past summer, the Detroit News examined

economic conditions that sparked the Detroit Rebellion, and found:

- Detroit blacks had less buying power in 2000 than in 1967,
- In 2000, black median family income was down 6 percent from 1970, while white median income rose 18 percent,
- In 2005, blacks were 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than whites – the same gap that existed in 1960.

Overall, there is more poverty in the U.S. now than 40 years ago and the poverty rate is about triple for black and Latin workers than for white workers. What’s more, the level of racist police terror and the rate of incarceration are far more oppressive than anyone could have imagined back then. The schools are much worse.

As with every crisis or “natural disaster,” from sub-prime mortgages to Hurricane Katrina, black workers get hit first and hardest. Racism is at the very core of capitalism, created to justify slavery and the very cord that holds the whole profit system together. And while billions are lost on Wall St., and a few heads roll, millions of workers, children and the elderly are having their lives wrecked by the bosses and bankers. Building a mass PLP and increasing the base for CHALLENGE newspaper is the only way to answer the racist horrors of capitalism.

While this sub-prime crisis is very serious for the bankers and bosses, it is important to remember that the bosses can survive any crisis, even defeat in imperialist war. The only crisis they can’t survive is communist revolution. And the future of that movement is in our hands, not theirs. ☸

FORD STRIKE IN RUSSIA ENDS

The three-week strike at the Ford factory in Vsevolozhsk, located right outside St. Petersburg, ended on Dec. 14. Ford workers are among the lowest-paid factory workers in Europe, making between 16,000 and 25,000 rubles (\$600-1,000) a month. This is comparable to auto factory wages paid in Latin America.

Ford used office workers to maintain one production shift, and toward the end of the strike managed to start a second. Nevertheless, the strike crippled production and exhausted the union’s strike fund. The police harassed the picketers and strike leaders were threatened with arrest.

Ford workers voted to go back to work after the bosses agreed to a wage increase. The union and the company agreed to settle all unresolved issues by Feb. 1. This was the longest strike in the post-Soviet era, the first under the new Labor Code and the first where strikers won a general amnesty against reprisals.

The workers failed to win their demands of a 30 percent wage increase, higher pensions and reducing the work day. But a strike leader, reflecting the fighting mood of the workers said, “I think [Ford] should agree to concessions. They would hardly want to see a new strike in the spring.” ☸

Lesson of Mack Ave. Wildcat: Scratch A Liberal, Find A Fascist

In December, Justin Ravitz died. He was the judge in 1974 who tried to jail the Chrysler workers who led the Mack Avenue Sit-Down strike. In August 1973, 350 workers seized the plant after a comrade was fired for his role in an anti-racist health and safety struggle, and reported to work the next day, refusing to leave.

Chrysler security was driven out of the plant, and the next day, the workers faced off against the Detroit police chanting, “FIGHT BACK! – FIGHT BACK!” It finally took 1,000 thugs organized by the UAW, just about everyone on the payroll and many KKK members, to violently retake the plant for the bosses. A white comrade and a black worker who gave crucial leadership to the action were arrested and each charged with two counts of felonious assault.

Ravitz had a reputation as an anti-racist lawyer and criminal court judge. He was involved in the legal dismantling of STRESS, a police undercover unit that murdered 20 people, 17 of them black, and fought to have more black people on juries. He called himself the only Marxist judge in the U.S., banned the American flag from his courtroom in protest of the Vietnam War, and refused to stand for the pledge when he was sworn in. But when it came to prosecuting PLP and communist-

led workers, Ravitz was on the side of Chrysler, the UAW leadership and the Detroit police.

At the time, the bosses were still trying to retake control of the major cities, after the armed rebellions of the late 1960’s. Henry Ford and the New Detroit alliance of bosses, bankers and politicians were calling the shots in Detroit, pulling

PLP relied on auto workers and youth to wage a political defense around the city, exposing Ravitz and the bosses he served.

the strings of Coleman Young, a former Communist Party auto organizer and Detroit’s first black mayor, and a City Council of preachers and fake radicals.

PLP relied on auto workers and youth to wage a political defense around the city, exposing Ravitz and the bosses he served. Every notice posted inside the plant soliciting prosecution witnesses was torn down in minutes. Literature saturated numerous plants, Wayne State University, and unemployment and welfare offices, calling on workers and students to defend PLP, the Mack Sit-

Down and exposing Ravitz, the UAW leaders, and the rest. Many supporters attended the trial, and many more gave money. The black worker who was arrested, a Vietnam vet, joined the Party on the very day he was called to testify.

Ultimately, the case was tossed out. There was a provision in the law at the time that the prosecution had to produce witnesses from a cross section of the population that witnessed the alleged crime. The Chrysler bosses, UAW and the Detroit police could not produce one Chrysler production worker to testify against the defendants. Not one. Case dismissed. Ravitz was beside himself, and scolded the cops and Chrysler bosses for failing to make their case.

A lot has happened since then, and today Detroit is a shell of what it was. Every anti-racist “reform” has given way to more and deeper racist oppression, from mass unemployment and poverty to crumbling schools and over-crowded jails. The infant mortality rate here is comparable to that of the poor countries in the Caribbean. This is the legacy of the reformers like Ravitz, who above all else were loyal to the profit system until the end. And we are better off for having fought them.

Mack Ave. Defender

Bhutto's Party and Musharraf, Two Sides of Capitalist Coin

The recent murder of Benazir Bhutto released the pent-up fury of workers and youth in Pakistan against the repressive and exploitative military dictatorship of Pervez Musharraf. Workers and youth clashed with the police and army in cities nationwide. Fifty-eight were killed, 89 injured, 800 shops, 185 banks, 27 railway stations and 13 polling stations burned.

Benazir Bhutto, was a former prime minister and chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). She had recently returned from exile to take part in elections after a deal with Musharraf worked out with the U.S. and Britain. Her assassination blew up that deal. (See Jan. 16 CHALLENGE on how that was a big blow to the U.S.-U.K. "war on terror," and on the inter-imperialist rivalry behind events in Pakistan.)

But even though Bhutto's murder sparked the masses' fury, it was really fueled by a smoldering discontent with the country's rigid class system, poverty, oppression and a widening gap between the rich and poor. Despite a rapidly-expanding economy, conditions for the working class have worsened as the cost of basic necessities rise and wages fall.

New anti-labor laws strip away previously-won rights to organize. Among 20 million industrial workers only two million have contracts, leaving 18 million who can be fired at any time and paid as bosses see fit. Workers have no social security, health care or pensions. In a population of 168 mil-

lion, (the 6th most populous country on Earth) 70% are agricultural workers, many of them "housewives" who work without pay, and landless peasants dependent on wealthy landlords for survival. Forced labor and child labor are common.

Privatization is making bosses even richer. The government is handing over the country's state-owned utilities and major industries to individuals, often army officials. As the new bosses "downsize," workers lose jobs. Privatization of colleges, which previously received government funding, means that working-class youth cannot afford an education.

Benazir Bhutto was part of the same capitalist class, as corrupt as the generals who run the country and dominate its businesses and banking sectors. In her two terms as prime minister she acquired immeasurable wealth. Her husband, known as "Mr. Ten Percent," served eight years in jail for extortion. Before the assassination, Benazir was facing corruption charges.

The Bhutto family, among the biggest landowners in the southwest province of Sindh, has feudal-like control over the lives of thousands of landless peasants and sharecroppers and sees the PPP as its personal domain. The PPP's first chairperson was Benazir's father; her will names her 19-year-old son as heir to the party's leadership.

The PPP was founded in 1967 during a fierce revolutionary-type fight-back. In 1968-69, under the influence of a worldwide anti-Vietnam War

movement and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, workers occupied factories, peasants surrounded landed estates and youth took to the streets. This anti-capitalist movement cut across ethnic and national lines, uniting around one slogan: "Revolution! Socialist Revolution!" It nearly overthrew the government but failed because the movement had no party with the strategy of taking state power. In addition, many workers joined the PPP, attracted by its stated aim of a classless society, only to be misled into the dead-end struggle of reforming capitalism through electoral politics.

The PPP leadership, acting in its own class interest, deflected the revolutionary aspirations of the masses and never delivered on its promise of ending exploitation. Her government also helped prop up the fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan and led to the Taliban. Yet some workers still look to the PPP as the way forward.

But revolutionary ideas can be embedded in workers' consciousness. They surfaced in the mass movement of the 1980s and are present again today as Pakistan falls into political turmoil. Revolutionaries of the 1960s missed the historical opportunity to take power. Now the working class is organizing again and learning from its past mistakes, as well as from the experiences of revolutionaries worldwide, that the fight for a classless society is not for socialism but for communism.

(This is the first part of a series on current struggles in Pakistan.)

Battle for Resources Behind Endless Wars in Africa

The bosses' mass media reports about Africa only when Madonna or Angelina Jolie adopts another baby or when another massacre or tragedy occurs. But they rarely explain what's really happening there. This series will present a communist analysis of events on that continent.

Kenya is the latest victim of a combination of imperialist super-exploitation of Africa's workers and its resources and how crooked capitalist politicians use tribal politics to pursue their own interests. For many years, there was little tribal conflict in modern Kenya; people basically got along. U.S. and British imperialists used Kenya as a base to invest, super-exploit and wage their "war on terror" in the region. But amid growing inter-imperialist rivalry and capitalist economic turmoil, the imperialist-created "stability" of Kenya was bound to fail.

The power struggle between President Kibaki and opposition leader Odinga sparked an explosion. Kibaki stole the December election and now refuses to give Odinga a piece of the action despite calls by Koffin Annan, Barack Obama (whose father is Kenyan), Gordon Brown (UK Prime Minister) and Condi Rice. Hundreds have died in clashes between supporters of both politicians, and 500,000 now need immediate relief because of this politicians' dogfight.

4 Million Killed in Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has again erupted into a bloody civil war, particularly in its Eastern region. It's being labeled a re-play of the fight between Tutsis and Hutus that led to the murder of hundreds of thousands in Rwanda and Burundi over a decade ago.

A front-page NY Times article (1/10) reported: "The recent clashes in eastern Congo...have exacted a grievous toll on a region ravaged by a decade of war. Around 400,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, thousands of women have been raped and hundreds of children have been press-ganged into militias, the United Nations says....But the fighting is also rekindling the kind of ethnic hatred that previously dragged this region into the most deadly conflict since World War II."

The rebels fighting the Congo army are Tutsis, who many see representing the Rwandan rulers who aim to control this part of the Congo. But while this conflict is defined as involving ethnic and tribal politics, economic and political factors are really behind this endless war in that country. (Since the 1990s, this war has killed over four million people, beginning with the fall of long-time strongman Mobutu, a rabid anti-communist first installed by the CIA and then propped up in his last few years by

continued on page 6

Unity With African, Arab Workers Critical to Union Fight vs. French Bosses, Hacks

PARIS, January 9 — Workers are searching for effective ways to fight the government's continuing attacks on them. The next test of strength will be a public workers' strike on January 24.

Yesterday President Nicolas Sarkozy admitted he wants to abolish the 35-hour work-week and impose racist immigration quotas. On January 6, Budget and Civil Service Minister Eric Woerth repeated his refusal to uniformly raise public workers' wages, which fell 6% between 2000 and 2006 due to inflation. Wage negotiations for public workers will begin January 14.

On November 20, some two million public and private workers struck for higher wages. (See CHALLENGE, 11/28/07 and 12/12/07) When Woerth refused to consider an across-the-board wage hike on Dec. 19, six union federations representing public workers called for demonstrations and a strike on January 24. Five teachers' unions joined the strike call, demanding higher wages and protesting the government's decision to eliminate 11,200 jobs.

Education Minister Xavier Darcos then announced he will test strike-breaking "minimum service" in public schools in at least four cities that have signed strike-breaking contracts with the national government. Scabs will babysit pupils to keep them in school and not disrupt parents' work schedules, minimizing the strike's impact.

Scabs will be paid with money docked from the strikers' wages. The unions denounced "minimum service" as an assault on the right to strike.

These attacks stem from the inter-imperialist rivalry that is pressing the bosses in each country to drive for maximum profits by taking them out of the pockets of the working class, smashing the social contract that has existed since World War II. Only international working-class unity can begin to meet these attacks.

Increasingly, workers here realize that they must meet escalating government attacks with greater working-class unity across public sector-private sector divisions. Responding to this rank-and-file pressure, the FO union confederation called for private-sector workers to join the January 24 demonstrations, but stopped short of calling on them to strike.

The SUD-Education union in northern Brittany issued a sarcastic statement denouncing

"an isolated, one-day strike by only public workers," asking why the major trade unions insist on: (1) pursuing the losing 24-hour-strike strategy, (2) negotiating crumbs while abandoning fundamental demands, and (3) allying with the government's effort to smash the welfare state. SUD-Education 22 nevertheless backed the strike call.

Several recent developments underlined workers' and students' combative mood. The public television union is calling for a strike to oppose plans to merge the five public TV companies and lay off workers.

The CFE-CGC nurses' union is calling for a strike to protest unpaid overtime hours. Each nurse is owed an average of 70 hours overtime pay from 2007.

Tolbiac University students here voted to strike and occupy university buildings to protest Sarkozy's "reforms." Classes were disrupted and cancelled, and access to elevators was blocked. The students condemned "the privatization of the universities, and the axing of some academic departments," and also raised the anti-racist demand of "papers for all undocumented immigrants."

This is an important step in making the fight against racism central to workers' and students' overall demands. The rank and file must link their struggle to that of African and Arab workers and youth against racist unemployment and police terror. Otherwise, the rulers will have accomplished their goal of dividing and weakening the entire working class.

Nevertheless, as of today, the CFDT union confederation — whose leader was denounced as a sellout and expelled by angry workers from the November 20 Paris march — still wanted to look at government proposals before considering joining the strike.

These pro-capitalist union misleaders will push workers to the bottom. Communist leadership is needed to turn workers' and students' growing frustration with the union hacks' betrayals into an understanding that only communist revolution can abolish the whole capitalist system, with its bosses, reactionary governments and labor fakers. ☸

LETTERS



Confidence in Working Class Pays Off

Recently, industrial workers in the Party got together to discuss the present and future state of industrial work. At this meeting the idea that we have been too timid in talking to our co-workers came up. We decided to be bolder and work harder to expand our CHALLENGE networks. This emphasis on boldness lies in having confidence that the working class can understand local, national, and international issues and how they are all connected. Most importantly, our practice must be based on the knowledge that workers can and will understand and identify with our Party line.

This new emphasis has paid immediate dividends for the workers who attended the meeting. Shortly after I returned to work my conversations with my co-workers became more political and the content of the conversations was pushed to the left, not just by me but also by my co-workers.

The quantity of conversations increased as well. While having lunch last week one of my co-workers, out of the blue, asked me what I thought about the new UAW contract. Seizing the opportunity, I put forward the Party's analysis regarding the ruling class's push to "re-industrialize" and how this push was a reaction to growing inter-imperialist rivalry. One co-worker brought up the Navistar strike and how the presence of UAW scabs is a sign of this intensifying struggle. The conversation then took on a life of its own as we discussed the Russian and Chinese push to build a massive industrial base in preparation for war and how the sub-prime loan crisis has exposed U.S. weakness in the face of its adversaries. The conversation expanded my potential base from just one person on the job to five.

All our lives the ruling class tries to tell us that the working class is stupid and incapable of understanding the world around them. But when you have confidence in the working class and you boldly put communist politics forward you realize that myth of the stupid and complacent worker is a capitalist lie. It is important that when we talk to workers sympathetic with our politics that we trust their ability to understand them.

Worker from the West

Need to Fight Racist Deportation Raids

When we heard about a fascist ICE (immigration police) raid that rounded up many of our undocumented working-class brothers and sisters at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, we figured if it happened there it could happen at our airport. My co-workers — CHALLENGE readers — were glad to help distribute flyers calling a meeting to discuss anti-immigrant racism.

The week before there was much political discussion among immigrants and citizens who helped build for this meeting. Led by our anti-racist shop steward, it was multi-racial and included Latino and black workers from El Salvador, Mexico and the U.S. However, one weakness was that no African immigrants came, influenced by nationalist thinking that says, "Well, this raid only affects Latino workers." This only aids the racist U.S. bosses and must be addressed. When one group of workers is singled out, none are safe.

In reviewing the O'Hare incident, we realized our airport hasn't had such a raid since 9/11. We need a plan to warn our fellow workers on all shifts in case the ICE police show up. Soon afterwards, when the union mis-leader visited the airport, the shop steward asked, in front of the airport workers, what would the union do if there's an ICE raid. This question disturbed the misleader who had no concrete answer or plan.

Later a black woman worker remarked, "You could tell the union leader really didn't want to talk about that." It exposed the racism and incompetence of our union leadership. Since half our membership is Latino, we need a plan to fight anti-immigrant racism, a part of capitalism which the bosses use to super-exploit immigrant workers and then discard them after they've made millions off their

labor.

In fighting racist deportations, PLP is following the anti-racist traditions of abolitionists like John Brown and Harriet Tubman and the Dutch communists in World War II who led workers to protect Jews from Nazi attempts to deport them to concentration camps.

The racist U.S. bosses use anti-immigrant racism to scapegoat immigrants just as the Nazis did with Jewish workers. PLP is building a movement of communist-led workers to smash such U.S. fascism with communist revolution that would benefit all workers.

Airport Red

Phony Wrestlers Hype Phony 'War on Terror'

I wrote a letter to a local paper based on a CHALLENGE editorial exposing the split in the ruling class over war with Iran.

If I had a dime for every time I've heard some yahoo state that U.S. troops are stationed around the world to protect "our" freedom, I could purchase a BMW.

On Christmas Eve, I was forced to watch the World Wrestling Entertainment tribute to the troops in Iraq. Imagine that spectacle: a bunch of phony wrestlers entertaining "our" troops fighting a phony "war on terror." How appropriate!

Of course, nobody mentioned that the war was based on the lie that Iraq had WMDs. Instead we're told that the mission is to ensure a "bright future" for the Iraqis and an end to persecution there. The viewer is also told that the Saddam Hussein regime executed the entire Iraqi soccer team in a stadium and therefore the U.S. invasion was correct.

This reminded me that 3,000 Chilean workers were murdered in a stadium following the U.S.-backed coup there in 1973. So U.S. imperialism should know a lot about soccer stadiums.

One thing I like about CHALLENGE is it always points out the need for communist revolution. If it was possible to reform capitalism to meet workers' needs, there'd be no real need for communist revolution. Some "left" groups (like the "Communist" Party) don't seem to grasp that fact.

Reform of any sort will not be on the agenda in capitalist-imperialist Amerikkka. The head honchos in the labor movement won't even launch serious unionization drives.

CHALLENGE is not afraid to tell it like it is.

Red Coal

Revoking Union Rights Is A Law of Capitalism

Recently all of Mexico's capitalist parties (PAN, PRI, PRD) approved the elimination of the labor rights of hundreds of thousands of office workers in state-run companies and as well as "mixed" ones (combined state-run and private) — PEMEX (oil), IMSS (health care) and CFE (electricity).

The legal protection of the current contracts was eliminated. Now the bosses can freely establish contract conditions through individual work agreements (CIT), dividing and weakening the workers.

In PEMEX, 32,000 office workers are forced to sign CIT work contracts. One clause bars a worker from appealing unjust company decisions, including being fired.

The bosses have spread the lie that these workers are an "elite," loyal to the company, and sworn enemies of rank-and-file unionized workers. Many of the latter believe this bosses' tale. But in reality working conditions for the office workers and the unionized workers are similar.

The majority of these office workers receive only a few crumbs more than the rest of the workers, and are often forced to work long hours without overtime and without any recourse against the bosses' abuses. Only the higher directors and very specialized professionals receive bigger salaries. The majority carry out functions very similar to

those of unionized workers.

This division is the cutting edge in eliminating workers' rights since these attacks will later be extended to unionized workers.

The office workers are starting to organize in associations to defend themselves. However, although they recognize the importance of uniting, they consider the legal road as the main way to fight the bosses. This limits their power and effectiveness.

We're active in these organizations where we've distributed DESAFIO-CHALLENGE and leaflets. We're struggling to overcome passivity and to be bolder in presenting the Party's ideas. We want to show these workers that defending ourselves from the bosses' attacks legally will fail in the long run and leave us frustrated.

All workers must see clearly that the laws of the capitalist system function to guarantee the bosses' profits. Working-class victory can only be guaranteed through uniting the workers and organizing a revolutionary communist party which fights for a society that workers control. This is the struggle of the communist PLP. Join us!

A Red Worker, Mexico

Higher-paid Jobs Corrupted USSR Leaders

CHALLENGE's recent back-page historical article on the Russian revolution urged readers to study and learn what the Communist Party did right and what it did wrong.

Good idea.

But in your suggestions about where to look for errors, there is an important blank space. That is the fact that in the 1930s Communist Party members who moved up as leaders — even very minor or local leaders — moved up to a standard of living much higher than the average worker. Yes, putting forth "socialism" as the immediate goal opened the door to wage differentials. But, keeping communism as the long-range goal would not be believable unless party members set an example by not taking excess income.

When Anna Louise Strong, a sympathetic reporter, visited the USSR for some time in the 1930s, she was shocked to be offered a country home. "We're all getting them," she was told by party members. She did not report on this at the time, fearing it would feed anti-communism.

Whatever mistakes Stalin may have made, I consider this the greatest harm he did to communism. Leaders who have a financial stake in keeping their jobs cannot honestly listen to and represent the workers. In fact, the leaders split-interests paved the way for the growth of a Party central leadership that ended up condemning Stalin and enriching themselves and their cohorts as they reverted to capitalism.

Ancient Red

Africa continued from page 5

French imperialism).

The real fight is over the region's mineral wealth — gold, diamonds and coltan (used in ballistic missiles and cell phones) are among the many lucrative minerals mined there. Usually, local bosses and generals work as subcontractors for multi-national corporations from Europe, the U.S. and South Africa which buy and trade these minerals.

(Future articles will explore the role of inter-imperialist rivalry in the misery of Africa; Chinese and Russian energy giants' involvement in the imperialist power game, from Darfur to Nigeria; Pentagon creation of a new command to protect U.S. imperialist interests in the region; and how the powerful working class of South Africa and Nigeria can play an important role — if given red leadership — in helping liberate all of Africa from imperialism and their local capitalist lackeys.)✴

Transportation Workers Can Be Key Force for Revolution

For several weeks last fall, French transit workers engaged in a series of strikes to defend their pensions and jobs. Other workers and students also struck. Meanwhile, the cops murdered two youths, sparking an anti-racist rebellion of African and Arab youth. It is inter-imperialist rivalry that is spawning increased racist attacks on our living standards worldwide, attacks which impel these strikes and rebellions.

French bosses are using president Sarkozy to attack industrial workers and youth, shredding the old social contract. The pro-capitalist union leaders refuse to counter these attacks. The bosses have their strategy for the future; what is ours?

The major imperialist powers are freely investing capital globally. New transportation and communications systems are creating rapid, mass migration of workers. The industrial working class is expanding, especially in India and China, where migration is mainly internal, from rural areas to the cities. In Europe and the U.S., migration is primarily from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. In Latin America, workers migrate from poorer countries to those somewhat less poor — from Haiti to Dominican Republic, from Nicaragua and Honduras to El Salvador, from neighboring countries to Brazil and Argentina. The bosses use this mobility to force large pools of unemployed workers to compete for jobs. We can use this greater connection to build an international movement against capitalism.

Transportation systems that move people and commodities are becoming increasingly critical to

capitalist profit. The transportation industries can be the Achilles heel of capitalism if we can organize breakthroughs here. This adds importance to the recent transport strikes in France, Italy, Spain and elsewhere, and the struggle in mass transit worldwide.

Our strategy is to unite the unemployed, immigrant and industrial workers in a movement for communist revolution, bringing workers to power and crushing the racist bosses. With communist leadership, transportation workers can take the lead.

French transit workers were able to draw students and other workers into the struggle, but lacked the leadership to unite with the unemployed and immigrant youth. Communist leadership is necessary to develop the anti-racist class consciousness required to advance at this time.

Among transit workers in NYC, Washington D.C., Chicago and the West Coast, we're fighting racist attacks and cutbacks that target a mostly black work-force that serves an even larger black, Latino and immigrant population. We struggle to keep the fight against racism in the forefront of contract fights and union elections. We organized support for those left to die in New Orleans during Katrina, and more recently for the Jena 6. We have tried to pass union resolutions and collected money from co-workers.

Mainly, we're fighting to spread CHALLENGE and PLP literature in our garages, bus barns and

workplaces. We're trying to develop personal and group discussions among co-workers, inviting them to study-action groups and PLP club meetings. Self-critically, we can do much better on this. The better we do, the better we can do. We must fight against getting buried in the daily demands of "union work."

The transportation unions are shadows of their former selves. Strikes, like the 2005 NYC transit walkout, are seldom used and often broken. This year the rulers will spend over a billion of our dollars in a sucker's bet on the 2008 presidential elections. Clinton, Obama and Edwards are the bosses' shell game. Whoever we choose, we lose! No matter who's elected president, more and deadlier imperialist wars will still rage, racist terror will be used to attack and divide us, and transportation workers will face more cutbacks and attacks. These are the laws of capitalism.

Transit workers, airline workers, railroad workers and truck drivers are the lifeline of modern industrial society. We can be a key force for communist revolution. The current inter-imperialist rivalry is leading to wars that will make Iraq look like a tea party. Slowly but surely, a new generation of black, Latino and women transportation workers will be building a mass international PLP to end the profit system once and for all. ☸



Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Clear case of insurer-murderer

The 17-year-old had been in a coma after complications following a bone marrow transplant to counter leukaemia. Her liver failed and doctors referred her for an emergency transplant. She was fully insured and had a donor but Cigna refused to pay....The family... could not afford the down payment of \$75,000.

The family mounted a protest of 150 people outside Cigna's Glendale offices. The demo was amplified by an internet campaign.... Cigna decided to reverse its decision....

The news drew cheers but the crowd grew sombre when they heard her condition had deteriorated. A few hours later her life support was switched off. "She passed away, and the insurance [company] is responsible," her mother, Hilda Sarkisyan, said.

The case points to growing disenchantment with healthcare in America. "This is what's wrong with our health system — insurers decide treatment, not doctors..." (GW, 1/4)

Neocons trace to anti-Stalin cult

...Neo-conservatism was the final stop of an ideological journey for a group of... young Trotskyists that included Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer and Melvin Lasky... Along with Irving Howe... the veterans eventually drifted away from Trotskyism, becoming stalwarts of the anti-Communist left, where they were joined by Norman Podhoretz... few if any of them expressed concern when they discovered that Encounter, a magazine that Irving Kristol co-founded in 1952, was secretly underwritten by the Central Intelligence Agency. (NYT, 1/13)

Black workers lost more homes

... Wells Fargo made high-cost loans, with an interest rate at least three percentage points above a federal benchmark, to 65 percent of its black cus-

tomers in Baltimore and to only 15 percent of its white customers in the area...

Wells Fargo allowed mortgage brokers to charge higher commissions when they put borrowers in loans with higher interest rates than the customers qualified for...

Now, Baltimore is a city in a foreclosure crisis...

Half of Wells Fargo foreclosures occurred in census tracts with populations that were more than 80 percent black. (NYT, 1/8)

Capitalist system: big trouble ahead

The average rates at which people consume resources like oil and metals, and produce wastes like plastics and greenhouse gases, are about 32 times higher in North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia than they are in the developing world... Yet we often promise developing countries that if they will only adopt good policies — for example, institute honest government and a free market economy — they, too, will be able to enjoy a first-world lifestyle. This promise is impossible, a cruel hoax.

[But] we could have a stable outcome in which all countries converge on consumption rates considerably below the current highest levels... Whether we get there willingly or not... our present [is] unsustainable. (Jared Diamond, NYT 1/2)

Capitalism doubles mental ills

... studies in the United States, Britain and Australia reveal that [mental illness] almost doubled between the early '80s and the turn of the century.

Capitalism has massively increased the wealth

of the wealthy, robbing the average earner to give to the rich.

In itself, this economic inequality does not cause mental illness.

But Selfish Capitalism stokes up relative materialism: unrealistic aspirations... Indeed, I maintain that high levels of mental illness are essential to Selfish Capitalism, because needy, miserable people...can be more easily suckered into perfectionist, competitive workaholism.

...Most damaging of all [is] the ideology that material affluence is the key to fulfilment and open to anyone willing to work hard enough. If you don't succeed, there is only one person to blame — never mind that it couldn't be clearer that it's the system's fault, not yours. (GW, 1/11)

Iraq: US bombings multiply by 5

The Iraq air war may be the longest in history. In one way or another it has been undermining Iraq's sovereignty, destroying its infrastructure, and killing and maiming its people for over 16 years. And there's no end in sight.

Despite global pressure to withdraw, President Bush — and indeed the broader U.S. power structure — has no intention of giving up Iraq. The potential oil bonanza is too huge. And Iran — with its oil bonanza — is next door.

That air war is intensifying. The U.S. dropped five times as many bombs in Iraq during the first half of 2007 as it did in the first half of 2006. As U.S. troops withdraw, the air attacks will multiply.

From the firebombing of Dresden and Tokyo, to the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, to Korea and South East Asia, to the first Gulf War and now to Iraq — air war is the signature of U.S. war making. (MinutemanMedia.org, 12/27)



Lessons of ‘Boston 75’ Crucial to PLP’s Future

The four months between May Day 1975 in Boston and the first day of school there in early September remains one of the sharpest sustained periods of struggle our Party has yet experienced. The anti-racist summer project BOSTON 75 remains rich in lessons and examples.

The most important is that gutter fascists like ROAR can be beaten even when they are protected to the hilt by the bosses’ state apparatus and made to appear invincible by the bosses’ media. The battle of May Day 1975 had already exposed ROAR as a paper tiger. In the ensuing months, the tiger lost its fangs and claws.

The BOSTON 75 volunteers were relatively few in number. Most had little experience in politics or class struggle. They were young, the majority in their twenties. They had to live on a shoestring. They confronted the daily fury of the ruling class’s dictatorship. Between June and September, the volunteers saw the inside of Boston’s jails more than 200 times. Some were arrested twice or even three and four times. A few eventually received prison sentences.

Yet, despite these attacks, they won a clear strategic victory. They proved that a small force of bold, determined anti-racists under communist leadership could at least temporarily thwart a ruling class bent on building a mass-based fascist movement. The numbers tell the story.

The day before the Boston schools opened in September 1975, ROAR led a demonstration of 3,000 people at City Hall, down from the 15,000 in a similar racist mobilization in 1974. Sporadic racist violence characterized the 1975-76 school year, but it never reached the proportions of 1974-75. ROAR’s public activities dwindled to a series of poorly-attended anti-integration “mothers’ prayer marches.” Fascist Louise Day Hicks soon abandoned politics altogether and in time fell into disgrace after her son was exposed as a dealer of illegal drugs. Shortly after BOSTON 75, the ROAR organization was dead in the water. PLP and the Committee Against Racism (CAR) deserve the lion’s share of credit for killing it.

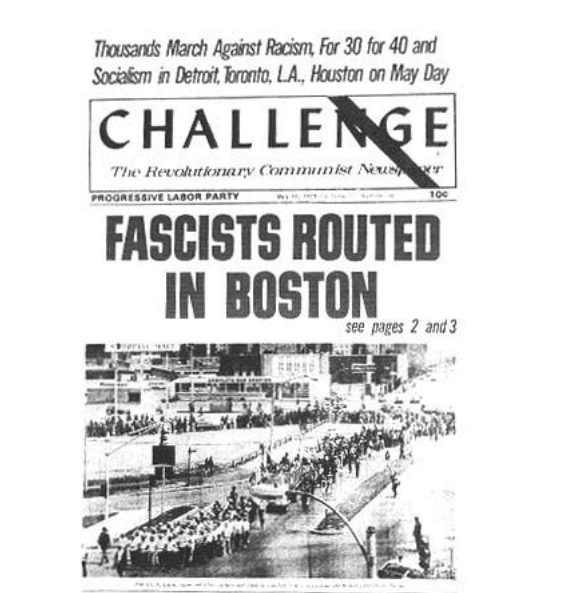
BOSTON 75 therefore belongs to the living

history of the PLP and the working class. For four months, against great odds, communists and anti-racists inflicted important political and tactical defeats on the ruling class of a great city and its plans to turn a large portion of the working class into Nazi thugs.

The project nonetheless had serious weaknesses; their lessons remain valid today. The most important was political, which grew out of the Party’s basic line at that time. By 1975, PLP had rejected nationalism — the idea that there were “progressive” bosses, even though they all believed in capitalism and would try to stop the working class from taking the road to revolution. This tied into also rejecting the theory of making revolution by stages, the idea that we could get to communism while still retaining some of the elements of capitalism (such as the wage system) — socialism — because workers “weren’t ready for communism.” But we still believed in socialism. We didn’t come to understand this error until seven years after the adoption of Road to Revolution IV in 1982. (For the full text of this document, see the PL website, PLP.org)

In practical terms, we continued to initiate reform organizations through which we would function, such as CAR — later InCAR. We had founded it in 1973. It achieved much: organized BOSTON 75 and the fight against ROAR; launched militant mass struggle against leading academic racist theoreticians like Richard Herrnstein and E.O. Wilson; and led many battles against attempts to revive the Ku Klux Klan.

But ultimately, with all their militancy, CAR and InCAR were still reform organizations. In creating them, we had committed two serious mistakes. Firstly, we were substituting them for existing mass organizations in which we should have been deeply active and struggling directly for communist ideas and the Party, both during the BOSTON 75 project and elsewhere over the long run. Secondly, related to the first, was the implicit belief that the workers and students we expected to move to communism needed a “half-way house” — a PLP-led militant reform organization — on the way to joining the Party. This was an opportunist error, allowing us to win people to militant reform, something less than



the communism we stood for. We thought we had licked this aspect of opportunism, at least in theory. We were wrong.

In the ensuing three decades, we’ve been trying to absorb these lessons, as the pages of CHALLENGE show. In the face of rising imperialist war and the bosses’ advance towards police-state fascism, this task has become increasingly urgent today. We defeated ROAR, a specific manifestation of U.S. fascism, despite working with one hand tied behind our back. It would be sheer folly to think that the experience could be repeated in the present period with an identical political approach and tactics.

We fight to preserve the spirit of boldness, militancy, anti-racism, and class hatred that characterized PLP’s work during the campaign against ROAR. We reject the opportunism of “two-stage” approaches to communist organizing. The victory against ROAR was an important battle, but it was temporary. The war against the profit system continues. The lessons learned in Boston more than 30 years ago should help the Party improve its leadership in the battles and trials ahead.✪

Steroids Helped Baseball Bosses Bulk Up Profits

Under capitalism, money ultimately ruins everything, even the games that are designed to divert workers from the wars and fascism rising around us. On December 13, Major League Baseball released the Mitchell Report, which told us what we already knew: that baseball — like the Olympics, the Tour de France, and every other big-money sport — is hopelessly infected with performance-enhancing drugs.

After naming more than 80 players, from superstars like Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens to average players like Paul LoDuca, former U.S. Senator George Mitchell declared that “everyone” in baseball was to blame for the spread of anabolic steroids and human growth hormone (HGH), from club management to the players’ union. But when it gets down to cases, the report essentially convicts individual players and low-level pushers like Kirk Radomski, the one-time Mets’ bat boy, while giving a pass to Commissioner Bud Selig and the owners and executives who have seen no evil as long as their profits and bonuses kept rolling in.

As Dave Zirin notes in his online column, Edge of Sports, the report was stacked from the beginning. Mitchell was appointed by Selig, whose family owned the Milwaukee Brewers until 2005. The ex-senator sits on the boards of the Boston Red Sox and the Walt Disney Company (which owns ESPN), and his law firm has earned tens of millions of dollars by lobbying for Big Tobacco and General Electric. Mitchell is a high-priced mouthpiece for his corporate bosses, first and last. His report gives baseball executives some needed damage control on the steroid front, along with leverage to re-open contracts with the Players Association in the owners’ ongoing struggle to grab a bigger slice of the money pie.

For communists, there is no “good” side in this controversy. In their desperation to gain an edge in the brutally competitive major leagues, the players — from the surly Barry Bonds to the

God-fearing Andy Pettite — have been corrupted into liars, cheaters, and hypocrites. They bear responsibility for the countless high school athletes and insecure adolescents who ape their drug-enhanced heroes on the path to torn tendons, liver and kidney damage, diabetes, heart attacks, depression, and suicide.

But as in every enterprise in this society, the owners paint the landscape. As Howard Bryant points out in Juicing the Game (Viking, 2005), baseball’s steroid era was born in 1994, when a player strike led to a cancelled World Series, depressed attendance, and a sharp drop in network television revenues. The owners’ response was to lure back the fans and sponsors with artificially inflated home run totals. They built smaller ballparks, shrank the strike zone — and looked the other way at rampant steroid use. In 1998, when an AP reporter spotted a vial of androstenedione (a “legal” steroid developed in East Germany) in

Mark McGwire’s locker as McGwire was en route to his record 70 home runs, “the entire baseball establishment,” Bryant wrote, “crushed...the story.” (In contrast to the media’s racist focus on Bonds, McGwire remained an all-American hero until 2005, when he humiliated himself by dodging questions at a Congressional hearing.) In 2001, the owners renewed their five-year TV contract with Fox for \$2 billion, nearly four times higher than the previous contract.

To date, only two middling major leaguers have received 15-day suspensions in the aftermath of the Mitchell report, but no matter how the sport changes as a result of the report, history tells us that baseball will remain business as usual — an enterprise run by capitalists for capitalists, with the next season’s profits the only record that matters.✪

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