

# CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

## May Day: Fight Bosses' Wars and Racist Terror



On this May Day, International Workers' Day, the international working class is under sharpening fascist attack while the drums of global war beat louder and slaughter millions. World capitalism pushes its economic crisis onto workers' backs with mass racist unemployment, wage-cuts, soaring food prices and resulting starvation. Yet masses of workers are fighting back, with general strikes and food rebellions from Greece to Egypt to Haiti to Russian Ford and Romanian Renault auto workers to Detroit's Axle strikers.

This May Day we must stand as one class, with one interest: to destroy the capitalist murderers with communist revolution and build a communist world based on production to fulfill the needs of our class. On this May Day, international workers' solidarity must meet the bosses' assault head-on, especially as they use the attacks on the world's 200 million immigrants to attack ALL workers.

Capitalism has spawned this migration across all borders. We say smash all boss-created borders. We are one class, internationally.

Capitalism created the working class, a class with nothing but its labor power to sell in order to survive. Early on, the capitalists moved millions of Africans as slaves from that continent to wherever they could produce the most profit. With capitalism's global expansion, immigration is now a worldwide phenomenon.

Capitalism's unrelenting drive for maximum profits uproots hundreds of millions of workers, forcing them into the squalor of sprawling mega slums, from Brazil to Nigeria to China, where 80 million Chinese-born migrant workers are branded as illegal. Many die crossing deserts and oceans from Africa to Latin America trying to reach jobs in the U.S. and Europe, as well as from starvation, malnutrition and curable diseases. Ten thousand died trying to cross into Spain from Africa in the last five years.

Those migrating to the more industrialized countries are not only super-exploited but are used as scapegoats, blamed for capitalism-created problems, and paid slave wages to lower the wages of all workers.

In the past, immigrant workers were on the front lines of class struggle. With global capitalism, the bosses — by forcing this mass migration — have internationalized the working class even more, providing the opportunity for a communist-led working class to forge the unity necessary for communist revolution. Immigrant workers are now positioned geographically and socially to help lead this fight worldwide.

Their role will become even more crucial as the imperialists' rivalry for world domination intensifies, particularly in the U.S., a declining power fighting desperately to hold its position as top imperialist while it gears up for wider Middle Eastern wars and eventually world war versus the rising powers in China, Russia and the European Union.

The U.S. rulers' fight over immigration reform concerns the tactics and strategies on how and when to wage these wars. One sector thinks these wars can be waged cheaply with a small, technologically superior military. These bosses opposing immigration reform just want to terrorize immigrant workers with deportations to continue super-exploiting them.

The liberal imperialist sector, however, needs an immigration reform that builds patriotism among immigrants through a 12-year-long path to citizenship. This is in exchange for recruiting millions of soldiers as cannon fodder in their imperialist wars and to maintain a workforce of millions of super-exploited workers for their war industries.

That's why their liberal politicians attack Homeland Security's "scattershot workplace raids" as bad economic policy. And their newspapers like the LA Times and NY Times criticize Congress and the Bush administration for endangering the ability of the bosses to achieve these aims.

These liberal rulers also use their state power to rein in their opponents like California's Orange County Sheriff Carona — indicted for some of his many crimes in the county where the racist Minutemen were born — and Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Arizona's Maricopa County, Arizona, who terrorizes day laborers.

But the vitriolic anti-immigrant stance of their

opponents also serves the liberal bosses, creating the terror and despair that drives immigrant workers into the arms of their liberal politicians — and their leaders in the pro-immigrant organizations, churches, unions and community groups — with their pacifism and dead-end electoral politics. The main organizing slogan of the pro-immigrant organizations is, "Today we march, tomorrow we vote!"

Their leaflet announcing the Los Angeles May 1st March praises the bosses' immigration reform and DREAM Act, aimed at forcing undocumented youth into the military under the farce of "helping them go to college," which they can't afford. This "Green Card army" will eventually become the army of all, via the draft or some militaristic "national service" scheme. The slave-like conditions and low wages of indentured immigrant workers will be extended to all workers.

With Democrats Obama and Clinton, and Republican McCain, supporting their comprehensive immigration reform bill and the DREAM Act, the liberal bosses will win no matter who becomes president. But their needs are forcing them to bring together two of the most oppressed, potentially militant and rebellious sectors of the working class: black workers and youth, crucial in industry and the military — possessing a rich history of fighting the U.S. bosses' racism — and immigrant workers with a long history of fighting U.S. imperialism.

With PLP building international unity and a base for rebellion and revolutionary communism among industrial workers, soldiers, and students — black, Latino, white, Asian and Arab, immigrant and citizen, men and women — we can fight the bosses' racism, nationalism and patriotism, and unite the world's workers to destroy the scourge of capitalism forever.

The fire of May Day burns brightly in a vibrant and growing internationalist PLP! Workers of the World Unite! Fight to end racism and wars for profit. Smash all bosses' borders! Spread CHALLENGE, the internationalist, revolutionary communist newspaper! Fight for communism! Join us! ☺

# Pope Heils Anti-U.S. Europe-China Bloc

Obama got it wrong. Embittered workers don't "cling" to religion by choice. The ruling class he serves shoves it down their throats, as the media's non-stop coverage of the pope's visit reveals. The Catholic passivity Benedict preaches is — like all faiths — so useful to capitalists in stifling working-class anger that they made his every utterance and gesture front-page, prime-time "historic events." But nevertheless, the pope's visit is a mixed blessing for U.S. rulers. While they benefit from his spreading religious ideology among workers, they must also win mass political support for their widening wars. And, just as he did as a Hitler Youth in pre-World War II Germany, Benedict represents European bosses increasingly at odds with U.S. imperialism.

## RULERS AIM SCANDAL AT CHURCH FOES OF U.S. BOSSES

His predecessor John Paul II mildly criticized the 1991 invasion of Iraq by a U.S.-led coalition that included large European contingents. At the time, Catholic bishops in the U.S. cooked up a theological justification for that war. Europe's oil majors, like Total of France and Eni of Italy, scored big deals with "rescued" Kuwait. But by the 2003 invasion, when it became clear the U.S. would not share Iraq's oil spoils with European firms, the prelates defied the Pentagon. Late in 2002, the National Council of Catholic Bishops declared, "We...find it difficult to justify the resort to war against Iraq...."

[W]e fear that resort to war, under present circumstances...would not meet the strict conditions in Catholic teaching for overriding the strong presumption against the use of military force."

U.S. rulers punished the Catholic leaders severely for their heresy. Starting with the Boston Globe that year, the bosses' media let loose a flood of exposés detailing sexual abuse of children by priests, pointedly blaming bishops for enabling and protecting pedophiles. Hardly breaking news — sex abuse has been rampant in the church for centuries. But imperialist U.S. rulers played it up to rob pro-European clergy of all credibility. Referring overtly to the abuse scandal but implicitly to geopolitics, a New York Times editorial (4/17/08) reminded pope-struck readers of "stunning failures of the overwhelming majority of U.S. bishops."

## VATICAN COZYING TO CHINESE RULERS

Now, as its European backers cement ties with China's rulers, the church is following suit, increasing the likelihood of an armed U.S.-China clash over U.S. protectorate Taiwan. The London Sunday Times (2/17/08) reports, "Tempted by the prize of a historic visit to China by Pope Benedict XVI, the nation's leaders have authorised a renewed effort... to heal their rift and inaugurate diplomatic ties.... [T]he Vatican is prepared as part of an eventual set-

## NAZI UNIFORMS THROUGH THE YEARS



tlement to move its embassy from Taipei to Beijing." The Times quoted a senior Vatican official, "There is no problem with breaking relations with Taiwan.... we have a duty to spread the values of the gospel." Those "values," no doubt, embrace China's recent purchase of a \$2.8-billion stake in French oil giant Total.

But U.S. rulers tolerated and even welcomed Benedict because religion hinders a rational analysis of the world's two opposing classes and prevents workers from fighting back accordingly. "Pie-in-the-sky" promises of heavenly rewards and meaningless, mystical concepts of "good" and "evil" devoid of class content can help lead workers into militaristic patriotism. Parochial schools preaching "Church and Country" furnished millions of recruits for the U.S. war machine in the last century.

Grossly underpaid teachers in one New York Catholic school union have the right response to papal pandemonium — strike. Our Party's goal is to organize working-class militancy like this into a mass communist party that will eliminate the war-makers and their religious apologists.☸

## 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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## The NY Times: All the News They 'Forgot' They Printed

The New York Times, U.S. rulers' vaunted "newspaper of record," ran an outraged three-page-plus article on April 20 exposing unethical ties between the Pentagon and retired officers working for TV networks as "military analyst" talking heads. The Times complained that, in return for deals with military contractors and other payoffs, these experts have given a favorable spin

to the war in Iraq, which the Times now claims to oppose.

What hypocrites! The Times itself was one of the loudest proponents of the war, with editorials backing star reporter Judith Miller's tales of immense caches of "weapons of mass destruction." The Times bosses' main gripe with the Pentagon is the latter's failure to secure for Exxon Mobil and Big Oil the six million barrels a day of Iraqi crude (about 2 mbd now trickle out) that U.S. strategists foresaw.☸

## Will Cops Go Free for Sean Bell's Murder?

While the liberal bosses prance around and pat themselves on the back for "making change" and proclaiming the end of racism in the U.S., three cops might very well be set free for the murder of Sean Bell in November 2006. Seems like the cops and the courts never got the memo.

Bell and two friends were shot at by plainclothes kkkops after leaving a bachelor party at a bar in Queens, NY. The cops claim that Bell and his friends first tried to run them over and that one of the men inside the car appeared to be grabbing for a gun in his waist. The cops then wasted no time shooting 50 BULLETS into the car, killing Bell and injuring his friends.

The bosses enlisted the ex-FBI informer and pacifier of black workers' anger, Al Sharpton. Our class should not be led by this bosses' agent who pervasively sells the snake oil of justice under capitalism. He's done it before with Amadou Diallo who was shot 41 times by the fascist police, and Patrick Dorismond in Manhattan and countless others. The cops' main role is to protect and serve the bosses' private property and terrorize workers, especially black and Latino youth, so that they do not turn their anger into rebellion.



With the coming elections the bosses need to win black, and all workers, to U.S. imperialism to stay ahead of their rivals like China, Russia and Europe. Barack Obama and the bosses need to give them hope that the system can work for them in the face of years of slavery, Jim Crow racism, segregation, police terror, poverty like in New Orleans and after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Workers and students should organize their friends and co-workers to expose the cops' role in the racist system of capitalism. No court will guarantee workers justice.

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# Marine Vet: U.S. Imperialists Are War Criminals

**SOUTHWESTERN CAMPUS, April 3** — “War crimes? Heck, the whole war is a crime!” exclaimed a student and Marine veteran of the Iraq war, summing up his contempt for the U.S. imperialist agenda.

Over 175 students, teachers and campus staff applauded enthusiastically. Foregoing classes, many stayed over three hours to hear testimonials from four members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and one from Military Families Speak Out (MFSO).

One army veteran/student quoted from Nazi butcher Hermann Göring at the Nuremberg Trials, exposing how all the rulers think: “Naturally the common people don’t want war; neither in England, nor America, nor in Germany....But...it is the leaders of the country who determine policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along.... Tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.”

He should have said, “any capitalist country” because Soviet workers were won to fight the Nazis in their own class interests. This vet said Göring’s statement brought a “chilling familiarity to our experience since 9/11.”

This vet quoted Marine General Smedley Butler: “War is just a racket....It is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses.”

Urging soldiers to abandon blind pride, the vet noted the growth of anti-imperialist war activism, citing “the growing number of active-duty IVAW

chapters.”

Vets revealed their painful understanding of war crimes and the contradictions that soldiers fighting an imperialist war face daily. One ex-Marine in charge of detainees explained how he attempted to protect them from casual abuse by other soldiers. Another witnessed a whole town storm his platoon’s position.

Current reports of corruption and of Iraqi recruits refusing to fight and turning over their weapons to Shiite insurgents mirrored one Marine’s description of outright corruption of Sunni commanders who sold weapons to insurgents. This Marine was disgusted with the “dog and pony show” of the Iraqi military, which is clearly not motivated to defend U.S. imperialism. These experiences provoked him to ask, “What the hell am I doing here [in Iraq].”

The MFSO parent noted how his son couldn’t make a decent living after high school and thus enlisted. This anti-racist MFSO member expressed dismay that after boot camp his son was trained to “hate people he never met.” He said 85% of those killed in Iraq are civilians. His son suffers from PTSD after one tour in Iraq where, on burial detail, he had to collect body parts of deceased soldiers with whom he had trained. This parent stressed the need for everyone to actively oppose the war by reaching out to active-duty soldiers.

The Q and A session revealed the uneven development among these vets. One panelist opposed the war in Iraq but not Afghanistan. Asked about the draft, one vet answered, “Draft all college-age Republicans,” which drew a laugh. Several vets sup-



ported a draft as a “wake-up call.” That position is based more on frustration than a real commitment to national service of any kind that’s promoted by the current presidential candidates. A few vets attacked imperialism as a system and opposed any wider wars or military call-up.

The potential for a revolutionary worker/soldier/student alliance was evident during these three brief hours. The panelists are part of the movement against imperialist war, which will ultimately require the fight for a world devoid of profiteers and exploitation. Such forums for political struggle are steps toward that goal.☺

## Fight Racist Destruction of Harlem

**NEW YORK CITY, April 12** — Hundreds of Harlem residents and their supporters formed a human chain across several long cross-town blocks and then marched on the NY State Office Building, battling the gentrification of East, Central, and West Harlem, which will displace thousands of working-class residents and many small businesses. The cops tried to pen the demonstrators into a small area on the street, but they immediately broke through the barricades and took over the sidewalk. Almost all the passing motorists honked in support.

Having recently approved the take-over of West Harlem by Columbia University, the City Council’s zoning subcommittee has now voted to rezone Harlem’s main thoroughfare, 125th Street, and two surrounding blocks all the way across Manhattan, for luxury housing and businesses. Central Harlem is home to mostly low-income and working-class African-Americans, averaging below \$25,000 annually. It’s also a cultural center, home to generations of black writers, performers and artists. East Harlem (El Barrio) is a mainly Latino neighborhood, also providing housing for mainly low-income workers. This demonstration marked the first time in recent history that groups from all these areas have marched together.

For two decades, gentrification has been underway, with the renovation of old brownstones and houses, attracting African-American professionals and a growing white population. As local property values rise, Harlem can be totally gentrified within the next decade. Tenant activists estimate that half of all Harlem residents may be forced to move.

Although this show of militancy and unity was heartening, a weakness of the movement has been its looking for “good” politicians to turn things around. Some hope the new black governor, David Patterson (who replaced Eliot Spitzer), will protect their interests. But Patterson is closely tied to the other prominent black NY politicians, ex-mayor David Dinkins and Rep. Charles Rangel, who are deeply embedded with developers. Some hope City Council members will carry their banner, but the Harlem representatives have long supported gentrification. A few involved fighters are nationalist, and see this attack as only against “their own group.” Most have welcomed the support of all.

Several comrades have been active in a Harlem church and community groups. We’ve pointed out how only a movement of rank-and-file workers and students can be relied upon to have our interests at heart, and that all politicians can only survive by doing the bidding of capitalist profiteers.

This attack on all of Harlem is based on racism of the foulest sort, hoping that not only will all NYC workers not back Harlem’s struggle, but will even welcome “racial cleansing.” We emphasize the role that racism plays and the necessity of multi-racial unity.

Most importantly, we must win our friends to see that gentrification, like the housing and financial crisis, the growing income gap and widening war and fascism are all part of capitalism, and therefore all our efforts should be linked to the fight against this racist system. We will continue to distribute CHALLENGE and bring some new friends to May Day. ☺

## NYC YOUTH VOW MAY 1ST WALKOUT

**BROOKLYN, NY April 16** — More than 70 students from six different high schools in Brooklyn, Harlem and the Lower East Side joined together and held an after-school conference about billionaire Bloomberg’s promised budget cuts and how to oppose them. Six young black and Latino women representing a school’s student government led the conference and electrified its closing moments unifying walk-out proposals from across the room into a call for a city-wide walkout at noon on May 1st!

Students showed up ready to organize against not only the budget cuts but the increased police presence and criminalization of students that has run rampant in NYC schools. An opening talk set the political tone of the event by reminding us that the capitalist system is based on theft of the value workers produce on the job every single day. Most participants in the conference took CHALLENGE and everyone got a copy of the PL leaflet describing how debt service means that billionaires always get paid whether schools face cuts or not.

“These cuts are racist! Eighty percent of NYC school children are black and Latino, can’t nobody tell me these cuts aren’t racist!” one student shouted. “Bloomberg has 16 billion dollars; if he wanted to he could fix the schools’ budget problems,” one student stated in her speech. “The government is trying to put us down before we even get up,” another student shouted. One student talked about being arrested and verbally abused by cops just for having her head outside of the window while watching a crime scene. We live in a period of growing fascism.

After breaking up into groups, students made lists of ways they can fight back against the cuts. Writing a petition, having rallies, getting the word out to more schools, letters to Bloomberg and having student walkouts were prominent on most lists. The plan is to link up with the immigrants’ rights march in Union Square on May 1st.

Some students made the connection that the money that is being taken out of the schools’ budgets is being used to fund the bosses’ imperialist wars and burgeoning police state. PLP students spoke of learning about communism in the classroom and thinking it is a good idea. Communist politics helped defeat the all-too-common liberal error of blaming these cuts on the war alone.

Students left the room with the message that capitalism itself is to blame and that communism remains a real alternative worth fighting for. The task now is to mobilize these same young people to be organizers for PLP’s May Day events this year on May 3rd and, over time, as another generation of young fighters for a communist future. ☺

# Ex-Marine Links U.S. Racism, Katrina and Iraq War

**BOSTON, April 14** — Students, faculty and staff at Roxbury Community College (RCC), a mainly black and immigrant working-class school here, showed considerable interest in an anti-war event marking the 5th anniversary of the Iraq war. It highlighted the recent Winter Soldier testimony that publicized veterans’ criticisms of the war. (See CHALLENGE 3/12)

Thirty-five in attendance heard the stirring remarks of two veterans and a speech explaining that U.S. rulers went to war to control Mid-East oil. One ex-Marine said Hurricane Katrina exposed the true nature of U.S. imperialism, which allowed mostly black workers to die in New Orleans while it was killing working people in Iraq. As a black man of Haitian descent, he declared that the racism of Katrina punctured his belief in U.S. patriotism and his willingness to “serve my country.”

We watched some of the recorded testimony of other veterans who described the atrocities the U.S. committed in Iraq. It was inspiring to see how Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is helping to

transform soldiers — damaged by their experiences — into anti-war organizers. However, although IVAW is introducing veterans to anti-war politics, the organization is also injecting patriotic content into those politics, undermining an understanding of imperialism, the real cause of the Middle-East wars. This builds a movement which the capitalist

**‘By understanding the class character of the war, working-class students can see the many ways imperialism is attacking them and their loved ones, and their role in organizing resistance.’**

class can easily manipulate as they plan wider war to protect their strategic interests in the region.

Because PLP understands the crucial role of soldiers and students in the growth of a revolutionary communist movement, we played a pivotal role in this function. Some students who had attended our May Day dinner a week earlier helped to organize

the event, distributing leaflets on campus.

The speech that presented a class analysis about the war helped people make more sense of the veterans’ testimony by putting their personal tragedies into a political context. Soldiers are being forced to kill and maim Iraqis in a genocidal war so that U.S. capitalism can maintain its control over oil.

This analysis inspired one veteran to expound on his previous talk. “It’s RCC students and Bunker Hill Community College students who are fighting this war,” he said, “not students from Harvard and Milton Academy.” Then, he called for students and soldiers to “revolutionize” themselves as a necessary step in fighting back.

By understanding the class character of the war, working-class students can see the many ways imperialism is attacking them and their loved ones, and their role in organizing resistance. This event made it clear that PLP needs to sell CHALLENGE more consistently and expose students to a communist analysis about both world events and their own reality at RCC.☺

## Building for May Day Young and Old, Across All Borders

### New Jersey

We had a very international May Day dinner in New Jersey to raise funds for the Party’s big events to celebrate this working-class holiday. Twenty-six of us came — some immigrants from 11 different countries: Jamaica, Peru, Italy, Hungary, Ecuador, the Philippines, Macedonia, Guatemala, Israel, Korea, Honduras and from Africa. There was fabulous Ethiopian and Guatemalan cooking, black-eyed pea fritters, with desserts of apple pie and brownies.

We heard stories of immigration, of untold expense and deadly injuries. Many undocumented immigrant pay smugglers (coyotes) \$7,000 to \$10,000 to come from Central America. There is no guarantee the immigrant will arrive safely to his/her destination and many have died either abandoned by the smugglers, crossing the desert, the river, or even asphyxiated piled up in cargo train cars, trucks, etc.

The Río Grande is cold and deep. Many don’t survive the swim. One man loaded his three children into an inflatable raft and swam with one arm, pushing the raft with the other. Another woman spent one night with two other adults in the trunk of a car, almost dying of dehydration and suffocation. Each had a story of having to leave individuals in the desert who could not walk or be carried. Two people related how Mexican workers often carried other people, children or adults, to the border who would never have survived the journey without their help.

The message was stated throughout that an international Party, the PLP, is essential to get rid of borders forever. With each horrific tale, it became more obvious that borders mean only separation of families, lowering wages, starvation and death for working people. The clear communist solution has to include doing away with wage slavery, profits and the entire capitalist class of parasites who suck the blood from workers trapped by borders. The working-class immigrants have already demonstrated the fortitude and courage necessary to win! ☺

NJ Red

### New York City



A collective of young and veteran members of Progressive Labor Party is coordinating efforts for a large gathering to celebrate May Day in New York City. We’re developing both the program and our organizing around a central theme of increasing class struggle to build the Party.

Our program features young comrades, helping to develop their leadership abilities, which is already reflected in the struggle they’ve spearheaded against NYC’s Department of Education. (See CHALLENGE, 04/09/08.) The excitement generated around this struggle has increased CHALLENGE distribution and produced potential new recruits to PLP. The energy of students and teachers and their understanding of the class struggle sharpened during this fight, which should help make our celebration an exciting one.

We will also acknowledge the contributions of long-standing members as we build for the future. A veteran of many on-the-job struggles will stress the importance of communist organizing at the workplace, linking his experiences with a call for participation in a Summer Project at some of PLP’s industrial concentrations.

Finally, we plan to ask the audience four questions about communism that our friends frequently ask. We hope the May Day celebrators will participate via their answers.

May Day marks a review of the strength of our communist organizing. The efforts of comrades, young and old, will ensure it will be inspiring and successful.

NYC May Day Collective

### Spain: PLers Defend Immigrant, Organize for May Day

**SPAIN** — We are celebrating May Day, the international working-class holiday, including distributing a leaflet outside Metro (subway) stations in a major city here. This occurs amid growing attacks by the regular and immigration cops.

A friend from Brazil was arrested at his job just for the “crime” of being an undocumented immigrant. From the U.S. to Spain, capitalism, to survive, needs repression and racism against workers by forcing immigrant workers to work for less and produce super-profits for the bosses.

A group of us went to the police station to support our fellow worker. He was lucky not to be beaten by the cops. We celebrated a small victory because he wasn’t deported, just given a letter of expulsion.

Communist ideas are being spread among workers in this and other struggles. Our May Day leaflet will bring these ideas to other workers who don’t know about PLP. Anarchist ideas are widespread here and there’s a fear about communism because anti-communist ideas are rampant. But now PLP’ers are working in many areas of the world with the aim of winning workers to understand what’s best for our class: communism. Long live May Day and the workers of the world! ☺

(For El Salvador PLP May Day Call, See PLP website — [www.plp.org](http://www.plp.org))



# Axle Strikers Holding Fast Despite UAW Sabotage

**DETROIT, MI, April 18** — Workers and students from Chicago drove here to picket in solidarity with the American Axle (AAM) strikers. Originally we planned to join a giant solidarity rally, but the UAW leadership cancelled it, angering the workers. But when we said we'd come to meet the strikers anyway, the workers made us feel right at home.

On strike for seven weeks, the 3,600 workers are fighting company demands to cut wages from an average \$25/hr to \$14/hr, convert company pensions into 401(K)s and eliminate 1,000 jobs. The strike has mainly affected production of GM pick-up trucks and SUVs. One worker told us, "AAM has diversified and we supply other car giants like Toyota." But scabbing supervisors have maintained some level of production of Toyota axles. Chrysler is unaffected since their parts come from Saltillo, Mexico, where workers make 70 cents an hour!

The strike has caused layoffs of 25,000 GM workers and thousands more in the parts-supplier plants. One worker told a story about the bosses bringing charts to a meeting to show workers who they were competing against. Of the nine names listed, seven were AAM-owned factories in other countries. He left the meeting saying, "We're in competition with ourselves!" AAM is a global corporation with plants from Mexico to China. This worldwide battle among the bosses for markets, resources and cheap labor

(imperialism) is behind the AAM strike.

While talking to the workers, distributing water and CHALLENGE, every car driving by honked their horns in support of the picketing black, Latin and white workers. They're not hopeful of any agreement coming soon. Many said they would vote against any concession contract. "We've already been out here this long, there's no point in caving in now," said one.

Meanwhile, the UAW international leadership has taken the negotiations away from the local, attempting to force the same sell-out contract they've signed with the entire auto industry.

With Detroit facing decades of racist cutbacks and decay caused by the retreating U.S. auto bosses, it's easy to see the source of the anger in the eyes of these workers. They speculate about how big a buy-out will be offered and how management will try to eliminate the most senior, highest-paid workers.

Several years ago AAM tried to implement a 2-tier wage system. Detroit workers rejected it but the contract passed after the company threatened to close the Buffalo, NY plant if they didn't approve it. When they voted "yes" the plant was closed anyway. Some of the laid-off Buffalo workers ended up at the Detroit plant and are now standing among the strikers as living reminders of how AAM lied.

When we asked workers whether they'd take the buy-out, some immediately said, "No." Some were undecided. Younger workers said they'd take it, and either look for work, open a business or go back to school.

Now that GM's supply of unsold cars is dwindling, there may be pressure on AAM to settle, but GM wants this wage-cut as much as AAM. The major assemblers have been pressuring the parts suppliers to slash wages and cut costs so they can buy cheaper parts. That's why they created this system of outsourcing decades ago.

All the workers thanked us for our solidarity. We invited them to May Day and obtained contact information.

The struggle against wage slavery lasts many lifetimes. The system cannot be fixed. As one worker said, "You cannot reform evil!"

Workers, and work itself, should not be a commodity with a price tag. We should contribute what we can and receive what we need. But it will take communist revolution to build that world. Let the AAM strike remind us why we fight for communism, and strengthen our will to fight! ☸

## Calif. Teachers Fight Budget Cuts, Tax Hikes, Union Fakers

California's educational system has been under attack from a combination of racism and the drive to maximize profits. Now the capitalist crisis is making it much worse, with a state budget deficit expected to top \$8 billion. Republicans want to balance the budget by cutting education, health care, and other services. Democrats want "a combination of tax hikes and budget cuts." This is a no-win situation for California workers, but liberal union leaders want workers to pay.

"If state lawmakers want to go for tax increases, they should focus on education," reported the San Francisco Chronicle, citing James Wunderman, president and CEO of the Bay Area Council, which includes 245 of the region's largest employers (including banks, oil companies, and war contractors). "It's a good way to get the public to acquiesce to paying more." (4/12/08)

That same day, a workshop at the Oakland convention of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) discussed "How to Talk About Taxes." "We must ... increase taxes. This workshop will analyze obstacles to convincing the public this is necessary."

This "public" is overwhelmingly the working class. From 1975 to 1998, the income of the bottom fifth of Californians declined nearly 25% while that of the top fifth increased by 66%.

So why is a labor union doing the dirty work for Wunderman and his fellow bosses?

There's a world of difference between the trade-unionist view of "labor" and "management" as bargaining partners and potential political allies versus the communist understanding that workers and capitalists are locked in a deadly class struggle.

The CFT convention gave lip service to the fight for "progressive taxation" but the truth emerged around a resolution to "support or sponsor legislation that would require the State of California to generate and allocate sufficient funds to education." An amendment was proposed, seconded and supported to add the words, "without raising taxes on working-class families."

Leading CFT'ers jumped up to object, claiming "taxes are the price of civilization" and "it's hard to separate the working class from the middle class so this wouldn't let us raise taxes on enough people." Some delegates asked why workers should pay for a government that serves the bosses and a crisis created by their drive for maximum profits. The amendment was defeated, but the sharp struggle — which the leaders neither expected nor wanted — was itself a victory.

At a demonstration against the cuts in L.A. a few days later, when teachers eagerly took PL leaflets, one teacher said, "All of this could be solved by taxing the oil companies." This is unlikely since Exxon-Mobil and the big corporations run the system. A revolution will eliminate the profit-hungry bosses who run these and all companies.

Most CFT delegates sincerely care about students, oppose the Iraq war, and want to promote "labor solidarity." But without a communist leadership, they are being led into the hands of our enemies. For example, a video about the 1946 Oakland General Strike (which was smashed by the AFL Central Labor Council) claimed as a "victory" the formation of a coalition of labor and community organizations that channeled energy into the electoral politics of the emerging "cold war." A presentation on the greatness of Franklin D. Roosevelt concluded with the idea that we should enthusiastically support the Democratic Party.

Delegates were urged to get 1% of their local membership to walk precincts for the November 2008 elections. We should aim to win 100% to become CHALLENGE readers! In contrast to the liberalism of unions like the CFT, the Progressive Labor Party today is working to win workers and students to fight cutbacks with the goal of turning the bosses' attacks and wars for profit into a revolutionary war for communism. We invited teachers and students and parents to celebrate May Day with us and join our Summer Project!☸

## PLP Growth in Pakistan New Hope for Working Class

**PAKISTAN, April 15** — New elections have changed the face of the ruling class, now a coalition of landowning capitalists (PPP), industrialists and financiers (PMLN), nationalists (ANP and BNP), racists (MQM) and fundamentalists (JUIF). They claim to be forming a government of national consensus. Their one major goal in common: exploit the working class more effectively. The pioneer of this consensus is the husband of slain Benazir Bhutto, famous for his corruption, money laundering and kick-backs.

Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani has a landowner, spiritual background and uses God to justify exploiting workers. He spent five years in jail on corruption charges. After taking office, he announced a wage increase for laborers as a ploy to earn their support; restored the right to form unions; and made many other promises which cannot be realized under capitalism. They are attempts to ward off any potential unrest.

Asif ali Zardari (chairperson of the ruling coalition) claims they are "changing the system," but his "change" would substitute a civil regime for the current military regime to better serve imperialism. The alliance of these various parties cannot last long — their internal rivalries will destabilize Pakistan.

PPP is helping President Musharaf by continuing his policies regarding the "war on terror" and relations with the U.S. Presently U.S. officials are actively seeking support from the new government for the war on terrorism, but workers know the CIA engineered this terrorism against Afghanistan's workers and farmers in the name of the war against "communists."

Back then U.S. imperialism protected the Muslims in a "sacred" war to make Afghanistan an Islamic country. They trained Muslim youth from throughout the world for terrorism, equipped them with the latest weapons, new cars and funds and provided them full protection for an illegitimate war against the Afghan people in order to counteract the Soviet Union. Osama bin Laden was on the CIA payroll in the training sites established in northwest Pakistan.

The capitalists' thirst for profit and resources to run their war machines drives this terrorism. It helps maintain the super-exploitation of the working class. Strategically northwest Pakistan is very important for carrying out imperialist wars, so the U.S. has created, or curries favor with, these fundamentalist factions to establish its influence.

Workers need communist leadership to fight the poverty and exploitation that are vital to capitalism. Poor workers here cannot afford their daily bread. Young children pick small pieces of food from garbage. They have little clothing, no shelter, no medication if they fall ill and no job opportunities. They are living to enrich the capitalists.

Fake leftists are playing imperialism's game, using the word "socialism," but PLP's ideas give hope to the working class that this murderous system can be destroyed. PLP is growing despite our limited resources. We don't advocate socialism, nationalism, "national democracy" or "people's democracy." We are true to the working class, trying to move workers towards communist revolution in exposing inter-capitalist rivalry.

Poverty, racism, inequality, unemployment and homelessness are all inevitable products of this murderous system. We must intensify the class struggle towards the goal of eliminating the cause of these evils. We in PLP have a rich history of fighting capitalism, equipped with revolutionary communist ideas. We must win workers to join us and wage an international struggle for communist revolution.☸



# LETTERS



## Fight-Back in Mexico and on Axle Picket Line

Several of us from a NYC organization attended the Labor Notes conference in Dearborn, Michigan on April 11-13, among some 1,000 delegates from the U.S. and overseas. There was one ugly incident: instead of fighting the war-making, racist, budget-cutting bosses, SEIU and California Nurses Association hacks physically fought each other over raiding members. Otherwise we had some very useful experiences.

In a workshop about unions and community groups we emphasized the fight for immigrant rights, particularly undocumented workers who suffer from the bosses' savage exploitation and discrimination.

We also heard from a San Luis Potosí, México union leader representing more than 300 workers fired from a glass plant that makes bottles for Corona and Modelo Extra Beer, very popular now in the U.S. After a long struggle, these workers organized a union independent of the pro-boss national union, and won a 19% wage hike plus other benefits. The boss retaliated, using the excuse of the U.S. recession, closing one plant and firing militant workers, so 250 lost their jobs. The boss hired new workers and forced them to sign blank papers, used later to make them members of the pro-company national union (very common in Mexico).

The fired workers are fighting back. They brought their protest to Anheuser-Busch (A-B) in the U.S., which controls 50% of the Modelo company. A-B's workers are represented by the Teamsters. One big Anheuser-Busch shareholder is married to the U.S. ambassador to Mexico.

One great experience was to be one of 200 volunteers who picketed in support of the Axle workers, on strike for two months (see page 5). They're on the line 24-hours-a-day rain, snow or shine, keeping warm by burning wood in tanks. Workers from a nearby union local brought them food. They thanked us and offered to share their food. We chanted along with the pickets for two hours and raised some money for their struggle. Most

gratifying, I distributed 40 CHALLENGES with the front-page article on the Axle strike. The workers thanked me for that.

It was great to share our struggles and views with other workers. I talked to a 22-year-old Mexican construction worker who has been working in New Orleans for two months. He showed lots of leadership at the conference, recounting many experiences in his young life in fighting the exploiting, abusive fascist bosses. I spoke to him about PLP and gave him CHALLENGE to share with other workers. We exchanged phone numbers to stay in contact.

Only a unified international working class, led by PLP, can achieve power through a communist revolution. Only then we will make our dreams as workers a reality.

*A Red Fighter*

## When It Comes to Racism, There's No Debate

I recently attended a NYUDL (New York Urban Debate League) tournament in Bronx, NY. At lunchtime, I was happy to see debaters speaking on a bullhorn about the racist incident at a debate tournament in Newark, NJ, and the importance of fighting racism. Debaters circulated petitions amongst hundreds of students, teachers, parents, and other participants of many colors and ages. The petition called to outwardly oppose racism and to fight back united against racist acts, no matter how big or how small they may seem.

I was very excited to be a part of this tournament. Anti-racist actions like these are necessary to fight back against all of the attacks the bosses perpetrate against our class. Small fight-backs help raise class consciousness and will help set the sparks for the future communist revolution; the only way we can truly have a society without racism or borders. Every time I see fellow debaters with CHALLENGE in their hands, I know that there is hope for our long fight ahead. It's what gives me strength to keep struggling, to keep telling myself that what

we do counts.

*A Red Debater*

## Rutgers Coalition Walks Out Against the War

On March 27, 2008, a week after Rutgers students had their spring break, 600 students walked out against the war. The effort was the result of months of planning on the part of local Rutgers activists involving PLP organizers.

The walkout itself, while not directly associated with the Party, provided us with an opportunity to build a base for future support. After the walkout a rally was held at the nearby Voorhees Mall. During the rally several speakers spoke about the various ways in which the war has destroyed their lives.

A mother of a fallen American soldier spoke of her pain, anguish, and anger at the folly of Bush's policies. An Iraqi native spoke of the numerous ways in which the war ravages her country every day. She gave an especially emotional story about the way in which American stray bullets from nearby firefights struck a relative of hers while she was sitting in her classroom. All of their words only affirmed the truth that we know: this war must end.

The walkout was followed by an independent movement of 300 students to march through the Rutgers campus, along the way having two sit-ins. The march went defiantly on the nearby highway, Route 18. It was an inspiring display of the disruptive and commanding force of a unified collective. This move by the students shows the power of the working class and the fact that working-class solidarity is unstoppable. The movement to end the war has undoubtedly grown stronger as a result of the walkout. Smashing the capitalist war machine is the only way to end this war and all wars. Working in movements like these are vital to establishing a network of comrades ready for the next step towards communist revolution.

*Scarlet Communist*

# How Red-Led Mass Actions Stopped Foreclosures in the Great Depression

Over two million workers' families could lose their homes because of the subprime crisis. The bosses' media says basically nothing can be done about the foreclosures, caused by the bankers' thirst for profits. Clinton's and Obama's "solutions" merely postpone the "inevitable," proposing "negotiated compromises" between the banks and homeowners who can't afford mortgage payments. The Federal Reserve bails out failing banks and McCain says "the free market will take care of things."

But 75 years ago during the Great Depression, the working class — led by communists — had a better idea, and it wasn't voting.

When the marshals were evicting workers from their homes — throwing their belongings onto the street — or family farmers were losing their homesteads, hundreds and thousands of workers would show up on the day of the eviction or foreclosure and literally overwhelm the marshals and the cops and simply carry the furniture back into the workers' homes. A NY Times headline (Feb. 27, 1932) read: "1,500 Fight Police to Aid Rent Strike."

When bankers or realtors at auctions were bidding on foreclosed Iowa homesteads, hundreds of neighbors would show up, surrounding them, and while one farmer — "fingering a rope" — would menace the rich bidders, another would bid a penny for the farm. "Sold" cried the auctioneer, and then the "buyer" would return the farm to the foreclosed owner.

When a jobless worker was being denied "home relief" (welfare), 5,000 fellow unemployed would show up to make sure it was granted.

How was all this organized? In the early 1930's,

when capitalism had laid off 17 million workers (one of every three workers was unemployed), the Communist Party led the organization of the National Unemployment Councils (NUC). On March 6, 1930, the Councils organized 1,250,000 jobless to take on the streets — 110,000 packed New York City's Union Square, and were attacked by 25,000 cops whose bosses feared the start of a "revolution"; 100,000 unemployed marched in Detroit, 50,000 in Chicago and Pittsburgh, thousands more in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Milwaukee, Philadelphia and Cleveland.

These mass Councils stopped thousands of evictions and foreclosures cold. In New York City, 185,794 families got eviction notices in the first six months of 1932. The Unemployment Councils moved over 77,000 back into their homes. On February 1, 1932, the NY Times reported that a "crowd numbering... 1,000...stormed the police" to fight the eviction of three Bronx families.

Black workers were the hardest hit and became the most active in the Councils, leading many of the anti-eviction struggles, which fought racism as a number one priority.

By 1938, the NUC had a membership of 800,000. They helped stop scabs as workers struck for unionization and the 8-hour day. There was great unity between the employed and unemployed as all saw it in their class interest to fight their struggles together.

Matthew Woll, an AFL union "leader," labeled this movement a "Kremlin conspiracy," but the NUC, with communists playing a leading role, vehemently rejected this red-baiting.

It was out of this mass ferment that the CIO or-

ganized industrial unions. It all forced the Roosevelt-led ruling class to enact unemployment insurance, welfare, Social Security, the 40-hour week and collective bargaining laws. It was workers' violent struggle that won these reforms, not voting for Roosevelt.

Unfortunately, the Communist Party got sucked into the "progressive" Roosevelt coalition instead of fighting for workers' power. The communists did not concentrate on using these reform struggles to win workers to understand that the ruling class still held state power and would use it to reverse these victories. Today, the working class is paying for this reformist error.

The anti-communist liberals and their union lieutenants have helped the bosses water down class consciousness and mass militancy. Today, racism against black, Latin and immigrant workers is rampant, while union-busting and fascist wage-cuts make workers pay for the bosses' crisis and endless imperialist wars. Meanwhile, too many workers and youth see voting for Obama or Hillary as the answer, instead of waging a mass fight-back.

Illusions die hard, but we in PLP are confident that workers and youth won't be taking it on the chin forever. We must build a mass base for our communist politics among workers, exposing the racist bosses as the cause of the problem, and their politicians and union servants as part of it. This May Day is an important step in this long road towards fighting for a communist society where workers' interests, instead of the profits of bankers and bosses, are the only priority.☺



# 1968: How 10 Million Workers Shut Down France



continued from page 8

May 16, workers had occupied 50 factories; by May 17, the number of strikers had swelled to 200,000. A day later, two million were on strike; the following week, 10,000,000 workers, roughly two-thirds of France's work-force, had hit the bricks.

Significantly, these strikes were not led by the organized unions, which did everything in their power to contain and reverse the movement. Police terror having failed, the labor "leadership," including the "Communist" Party, tried bribery, but the workers turned down a significant pay increase and remained on strike.

On May 30, nearly a half-million workers and students marched through Paris chanting "Adieu, De Gaulle" (Farewell De Gaulle), to express their hatred for France's president and his government.

De Gaulle had already flown secretly to Germany to enlist the support of the infamous General Jacques Massu, known for his justification of torture during France's colonial war in Algeria. De Gaulle had appointed Massu commander of French military forces in Germany, and Massu was preparing to send French regiments home to suppress the revolt.

However, the French ruling class didn't need the army. The revolt quickly subsided because of its own internal flaws. Crucial among these was

the absence of leadership from a revolutionary communist party with a mass base within the working class. Only such a party could have given strategic and tactical direction to the longing angrily expressed by French workers and students for fundamental change in society. Only such a party could have raised the question of smashing capitalist state power and replacing it with a working-class dictatorship. This is the key lesson for us today, but not the only one.

The revolt occurred at a time when the concept of the working class's role in society and the revolutionary process had come under assault from a gaggle of fake-left "theorists," led by a professor named Herbert Marcuse. The millions who struck France's factories exposed the shallowness of this viewpoint and dramatically showed that the working class alone, which builds and runs everything, has the potential to revolutionize society and bring about meaningful change. This principle is just as valid today.

The events of May 68 also clearly demonstrated the key secondary role of students and intellectuals in the revolutionary process. It's no accident that the struggle began on a college campus before spreading to the factories. Despite several abortive attempts, France's student strikers failed to make a significant alliance with the millions of working-class strikers, but this failure in no way invalidates the strategic necessity for a worker-student alliance. More than anything, it highlights the absence of communist leadership.

A third key lesson is the absolute bankruptcy of reformism. The workers who rejected the salary bribe had an inkling of the right idea here; without a communist party to lead them, they were forced to fight blindfolded, with one hand tied behind their backs.

After the strike ended, De Gaulle quit the presidency, replaced by his henchman, Georges Pompidou. A host of reforms ensued. Forty years later, France remains a capitalist dictatorship. Unemployment for younger workers hovers between 20 and

25 percent and is much higher for immigrant workers. Racism, particularly against black workers from Africa and Arab workers is rampant in the land of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." France's rulers continue to seek status as junior partners in the bloody scramble among U.S. bosses and others for control of Persian Gulf oil. French capitalism is thus helping grease the skids for the next world war.

Pro-boss cynics say May 68 justifies the lie that class struggle always leads to disappointment. PLP differs. The struggles of workers and students in France two generations ago belong to our class's living history, if we absorb their lessons and interpret them correctly. In the past four decades, capitalism has solved none of the problems that led to this revolt. If anything, the problems have worsened. Therefore, more revolts are only a matter of time. In fact, now there is speculation about workers' reaction to this 40th anniversary and whether current student demonstrations and school occupations could spark another strike wave.

PLP's job remains the same everywhere: to spread our revolutionary ideas and build our revolutionary organization under any and all circumstances, so that when struggle of this magnitude once again erupts, its goal will be working-class dictatorship and its outcome will be a massive spurt in the ranks of communist-minded workers and students.✶



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

## US workers losing wage battle

The \$20 hourly wage, introduced on a huge scale in the middle of the last century.... is on its way to extinction....

The shrinkage is sometimes quite open. The Big Three automakers are buying out [over 100,000] employees who earn above \$20 an hour, replacing many with new hires tied to a "second tier" wage scale that never quite reaches \$20.... and with fewer benefits.

The United Auto Workers agreed to this arrangement, accepting management's argument that it must have labor cost relief to rebound and prosper....

The auto workers weren't first. They ratified a practice that had spread... lowering earning power for new hires.

Two tiers is one tactic. Another is filling middle-income jobs with temporary workers earning less. Add outsourcing to the list.... Then there are the manufacturers who close a union plant and shift production to a nonunion one, often in the South but also in the Midwest....

Tens of thousands of workers have accepted wage cuts pressed on them by embattled employers. (NYT, 4/20)

## US ally slaughters unionists

More than 2,500 union members in Colombia have been killed since 1985, with fewer than 100 cases resulting in convictions.... President Uribe's former intelligence chief is under investigation for handing over lists to paramilitaries of union leaders and other left-wing figures who were singled out

for assassination. (NYT, 4/14)

## People know who really runs US

Asked how much the country should be governed according to the will of the people — on a scale with 0 meaning not at all and 10 completely — the mean response is 7.9.... But Americans do not think this is what they are getting. Asked how much influence the people do have, the mean response is far lower: on average 4.0.

This may explain, in part, why just 19 percent say they believe the country is run "for the benefit of all the people," while 80 percent say it is "run by a few big interests looking out for themselves." (LAT, 4/4)





# Ira Gollobin: A Communist for All Seasons

Ira Gollobin, a great friend of PLP who made an enormous contribution in the area of dialectical materialism, died from a staph infection in his blood and lungs on Friday, April 4, in his 97th year. In a lifetime of struggle, Ira was as much at home on the picket line as in the courtroom. He never stopped fighting for nearly an entire century!

In addition to authoring one of the definitive works on Dialectics, Ira had a great influence on PLP. He was present at a December 1961 meeting of a group of about 30 members of the old Communist Party (CP) who had concluded that the CP was dead as a communist organization and that it was necessary to organize a new party. Out of that meeting the Progressive Labor Movement was born six months later, and the Progressive Labor Party three years after that. Ira endorsed that outlook.

For years afterwards, he taught many classes on dialectics to leaders and members of PL and was partly responsible for the crucial emphasis PLP has placed on members studying this subject. This was probably his most important contribution to our Party. In addition, Ira was our lawyer in many government attacks on the Party, as far back as the early 1960s, and then taking the offensive against the witch-hunting House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC). Ira always agreed with our position to not simply rely on the “legal” front but to organize militant demonstrations and make a political defense (which many other lawyers told us would “hurt” our case).

In his early years as an attorney in New York City, Ira defended many victims of the Great Depression. After he passed the bar in 1935, he left New York to spend a year “seeing the country.” He

became a migrant worker, picking oranges and walnuts in the fields of the West, “riding the rails” with jobless workers. He said these experiences “sealed my identification with the underdog.”

When distributing leaflets during a strike at Presbyterian Hospital in NYC, he met members of the American Committee for Protection of the Foreign Born and eventually this cause dominated his life as he became the country’s leading immigration lawyer and a member of the Committee’s General Counsel. He saved the jobs of 1,500 NYC foreign-born transit workers and enabled workers fleeing Nazi Germany and Franco’s fascist Spain to be admitted to the U.S. He won a landmark decision before the U.S. Supreme Court for 300 Haitian immigrants who had been refused asylum, the government claiming they were “economic” refugees, but Ira won the case to identify them as political refugees fleeing the Duvalier dictatorship.

Over the years we sent him scores of workers with immigration problems and he successfully defended them against government attacks (money for fees was never an obstacle).

Ira was part of a generation that risked their lives to join the fight against fascism, first in the Spanish Civil War, and then against the Nazis and the Japanese fascists, a fight led by the world communist movement. Ira was more than a lawyer. Being a dialectician, he understood the necessity to practice what he preached.

Serving in the Philippines in the army when World War II ended in 1945, he led a struggle to prevent U.S. rulers from using thousands of GI’s to repress the communist-led Filipino guerrilla movement (the “Huks”) — that had been crucial in defeating the Japanese — and even to ship them to Vietnam to assist the French colonial oppressors in that country. But the GI’s, having defeated Japanese fascism, were seeking to return home and wanted no part of this, looking on the “Huks” as comrades-in-arms. So Ira helped organize militant actions opposing the brass, putting 35,000 GI’s into the streets of Manila on January 7, 1946. He led a 5-member committee that met with the brass to tell them the GI’s would refuse



to carry out this mission for U.S. imperialism. They succeeded and the GI’s were shipped home over the ensuing months (although Ira and the committee were immediately flown back to the States, the brass not wanting to deal with their leadership). The “Bring the Boys Home” movement soon spread around the world. (For CHALLENGE article, see website: <<http://www.plp.org/cd02/cd0313.html>>)

Ira was a stickler for physical fitness. In his 70’s and 80’s he was still running six miles a day, six days a week and was working out in the gym three times a week in his 90’s. (In going through his belongings in the hospital his daughter found his gym card still in his back pocket.) He spent 20 years writing his monumental work, “Dialectical Materialism, Its Laws, Categories and Practice.”

Ira was a supporter of PLP right to the end, generous in his financial donations, giving our Party five cartons of Marxist books from his personal library. The revolutionary communist movement will sorely miss Ira, but his contribution to Marxist theory and practice will live on in our members’ study of dialectical materialism and the carrying out of that theory in practice, a cause to which Ira devoted his life. The best way we can honor him is to use those tools to organize a communist revolution and the emancipation of the working class.☺



Ira winning a case defending Haitian workers

## 1968: How 10 Million Workers Shut Down France



Forty years ago this May, a revolt by millions of French workers and students led to a general strike that paralyzed the country for three weeks, caused the government to collapse and electrified the entire world. This struggle’s anniversary is noteworthy because “May 68” still has much to teach us.

The upheaval began as a student protest, similar to those occurring on a daily basis during that period throughout Europe and the U.S., although general working-class anger and a 67-day white-collar metal workers’ strike in Saint Nazaire in 1967 provided the tinder for the spark that was about to come. That strike affected all the metal workers and won broad solidarity from all the workers in

the city, especially from women’s protest marches of 3,000 and 4,000.

On March 22 in 1968, about 150 students and others invaded an administration building at Nanterre University outside Paris to demand reforms in the university’s budget. The administration called the cops and the students left the building. Protests continued, so on May 2 the administration closed Nanterre.

Four days later, 20,000 students and professors marched to the Sorbonne, Paris’s main university. The police rioted, launching tear gas grenades and beating and arresting hundreds of protesters. On May 10, another mass demonstration led to a pitched battle, lasting well into the night. Again, the cops ran amok. Police provocateurs launched Molotov cocktails, providing a convenient excuse for more beatings and arrests.

By now, sympathy for the student protesters and revulsion at police brutality was spreading throughout the working class. The French “Communist” Party — having long become a pro-ruling class puppet — and oth-

er fake-left organizations attempted to co-opt the growing movement with a call for a one-day strike on May 13. More than a million people marched through Paris that day. The government made minor concessions, but the protests mounted.

Most significantly, they spread throughout the working class. On May 13, workers at the Sud Aviation plant in the western city of Nantes began a sit-down strike. A strike by Renault auto parts workers near the northern city of Rouen spread to the Renault manufacturing complexes in the Seine valley and the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt. By

continued on page 7

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