



CHALLENGE

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Rivalry Over Gas Pipeline Feeds Ruler's War Surge

"The Good War," as the media calls Obama's mounting slaughter in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has the same imperialist motive as the war in Iraq: U.S. dominance of world oil and natural gas supplies to counter Chinese, Russian, and regional competitors. In 1979, Jimmy Carter declared that the U.S. would regard any other power's encroachment on Exxon Mobil's turf as an act of war and backed up his threat with his new Rapid Deployment Force. The Carter Doctrine formalized the United States' top strategic priority: securing and controlling Mideast and Central Asian energy and export routes.

Last month, with the agreement by

Iran and Pakistan to complete a 1,200-mile IP (Iran-Pakistan) gas pipeline from the South Pars gas fields in Iran to Karachi, this strategy suffered a grave setback. According to Middle East Energy Strategy, a newsletter from Harvard's Olin Institute, "What may seem like a standard energy project could have profound implications for the geopolitics of energy in the 21st century and for the future of south Asia, as well as for America's ability to check Iran's hegemony in the Persian Gulf" (5/29/09). In retaliation, Obama is sending in his new Afghanistan commander, Harvard-trained General Stanley McChrystal, best known for his command of death- and torture-

squads in Iraq and Afghanistan. These ground-based "special operations" will supplement airborne Drone terror strikes in Pakistan. And coming soon: 21,000 more GIs in Afghanistan.

**Iran, China, Russia Score
Economic, Military Gains**

U.S. rivals come out big winners in the pipeline deal. Iran gets steady income to offset losses stemming from U.S.-led sanctions, and also cements political ties with nuclear-armed Pakistan, already a shaky U.S. ally. As for China, "Iranian gas will flow to the Baluchistan province port of Gwadar, in the Arabian Sea [where China is now building a refinery]. And Gwadar is supposed to be connected to a proposed pipeline going north" to China (Asia Times, 5/29/09). Even before it launches a blue-water navy, China will gain the ability to import energy along routes beyond the reach of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. "With IP in place and with multi-billion-dollar, overlapping Tehran-Beijing gas deals, China can finally afford to import less energy via the Strait of Malacca, which Beijing considers exceedingly dangerous, and subject to Washington's sphere of influence" (Asia Times). For Russia, meanwhile, "IP is a gift-from-above tool in rerouting gas from Iran to South Asia away from competing with Russian gas. The big prize, in this case, is the Western European market, dependent almost 30% on Gazprom [the gigantic Russian gas company] and the source of 80% of Gazprom's export profits" (Asia Times).

**Pentagon Unleashes Ivy
League Assassin-in-Chief**

By mid-summer, Obama's deadly Afghan surge will be poised to strike, backed by a new U.S. Marine megabase in Helmand province, a stone's throw from the Iran-Afghan border and Pakistani Baluchistan, where the pipeline will run. It's the ideal strategic

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U.S. Pours Fuel on Iranian Fires

Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets to protest last week's presidential election in Iran. Several things are driving the battles taking place in Tehran. Economic problems caused by falling oil prices are causing attacks on the standard of living. There is a built-up hatred of the ruling class by young people alienated from the fundamentalist movement as well as people who had hoped the 1979 revolution against the Shah would liberate them and were betrayed. Divisions have developed within the Iranian ruling class on whether to deal solely with China and Russia or develop closer business ties with Europe. This is happening as covert operations by the U.S. to build up anti-government movements in Iran have been stepped up in recent years and are exploiting the contradictions in Iranian capitalism.

The anger at the disputed Ahmadinejad election victory is in part a reaction to 30 years of the Iranian ruling class' brutality. Tehran's rulers secured power by jailing, torturing and killing many thousands of people who had allied with them to

get rid of the Shah. The left-wing and liberal parties who joined forces with Ayatollah Khomeini's fundamentalist movement were immediately turned on and attacked once the Shah was ousted. For years the remnants of these movements have been waiting for an opportunity like this.

The U.S. has invested heavily in the weakening of the Iranian ruling class. In his last year in office the Bush administration, under Defense Secretary Gates, began a \$400 million program of covert operations in Iran to destabilize the country (New Yorker 7/7/08). While it has never been publicly confirmed, "It is very hard to imagine Obama abandoning covert operations [in Iran]" (Stratfor, 1/12/09). This estimate was strengthened with Obama's retention of Gates as Secretary of Defense. Unless there is a mass communist movement built in Iran, the current uprisings are leading people into the arms of the U.S. ruling class, just as the movements of 1979 against the U.S.-installed murderer, Shah Reza Pahlavi, led to the installation of the Khomeini-led capitalists.

Obama's Big Beginning: Wider War, Billion\$ to Banks, Jobs Down, Rising Racism, Foreclosures - All in 100 Days!

Millions of workers supported Obama, wanting real change: jobs, an end to the imperialist wars, and, importantly, a victory against racism. However, Obama's first 100 days hasn't been the "change" from the Bush administration workers expected.

The day Obama was inaugurated, home foreclosures and racist unemployment were at their highest pace since the 1930s. Defenders of Obama claimed that he 'inherited' these crises from the Bush administration. Throughout the Bush years, CHALLENGE argued that the real problem "isn't Bush, it's capitalism." It doesn't matter which president is in office; the ruling class sets the agenda.

Instead of bailing out the working class, Obama gutted the auto workers' contract, gave billions to his ruling-class buddies and called on workers to sacrifice for the "good of the country." On April 27, Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in the presence of Senator Kennedy and former President Clinton. This will triple the number of U.S. youth volunteering for AmeriCorps, create four new national service corps (three focused on youth) and turn September 11 into a National Day of Service. The building of this volunteer corps takes people's desire to serve the working class and directs it into service for the needs of the bosses. It will create a free army that can be mobi-

lized as the wars waged by the rulers expand. It is a partial realization of the Hart-Rudman Commission's report that outline the ruling-class's plans for confronting rising imperialist rivals like Russia and China, and securing long-term global military superiority.

Obama's true class loyalties were foreshadowed by his reaction to the Israeli genocide in Gaza. During Bush's last months, Obama was more than willing to accuse Bush of "mishandling" the economy, and yet didn't say a word about the thousands of men, women, and children being killed and maimed. His only remark was "we only have one president at a time." Even Ben Cohen, liberal columnist and staunch Obama supporter, commented that Obama's "silence was deafening" (Huffington Post, 12/29). When Israel destroyed a U.N. school and murdered at least 40 Palestinian refugees, Obama turned a blind eye.

Millions of workers expected and hoped that the Obama administration would improve workers' lives. Obama staffed his administration with bank executives, former Clinton advisors like Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, and known torturers like General McChrystal, now in charge in Afghanistan. The Obama-led government passed a \$787 billion "stimulus" package, secured a bank bailout and nationalized the auto industry. Obama's priority has been saving the capitalists. He has no intention of stopping the foreclosures that are leaving thousands of families homeless with each passing week nor of fixing the racist unemployment that grows with each passing month.

As a presidential candidate, Obama promised to bring all combat troops back from Iraq by May

20, 2010. This gave him an edge among workers over Clinton or McCain, who admitted U.S. involvement in the Middle East may stretch a century or more. On February 27, President Obama changed his promise. By December, he plans to remove only two of the fourteen brigades, leaving a so-called residual force of around 50,000 troops. Those remaining beyond the Bush-brokered "Status of Forces Agreement" with the U.S.-sponsored Iraqi government will be merely renamed "advisory training brigades."

Meanwhile, Obama continues authorizing the massive bombing campaign over Afghanistan and missile strikes onto villages in Pakistan. The makers of these weapons, arms industry giants such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon have a strong voice in the Obama administration through William J. Lynn III, former Raytheon lobbyist and Obama's new Undersecretary of Defense, and Senator Edward M. Kennedy, one of their favorite campaign contribution recipients. The arms industry is intertwined with the very megabanks like J.P. Morgan Chase and Citigroup whose former executives now advise Obama's administration.

Obama, just like Bush before him, has shown his willingness to serve the bankers and bosses at the expense of the working class. No matter how much we hope for change, the capitalists will never allow a president who isn't loyal to them to occupy the White House. Voting will never bring about a society that truly serves the needs of the workers of the world. Only communist revolution can do that. ☛

OUR FIGHT

★ **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 — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.**

★ **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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Pipeline Rivalry

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base for an extended, tri-border (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan) "counter-insurgency splash," as coined by General David Petraeus, head of the U.S. Central Command (Asia Times, 6/4/09). Key to this effort will be Gen. McChrystal's secret Special Operations killers, "targeted assassination teams working out of Afghan bases in Kandahar and Nangarhar, and allied with wily, local militias" (Asia Times). These militias, cynically manipulated by U.S. war makers, are separatist, nationalist Baluchi tribes. They claim a homeland that spans parts of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, including the critical Gwadar port.

The imminent Iran-Pakistan pipeline sharply contrasts with its hapless rival, the U.S.-backed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) project. Begun under Clinton and Unocal (now Chevron) in 1995, TAPI's U.S. backers first courted and then fell out with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban. In 1999, when the Taliban favored an Argentine rival builder, Bidas, Clinton pulled the plug on the deal and essentially ended—temporarily—the U.S.-Taliban alliance. Taliban-run Afghanistan soon became a haven for al Qaeda, and its training ground. Washington has repeatedly insisted that its sole objective in invading Afghanistan in 2001 was to defeat Taliban and al Qaeda forces. But of late, pipeline building has reemerged as a chief aim. Bidas, which U.S. rulers now grudgingly support as a hedge against Chinese, Russian, and Iranian interests, has re-opened TAPI talks with Kabul. But while these negotiations remain in the talking stage, Iranian gas is set to flow to Gwadar and Karachi by 2014.

U.S. rivals make significant geostrategic gains with the stroke of a pen and guarantee them with vast numbers of nearby troops. U.S. rulers, on the other hand, can't enforce deals without transporting their war machine across oceans and continents. Relative U.S. weakness is creating a field day

atmosphere among Moscow's and Beijing's military planners. "Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated in April that Russia and China would strengthen their military cooperation through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and engage in several joint military maneuvers. He implied that these plans were aimed at limiting the U.S.'s presence in Central Asia" (Asia Times, 6/13/09). At the same time, Russia is marshalling former Soviet vassals into a fighting alliance called the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). "The new force would comprise large military units from five countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The creation of a powerful military contingent in Central Asia reflects Moscow's drive to make the CSTO a pro-Russian military bloc, rivaling NATO forces in Europe" (Asia Times).

Phony "peace candidate" Obama is fully on board with the war program that U.S. capitalists require. Today it is death squads and more troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Tomorrow it could be a frontal confrontation with China or Russia — a step that will require a full military mobilization of the U.S. This includes disciplining the capitalist class and rebuilding infrastructure (popular media topics) and a restoration of the draft (an as yet unmentionable one).

Obama is no friend of the working class. Despite his Cairo speech to "reach out" to the Muslim world, these are the same people who suffer daily atrocities in U.S. war zones. At home, millions of jobs have vanished under the new president. Poverty and police terror run rampant. Yet despite the decay of material conditions for the working class, Obama enjoys sky-high approval ratings: proof of his value to U.S. rulers. Exposing Obama's true class allegiance — and his role — in these worsening times is a major priority for our Party. ☛

Peru's Indigenous Indians: Armed Fight Challenges U.S. Imperialism's Power Grab

LIMA, PERU, June 8 — Massive armed protests by thousands of Indigenous Indians have rocked this country. The fight is over government decrees doling out vast tracts of the farmers' communal forest lands to corporations for oil and gas drilling, logging, mining, control of water resources and large-scale agriculture. The robbery is being carried out under government decrees directly linked to a Peru-U.S. trade pact that "would bring Peru's rules for investment in jungle areas into line with the trade agreement." (NY Times, 6/12) The decrees would enable these capitalists to seize 72% of the country's rain forest for exploitation of natural resources that threatens the survival of the Indigenous peoples.

But the people are not taking this corporate grab lying down. After sporadically blocking roads, waterways, state-owned oil pipelines and airports since April 9, violent clashes erupted on June 5. Government troops opened fire on unarmed protesters from helicopter gunships, tanks and the tops of buildings killing them while they slept alongside a road. Over 250 protesters were slain, "disappeared," burned and/or thrown in rivers. Hundreds more were wounded in the massacre. The protesters say there is a cover-up: "The government is trying to clean the blood off its hands by hiding the truth," declared Andrés Huaynacari Etsam, an Awa-jun student who said five relatives were killed and three are missing. (NYT, 6/12)

Insurgents Turn the Guns Around

A thousand Indians then killed 25 cops and abducted 38 as hostages. In one battle the insurgents wrestled guns away from the cops. Two hundred Mahiguenga Indians occupied an oil pipeline valve station in the Southeast, where the rebellion had spread from the North. Although the Army re-took it, the Indians said they would try again.

A general strike on June 11 brought thousands out into the streets in Iquitos, the largest Peruvian city in the Amazon, and spread to cities as far away as the capital and Arequipa on the Pacific coast.

The militant struggle forced Peru's Congress to temporarily suspend the decrees, Said 24-year-old Wagner Musoline Acho, "The government made... [a] condescending depiction of us as gangs of savages in the forest.... They think we can be tricked by a maneuver like suspending a couple of decrees for a few weeks and then reintroducing them, and they are wrong." (NYT, 6/12)

President Alan Garcia has declared a "state of emergency" and imposed a curfew, but that has only escalated the rebellion which has spread to the strategic South. Garcia has ordered the arrest of one of the leaders, Alberto Pizango, on "sedition" charges and has suspended the constitution in four provinces. The protesters have charged the government with violating both the country's constitution as well as international law for failing to obtain the Indigenous peoples' consent before any of their land and resources can be given away.

The Peruvian Jungle Interethnic Development Association which has organized the protests represents over 300,000 people from dozens of Indigenous groups. Their leaders have charged the government with genocide for the killings of their people. Daniel Marzano, an Asháninka leader from Atalaya Province, declared: "We want an immediate halt to every project that was conceived without consulting those of us who live in the forest." (NY Times, 6/6) They vow that their protests will continue until their demands are met. They have derailed a plan by Brazilian-controlled Electrobras to erect five hydroelectric plants on the Indigenous people's lands at a cost of \$10 billion.

A Duke University scientists' study reported that, "At least 58 of the 64 areas secured by multi-

national companies for oil exploration overlay lands titled to indigenous peoples." (NYT, 6/5) Contracts for oil and gas exploration cover 72% of Peru's rain forest.

While the government hands over billions of dollars worth of resources to these corporations, 40% of the country's population — half of whom are Indigenous — live in poverty. (NYT,)

Meanwhile, Ollanta Humala, a nationalist and a former lieutenant-colonel in Peru's army who was defeated in the last presidential election, has sided with the insurgents to prime himself for the 2011 election. President Garcia, who also held the position in the 1980s, is the very butcher who suppressed a prison rebellion in 1980 and murdered over 100 inmates as "suspected guerrillas." (NYT, 6/7)

The rebellion exposes the role of the capitalist state. The constitution is not worth the bosses' paper it's printed on. If it endangers the multi-nationals' aim to exploit the workers' and farmers' claim to the country's rich resources, the rulers' government simply voids it. And when the exploited classes rebel to assert their rights, that same government comes down with the full weight of its state apparatus, army, air force and police, to crush them.

The rebels must not rely on the bosses' laws or elections of a nationalist ex-army officer like Humala to protect them. A revolutionary communist leadership is needed to combat these attacks and forge a movement for a communist society with an armed struggle for working-class ownership and distribution of the wealth of resources that are being stolen by Peru's bosses and their international capitalist backers. ☛

Boston Teachers, Students and Parents Unite to Fight Budget Cuts

BOSTON, MA, May 19 — Chanting "Bail out schools, not banks" and "Money for schools, not war," Boston teachers, students, parents and supporters rallied at the State House and marched to City Hall. We demanded no cuts in public school programs and full funding for community colleges and public education.

This was the first mass action of Boston teachers against budget cuts since layoffs were announced in December. Teachers attacked cuts in their own schools. A Haitian community leader spoke against cutbacks, pointing to rising immigrant dropout rates. A Roxbury Community College student attacked underfunding at state colleges. A parent explained how cuts in inner-city schools are racist. A school bus driver opposed the Superintendent's plan to further segregate the Boston public schools by creating five zones and restricting school choice to within these zones.

A PLP speaker called for an end to the system of capitalism that created the economic crisis. PLP leaflets calling for communist revolution were distributed.

To organize this rally inside the Boston Teachers Union (BTU), teachers had to fight the BTU Executive Board for months. The Board overturned the vote of the BTU membership to sponsor the rally, disgusting many members. The Board is calling for more taxes on working people, and for lobbying "friends" in the government. But many teachers followed the call to hold the rally anyway!

Teachers are skilled workers. But, like all workers, they are under attack by the bosses. Therefore, they must unite with working-class parents and students to fight against the bosses and their budget cuts. Otherwise, other workers may view teachers as "greedy and selfish." By fighting to improve the education of working-class students and against racism, imperialism and war, teachers can fight for the needs of the whole working class.

The Progressive Labor Party tries to give leadership to the anger of the hundreds and thousands of teachers, parents and students and turn the fight against cutbacks into the fight for communist revolution. ☛

Racist LA School Cuts Sacrifice Students, Not Bankers' Profits

LOS ANGELES, June 15 — Students at high schools across this city walked out against racist budget cuts, carrying picket signs teachers had put up on their classroom doors, to protest the rulers' Board of Education's layoffs and increase in class size.

Obama called for "shared sacrifice" in his inaugural address, and lauded "the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job." On May 27, LA Mayor Villaraigosa said, "Given the unprecedented economic downturn in California, everyone must share in the responsibility and sacrifice to bridge this budget deficit." But neither of these bosses' servants said the bankers must share their profits.

This idea isn't new. For years, autoworkers were told a pay cut would avoid job losses. They've taken pay cut after pay cut, and then lost their jobs as well. That's the way a profit system works.

Given the state budget crisis and virtual collapse of the union leadership in the wake of the May 15 injunction, teachers may be forced to take a pay cut "to save teacher jobs and class size," but will probably wind up with both a cut and layoffs.

The fight continues with picket lines, community camp-outs and other actions. But the reluctance of teachers to strike against the injunction indicates our class must gain the confidence to defy the union leadership. The teachers and students fighting together against the cutbacks has been an inspiring example of working-class unity. Most important is the increase in CHALLENGE readers, five youth joining PLP, more meeting with the Party and distributing CHALLENGE. In this crisis, the working class's main victory is the growth of the communist movement.

We communists believe in sharing scarcity as well as abundance, and we believe that the

working class can be won to this communist idea. While the willingness of many teachers to take a pay cut in the belief they will save jobs and prevent class size increase might be an example of the collective spirit of the working class, under capitalism "shared sacrifice" is a lie and a trap.

Workers' militancy should be used not to negotiate their wages and conditions down but to fight to up the ante of class struggle. The hypocrisy of a system that gives \$750 billion of workers' taxes to super-rich bankers while they squeeze predominantly black and Latino students into larger and larger classes must be exposed. Then they cut teachers' wages to boot! In this capitalist class society, it's always the working class who sacrifices and the rich who live off that sacrifice.

The German poet Bertholt Brecht wrote in "A German War Primer" in 1938:

"Those who take the meat from the table preach contentment.

Those for whom the taxes are destined demand sacrifice...

Those who lead the country into the abyss call ruling too difficult for ordinary men."

Capitalism is in a deepening crisis. The U.S. is isolated internationally, fighting an imperialist war on at least two fronts, leading the international global market into decline and attacking workers to pay for this crisis. Millions are losing their jobs and homes. The only government expenses not being cut are their war expenditures, the police and the prisons — the infrastructure for the war and fascism which is the capitalists' main hope of surviving this crisis.

Clearly capitalism cannot provide a decent life for the working class. It must and can be overthrown and replaced by a communist system based on collective work, collective planning,

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Stella D'Oro Diary 3: Strikers Continue to Fight

Bronx, NY, June 17 —

For the wife of J.F. -

*En la vida todo es ir
In life everything is going
A lo que el tiempo deshace.
towards what time is undoing.
Sabe el hombre donde nace
Where we are born we know,
Y no dónde va a morir.
not where we're going to die.*

This dialectical poem by the revolutionary Juan Antonio Corretjer¹ captures the experience of Puerto Rican workers' migration to New York, and treats life itself as an endless migration from our birthplace into unknown time. It speaks to the poignant experience of time in any migrating worker's life. We heard that in the memorial tribute by his brother to Marcelo Lucero, the Ecuadoran immigrant worker murdered by racists in Long Island last year. And we hear it in the strike of the Stella workers, 97% of whom were born outside the U.S.. The strikers tell us that not knowing how a long strike will end is a hard thing to live through.

If you ask them what is the worst thing about their strike many speak of the dragging, endless time waiting on their corner of north Broadway for the strike to be resolved. "Ten months! In two months it'll be a whole year!" "We started in summer... into the fall... winter... spring... and now it's summer again — another summer!" They shake their heads, put their hands on your arm and ask "Are all strikes this long? How long are other strikes?" Where is it going? Is all this time undoing their lives? Is everything coming undone because of the boss's heartlessness and refusal to listen to them even when they speak in the chants of a thousand supporters?

Sitting near us in the courtroom last month, while the Brynwood lawyer and the hated manager Dan Meyers droned on with their racist contempt for the workers, an older woman from Africa looked so sad we asked her what she was feeling, and she said she was thinking about her life ending this way, destroyed by these people. That's one ending to the strike people are thinking about, that it might be the end of their working lives, the death

of their common life together in the factory which, exploitation and all, was nevertheless a life where they shared good feelings as well as hard times, and had pride in their collective strength as unionized workers who had struck twice already for their demands. Will they ever go back to that time?

The Brynwood bosses, snug in their Connecticut suburbs, of course count on a strike wearing down the workers, but the strikers say grimly that Brynwood has underestimated them all along and that they will never give in. And strike time is not all unrelieved waiting. It is punctuated by a big rally that lifts their spirits; the last was twice the size of the previous one and they see they are gaining momentum. Every day other workers come with coffee and they know they are not alone. Yesterday a TWU busdriver blasted his horn going by and yelled through the window "Down with the scabs!" Those scabs walk brazenly past and they get up from the crates they're sitting on and yell at them, competing to make up witty insults.

They see their fellow workers step up and develop as leaders growing in political knowledge and skill (one man on her shift bought one of these new women strike leaders a bullhorn of her own, as testimony to her fighting for all the workers). They know they are being talked about by radical workers in Germany and Guatemala and Spain and France and wherever CHALLENGE is read around the wide world they come from. Some come to meetings with PLP and discuss it all at length, as we make it possible for them to know one another, and speak together, in new, politically informed ways. But others sit there on their crates. A striker's time drags and drags and drags towards its unknown end.

People are getting tired and worn down; they get sick again and again. (It's good that tomorrow some doctors are coming to the line to do free



BRONX, NY, May 30 — Stella D'Oro Strikers and Supporters March to the Factory Gate

checkups.) Some are thinking about bankruptcy or looking for other jobs — will another job be the end of their time at Stella? A spouse's grave illness removes one of the most militant workers from strike activity and we don't see him for more than two months. A woman speaks of how hard it is to answer her five-year-old grandson's question, "Where are you going? Is that strike still on?" The strikers don't know the end of the process, but they know the way, their struggle is making the road by walking. All of a worker's struggling life is going, going forward, and starting from their political "birth" place at Stella D'Oro some of these workers may die as revolutionaries. We, and they don't know where we individually will end, but we and they do know that the working class itself will never die. ☺

(Endnote)

1. Corretjer left the revisionist Puerto Rican Communist party to found the Liga Socialista, which for a time in the 1960s was a fraternal party of the young PLP. You can find on the internet Roy Brown's musical setting of this poem in decima style sung by him, the group Haciendo Punto, and the Catalán singer Joan Manuel Serrat.



PLP is holding its
National Summer Projects
N.Y. & Seattle July 5 - July 12, L.A. July 13 - July 28

to mobilize workers, students, and soldiers to fight back against imperialist war and fascism, and to build and support our political work among hundreds of thousands of workers in key sectors vital to U.S. imperialism

Help us make this year's Summer Project a successful one.
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Four Years Post-Katrina: A Capitalist Disaster

Because of inherent racism, capitalism turned Hurricane Katrina into a destructive disaster for working people, a result which could have been prevented. Four years ago this coming August, Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, causing damage from central Florida to Texas and displacing over a million workers.

The majority of destruction was in New Orleans where 80% of the city was flooded and 1,836 workers' lives were lost. The federal flood protection plan failed in 50 places and almost every levee was breached. Working-class people were stranded in flooded neighborhoods as the police and National Guard pulled guns on them, preventing them from entering the Superdome.

The areas in New Orleans affected the most and suffering the highest death rate were those in black and Latin communities. The local and federal governments did nothing to protect these communities, which were poverty-stricken even before the hurricane.

The news media painted a racist and anti-working-class picture of the city's residents. While levees were breaking and police were preventing residents from crossing bridges to non-flooded areas, the media focused on attacking people that were "looting" food from local grocery stores. People who had been stuck on roofs and in flooded areas had no other choice but to

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Korea: From U.S.-Japanese Colony to Pro-Communist Land to State Capitalism



On June 12, the U.S. had trade sanctions placed on North Korea to punish it for testing a nuclear bomb. This conflict is part of a rising one between the U.S. and China, one where the U.S. tries to marshal anti-communism to win U.S. workers to support increasing military action worldwide.

North Korea is repeatedly presented as a mystery, a place impossible to understand, with a crazy, untrustworthy leader, likely to irrationally attack the U.S. or Japan or other "play-by-the-rules" nations. Ironically, U.S. imperialist urge workers to trust them — the only ones who have experience using these "weapons of mass destruction" in war!

Modern Korea began with Japanese and U.S. imperialism, and the wars they fought to gain control of the region. In 1905, Japan "won" Korea as a colony after a war with Russia. Teddy Roosevelt received a Nobel Prize for brokering "peace" between the two imperialist rivals, one that included Japan's acceptance of U.S. control of the Philippines. In 1945, after 40 years of brutal exploitation and resistance to Japanese imperialism by Korean workers, the U.S. occupied southern Korea. As part of its World War II victory, the U.S. took what is now called South Korea as both an economic beachhead and a potential garrison for containing the Soviet Union and the communist-led, anti-imperialist movements of northern Asia.

Initially, a pro-U.S. government was staffed by Koreans who had served in the hated Japanese

army and police force, but it couldn't shut down the people's committees that had been formed during the anti-Japanese resistance.

In June, 1950, after months of border skirmishes, most often initiated by the South Korean government, the U.S. demanded UN permission to attack North Korea for what it alleged was a foreign "invasion" of South Korea. Plagued by guerrilla resistance to landlords, to former collaborators and to U.S. rule, the U.S. hoped to "roll back" the northern communist regime that it blamed for civil war in the south.

The resulting Korean War demonstrated the lengths to which U.S. butchers would go to destroy communism and defend imperialism. As control of Korean territory passed back and forth between U.S. and North Korean forces, U.S. officials adopted a scorched-earth policy aimed at wiping out every city in North Korea.

By August 1950, B-29 formations were dropping 800 tons of bombs per day over North Korea, many of them pure napalm. Every city in North Korea was damaged, with most experiencing 75-80% destruction. U.S. bombers targeted dams and shot farmers in their fields. The goal: to starve the population into submission. The U.S. also threatened to use atomic bombs, moving them into Asia, and ran practice atomic bomb drops over the North.

As a result of this aerial bombardment, 4 million out of a population of 30 million died during the Korean War: 2 million North Korean civilians, 1 million South Korean civilians, and 500,000 North Korean troops. A million Chinese soldiers (who had joined in the defense of Korea just as Koreans had fought in their revolution) and 56,000 American soldiers were also killed. Like the Vietnamese a decade later, Koreans know from personal experience that U.S. imperialists have never valued the lives of the worlds' working class.

A 1953 truce — officially the war has never ended — left Korea just as divided as before. The Korean communist party (the Workers' Party) of Kim Il Sung governed the North. A fascist, pro-U.S. government ruled the South, aided by a permanent garrison of some 40,000 U.S. troops armed with nuclear missiles and tactical nuclear weapons. North Korea defied the U.S. military assault, but its own political weaknesses turned this victory into a defeat for the international working class.

Founded in 1925, the Korean communist party grew out of the resistance to Japanese occupation in the wake of World War I and the Bolshevik revolution. Part of an international movement, thousands of Koreans served in the Chinese Communist army during the resistance to Japan.

In 1946-47, the Korean communist party initiated land reform, made education and health care free for all, liberated women, and nationalized

the large number of Japanese and U.S. factories in the North. But these socialist reforms did not move Korea toward communism. The Korean party focused on building "socialism in one country" which, over time, led to nationalism becoming its primary ideology.

In modern North Korea, no slogans call for workers' power or internationalism. Banners proclaim "Long Live the Great Juche idea!" "Juche," calls for national (Korean) independence in politics, economics and defense; the term is linked to monarchist ideologies that meld the people and the nation into the person and family of the ruler, now Kim Jong Il, the son of Kim Il Sung. Glorified images of Kim Il Sung — reminiscent of the cult of the individual that weakened the Soviet Union and China — replaced the internationalism and the fight for communism that were once part of Korean practice.

Within its nationalism, North Korea retained wage differences and operated within the broad international economy. From the 1950s to 1980s it traded with the USSR and China for raw materials (oil) and manufactured goods. In the 1990s, with the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the intensification of capitalism in Russia and China, North Korea began to suffer the problems of all capitalist economies. Russia wanted hard currency for oil, and Korea had to find more markets for its goods.

The North Korean government had two responses to these economic problems, both reflecting state capitalism, not communist goals. One offered its workforce as low-wage labor by setting up free trade zones where South Korean and Japanese factories employ highly-skilled North Korean workers at low wages.

The other was to enhance its exports. In the 1990s, the trade in weapons became an increasingly important source of petroleum and foreign currency, and North Korea became a major supplier of SCUD missiles to countries such as Iran who are linked to China, Russia and other rivals of U.S. power. North Korea's push to develop nuclear weapons is a tool to gain economic benefits and to manipulate the intensifying imperialist rivalries.

None of this benefits the working class. We can draw two lessons: One- no matter what sweet words the latest U.S. ruler coos, imperialism is a dead-end and a death trap for the working class. Second- there are no shortcuts to communism, to a society without wages, run by the working class. Nationalism has repeatedly been offered as a path to change, and it has repeatedly led workers back to capitalism and to death, whether in the Middle East, Asia, or the U.S. Only an international communist movement to smash capitalism worldwide can end war, racism and exploitation once and for all. ☪

Four Years Post-Katrina

continued from p. 4

take food to survive.

The violence, which the media skewed, was mainly by cops and the National Guard against the people in the affected areas. The media, a ruling-class tool, is used to slander working people. However, from the beginning CHALLENGE exposed the bosses' neglect of the working class and the media's lies.

Today, we see little change in the politicians' and government agencies' response to problems stemming from Katrina. Of the 1,859 public housing apartments in the St. Bernard and Lafitte Housing developments, only 10 have been replaced. Only 11% of families have been able to return to the Lower 9th ward, one of the poorest and most devastated communities. There are 25% fewer hospitals in New Orleans than before Hurricane Katrina hit. Almost the entire school system, formerly public, has been privatized and has left teachers without a union.

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management

Agency) was scheduled to give \$2.6 billion to the state of Louisiana and \$1.9 billion to New Orleans, neither of which has been delivered (San Francisco Bay View, 11/09/08). But the government has no problem spending \$750 billion dollars to bail out U.S. bankers.

On June 1, FEMA was set to evict thousands of residents from their FEMA trailer homes, but after militant protests, the government was forced to sell the trailers to the residents for \$1. Here, four years after the hurricane, workers are still living in trailers, many of which were poisoned with toxins and poor construction, sickening many people.

The rulers have used this disaster to gentrify New Orleans and profit off the reconstruction in the tourist and rich neighborhoods. Undocumented workers have been hired at poverty wages, sometimes going unpaid, to work in unsafe conditions to rebuild the city. What was a disaster for the people of New Orleans has been turned into a gold mine for the ruling class.

Cuba has created a hurricane emergency system which, even as a remnant of the system that existed before Cuba gave up on fighting for the interests of the working class, has consistently kept death tolls to a minimum during hurricane season. Cuba assigns people to distribute medication to those in need and prepare food for times of natural disaster so people won't have to "loot."

PLP has gone to New Orleans every year to stand with our working-class brothers and sisters to help rebuild homes and work with groups to spread revolutionary ideas. A communist society will plan in advance how to handle natural disasters, which will minimize loss of life and provide food, clothing and housing to those who may suffer losses.

That's why we need to build a society that values workers above all, abolishes profits and destroys racism. Join the struggle to fight for communism! ☪

LETTERS



Luis Castro Inspires Renewed Dedication to Fight for Communism

A group of comrades and friends of the Party in Los Angeles met to remember happy moments of political discussions about the communist movement, about entertainment, and the strengths and weaknesses of Comrade Luis Castro, editor of CHALLENGE for more than 30 years. Luis died on June 3, 2009.

His love and commitment to the international working class were enormous, as was his reading and infinite knowledge about liberal groups, nationalists, revisionists [fake leftists] and obviously, about the Russian and Chinese revolutions and the line of PLP. This same love was reflected in his love and tremendous commitment to his family.

A comrade said, "For decades, Luis was the symbol of CHALLENGE, from the time when we sent articles by telephone and he had to type them while we read them to him, asking questions or adding points to make it more political, until recently with the era of the internet. His knowledge about editing and his communist line were transmitted to many comrades, young and old, in many places."

Other participants in the meeting noted, "For years, Luis was the paper's main translator. But when it came to simultaneous spoken translation during a meeting, that was something else. Once in New York, we, a group of garment and farm workers, were to have Luis as our translator (from English to Spanish). After a few minutes in which someone was giving a report, we asked Luis, "What is he saying?" He answered, "He says we have to fight for communism." Another two minutes passed. "Luis, what's he saying?" Luis responded, "He says fascism is bad." That's how Luis was.

Remembering Luis brought tears, laughter and calls to dedicate our lives to fight with greater vigor for what millions around the world dream of so much, true communism. We ended the evening singing *Bella Ciao* and *Venceremos* — We will win, the PLP version.

PLP Comrades, Los Angeles

Reader in El Salvador Praises PLP's Exposé of FMLN Swindlers

I've been reading CHALLENGE for more than 10 years. I'm 76 years old and I'd like to take this opportunity to write something my conscience pushes me to write.

I want to deeply congratulate the Progressive Labor Party for the clarity that you've shown through the liberating principles of your communist literature. I say this because in reality there's no other way of life — only communism can offer us what we need and tell us: with capitalism all of humanity faces the abyss.

It's time to discover new horizons and with the help of PLP we will go forward. Before I read CHALLENGE, I lived with the hope that a government formed by the FMLN would change our system of life, not thinking that they are manipulated by the dictates of merciless capitalism and never in their path conform to communism, and thus they'll swindle all the workers of the world. Long live communism.

A CHALLENGE reader

Testing Protested At H.S. Graduation

On June 6, residents of my Texas town prepared to witness their children graduate as the Class of 2009. Sadly, some students were barred. Though having completed all their credits, they had failed one of the required Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests. At a special meeting the students requested to walk in the graduation ceremony as state law permitted. But this was denied. Students were threatened with arrest if they defied the ban.

At the ceremony, extra police lined the entrances and facilities. The protesting students came in their caps and gowns and sat together where their protest would be visible. When their class exited the stadium, they walked together with locked arms behind their class and threw their caps in the air with their class. No arrests were made.

Thinking back, I remember debating how to react if my daughter did not pass her exit level and TAKS exams. I figured that if she didn't try hard enough, then maybe she didn't want or deserve a diploma. She would just have to attend summer school and miss the family vacation. When I learned that she had not passed one TAKS exam and that the school board would not allow her to walk on their graduation day, I felt I had disappointed her. But the more I thought about it, and the more I talked to her, the more I realized that "it's just not fair." My daughter has never repeated a grade and, like many others, has overcome many obstacles.

Under "No Child Left Behind," high school kids must discontinue their regular curriculum to prepare for a four-part TAKS test and exit exams to receive a high school diploma. Not only has the government given school districts the tools to discriminate but also the power to destroy. As more schools give up on kids, they don't tell parents that a child may fail or not graduate. I got a phone call two weeks before school was out. The school has NEVER shown students their test results. And no one knows how many students were forced to drop out before graduation.

Kids are accountable to the state for test performance, and schools receive government funds to improve programs, but are the schools and states held accountable to the children? Our town has cancelled summer school, and students who need to make up credits must go to a different district, 30 miles away, with no transportation provided. Yet the school is building a new indoor football practice field.

"No Child Left Behind" left many kids behind. How did so many go unnoticed for nine months? They are not troubled kids, not in alternative or special ed classes, not gifted or homeless. So I wonder, where was the tutoring, letters of concern, or phone calls requesting parent involvement?

A Reader

Youth Felt Comrade Luis's Communist Humanity

When Luis Castro, former editor of CHALLENGE, passed away I could not believe it. My feelings about his death weren't and still aren't pleasant. However, the experiences I shared with him were happy and educating ones.

Luis left a legacy and I will sorely miss him. He taught me, a young person, a lot about current events and history. Being late to the memorial, I didn't see him in the casket at full view, which would have provoked tears, making it even more difficult to carry on. He was easy to talk to and a very good person.

Westchester Comrade

New Highways Pave the Way To War

From South America to Alaska, new highways are ready to go to create pathways for transporta-

LA Schools

continued from p. 3

and real equality (not socialism which retained money, banks, and wages, with the latter's differentials splitting the working class). Eliminating the exploiter class which lives off the profits it squeezes from workers' labor will release the potential for workers to reap the full fruits of the value that they, and only they, create.

Every struggle must have the long-term strategic goal of building the communist movement that can seize power from the bosses. The class struggle has crucial lessons to teach us how to get there. Three wildcat one-hour work stoppages built the unity, militancy and resolve of teachers, students and parents, independent of the union leadership. Student walkouts throughout the district, fighting for their own and their siblings' education, build their potential to fight for the working class.

This is a victory the Board of Education can't take away — the unity of parents, teachers and students; the experience of confronting the district, the Mayor and the banks; seeing our potential to unite against the bosses and their racist system; and the growth of PLP.

Read CHALLENGE. Participate in our PLP Summer Project, where students and teachers, soldiers and industrial workers will reach thousands with our newspaper and spread communist ideas. ☺

tion and communication. These roads will ease the ruling class' access to oil and natural gas, manufactured goods, minerals, iron, biodiversity, water and other natural resources and cheaply made goods. The goal is to maximize profit, guarantee security and control, to try to keep these resources away from the rivals of U.S. imperialism, and to prepare for the third world war. Since 2001, Robert Pastor (the founder of Harvard's Center for North American Studies), has put forth the proposal regarding "deep integration", which was spurred on by the Alliance for Security and Prosperity in North America (ASPAN) and Chamber of Commerce of North America (CCAN) projects.

The CCAN is a subsidiary of The Chamber of Commerce and Council of the Americas (founded by Rockefeller), the Mexican Institute for Competition (financed by the international and national private sector), and the Canadian Council of CEOs.

The executive committee of CCAN is formed by Chevron, Ford, General Electric, General Motors, Lockheed Martin, Merck, Procter & Gamble and its subsidiary PUR Water Purification, Mittal Steel, etc. From Canada the committee includes: Power Corporation of Canada, Suncor Energy, Linamar, Home

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Communist-led Open Mic Kicks Out the Jams

The capitalist education system maintains divisions between teachers, students, and parents behind their petty administrators who carry out the bosses' orders. The schools function as the ideological production centers that indoctrinate our youth with rotten capitalist ideology drenched in patriotism and elitism that poisons the necessary aspects of the learning that we know our youth need. PLP has been struggling to create unity through class consciousness and collective action in one high school. Through distribution of 100 CHALLENGES, we've recruited and consolidated students and teachers, and built an organization that attempts to create communist culture.

Several student PL'ers facilitate CHALLENGE networks while struggling with their fellow students to attend protests and PLP study/action meetings. The Culture Club proposed at a PTA meeting that an open mic would be a great way for the two organizations to have a fundraiser.

The Open Mic was a success. Parents provided

hot food, teachers rapped and jammed with the students, and the students performed dance, poetry, music and stand-up comedy. The event was a clear illustration of PL's idea to build solidarity between workers (parents and teachers) and students. By creating a communist culture within the school, communist social relationships take seed and develop between the students that read CHALLENGE, distribute the paper, and/or are interested in fighting the budget cuts.

A year of struggle culminated in an Open Mic that had parents and students moving to heavy metal that blared out of angry guitars strummed by students was an inspiration. Asian, Latin, black, and white students expressing, working, and socializing together with staff and parents is a brief glimpse of how communist entertainment will be both participatory and exciting. The PLP continues to gain ground by developing communist consciousness through cultural work. "Everything you do counts." ☺

More Letters

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Depot, etc. And from Mexico: the Business Coordinating Council, Mexican Council of Businessmen, Confederación de Camaras Industriales, Grupo Posadas, Modelo, Kimberly Clark Mexico (US), Grupo CYDSA, etc. (Delgado, n.d.)

Mexico, one of the North American "allies", has received financing through Plan Puebla Panama, and has been upgrading the Highway of the Atlantic and the Pacific, the tourist highway of the Caribbean and the inter-oceanic logistical highways of Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama, as well as the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Mesoamerican Coralline Corridor, which have been implemented through them.

One of the most important highways is CAN-AMEX which crosses the American states of Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho and Montana. It connects to Alberta, Canada and the Mexican states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Nayarit and Jalisco.

At the same time, the Super Highway of North America extends from Canada to the center of Mexico. It is estimated that it allows the movement of merchandise worth billions of dollars. The highway is widened from Mexico City to the north, passing through Hidalgo and San Luis Potosi (multipurpose land ports) where the rail lines and highways from the Pacific ports connect. The outer zones connect to the corridor as sources to transport petroleum and petrochemicals.

The U.S. ruling class wants to secure these corridors and merchandise, and, under the excuse of drug trafficking, its national security. The bosses want to be ready to put down any signs of discontent as well as their rival imperialists, and have militarized the country. That's why it is important for us to unite and fight for a society where the pathways to communication do not serve the economic interests of the bosses, but as paths to form internationalism among the working class. While bosses are constructing their web of highways, we will fight and use these paths to construct one Party around the world, under one same flag and the sole struggle, the struggle for communism!

Young Mexican Comrade

Transit Bosses Make Workers Pay for Crisis

LOS ANGELES, June 15 — With the bosses cutting bus hours, health benefits and jobs, transit workers are under attack as the rulers try to solve their crisis on the backs of our class. But this is a capitalist disaster — not an act of nature. This crisis was created by those who profited hugely. Now that the capitalist economy is in decline, these same bosses and bankers demand to be bailed out. Workers are doing the bailing. With a salute to their commander-in-chief, the labor union executives have stepped in line behind Obama's call for "shared sacrifice" to save their system. But instead of sacrificing, the richest of the rich are taking \$2 or \$3 trillion for the banks while workers suffer cuts in wages, benefits and vital social services.

The entire goal of the capitalist system is competition to produce maximum profits for a tiny group of capitalists, not to produce to meet the needs of the workers. In times of crisis, hard wired into the capitalist profit system, more goods are produced than people can afford to buy. The greedy bosses would rather destroy products than give them away to people who desperately need them. They take food, jobs, benefits and bus service away from us so they can pay huge amounts to keep their banks solvent. We don't need their banks; we need to survive.

That's why the main victory in this contract fight and in our coming struggles against their attacks will be unity and understanding that the source of these attacks is capitalism. We need to unite to fight for a system in which we produce to meet the needs of our families and our class, not to bail out the banks and to keep profits high for these blood suckers. We need to build a mass PLP to fight for workers' power through communist revolution.

These attacks are coming home to MTA workers but the majority of the 9,000 mechanics, clerks and drivers know next to nothing about what's

going on with negotiations. The union leadership tries to keep the membership in the dark, only calling on us when it needs our votes to legitimize its murky deals. The last thing they want us to do is to unite against the capitalist system and to fight for a communist society without bosses, profits, banks or union hacks!

An independent strike committee is forming to call on transit workers to fight the union leadership as well as the company's attempt to impose "shared sacrifices." CHALLENGE readers will be active. A lack of leadership leaves many workers feeling defenseless.

We can learn from our fight for contract issues how the apparatus of the bosses' government is used against us. From a strike, political lessons always become clearer. Our unity strengthens when we realize that the only solution to the constant attacks is to build workers' revolution. This can never succeed without increasing the size of our communist party, PLP, among drivers and mechanics.

Why rescue a system that, in the name of profit, forecloses and empties thousands of houses while families live in camper shells? The LA Times reports cuts of more than 400,000 bus service hours since 2007 at a time when even more workers must rely on public transit. The madness and greed of the racist profit system must end.

If transit workers are against these foreclosures, layoffs, cuts and the job freeze at Metro, if we're against bailing out the banks at our expense, we must understand that we're against capitalism itself. To guarantee the future for the working class, we should unite against the coming war contract, build for a strike against any and all cuts and deepen that unity. We must build the long-term fight to get rid of the profit system and for a communist society where all workers will work and produce to meet the needs of our own class, not the bankers! ✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

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

Banks plotted 'ghetto loan' profits

NYT, 6/7 — As she describes it, Beth Jacobson and her fellow loan officers at Wells Fargo Bank "rode the stagecoach from hell" for a decade, systematically singling out blacks in Baltimore and suburban Maryland for high-interest subprime mortgages.

These loans... tipped hundreds of homeowners into foreclosure....

Wells Fargo, Ms. Jacobson said in an interview, saw the black community as fertile ground for subprime mortgages.... Another loan officer stated in an affidavit filed last week that employees had referred to blacks as "mud people" and to subprime lending as "ghetto loans."

We just went right after them.... The N.A.A.C.P. has filed a class-action lawsuit charging systematic racial discrimination by more than a dozen banks, including Wells Fargo....

A typical spread between conventional and subprime loans... adds more than \$100,000 in interest payments.

Obama won't cut cash to Israel

NYT, 6/1 — Administration officials are debating how to toughen their stance against any expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank....

Israel is a critical United States ally, and no one in this administration expects that not to continue....

Placing conditions on loan guarantees to Israel,

as the first President Bush did nearly 20 years ago, is not under discussion, officials said.

They prayed for doctor's murder

NYT, 6/10 — The Kansas abortion clinic run by the doctor who was shot to death in church last month has closed permanently, his family said on Tuesday....

"Where does it end?" Dr. Hern said. "The anti-abortion fanatics got exactly what they wanted...."

The president of the Kansas Coalition for Life... who since 2004 had arranged for daily volunteers to stand outside the clinic... said.... "it looks like our prayer was answered."

Good time to discuss communism

Barbara Ehrenreich, LAT, 5/8 — Today, with the country losing more than a half-million jobs a month, both white-collar job searching and blue-collar retraining are becoming surreal exercises in futility. No matter how smart you are — how flexible, personable and skilled — you can't find a job that isn't there....

Of course.... You could get together with laid-off friends and co-workers.... To express anger and... conspire to build a better world.

Drug prices: no money for health

NYT, 6/4 — "I'm out of Lexapro," a woman



pleaded one recent Tuesday.... "Can I just have four pills until payday on Friday?"

Some customers request prices for a fistful of prescriptions, and then say they can fill only the cheapest two. Others ask which are most important.

"It can be a hard question to answer," said [a] pharmacist. "The only thing I can do is let them know what they're for, get them the cheapest available and encourage them to come back for the others when they can."

Even with the Medicare drug benefit... many Americans still find themselves unable to afford the prescription medications that manage their life-threatening conditions.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE ONLINE:
challengenewspaper.wordpress.com

Comrade Luis Castro: An Internationalist for the Ages



Luis Speaking at the 1971 March for Jobs

Luis Castro, a stalwart communist, a fighter against racism and for the working class his entire adult life and the editor of CHALLENGE-DESAFIO for a quarter century, died on June 3, having battled pancreatic cancer for an astonishing three years.

Our hearts go out to his loving family, to his wife Lucia, to his six children and his five grandchildren.

Forty years ago Luis volunteered to translate for DESAFIO and eventually became the editor of the entire paper. His knowledge about everything across the globe was boundless. Before there was the World Wide Web, there was Luis. Before there was Wikipedia, there was "Luis-pedia."

Luis had a razor-edged, penetrating political understanding. Whenever he spoke at meetings or in private conversations or at street rallies, Luis's political line was on the mark. He was sharp and to the point.

Luis was the prototype of an Internationalist. He truly saw the working class as one international class. Whenever workers were attacked or suffering in some corner of the world, he would become enraged. He would take it personally, like an attack on his family, because his family included workers everywhere.

In whatever article he wrote, he would invariably refer to what became his trademark: "From Detroit to Oaxaca, from New Orleans to Bogota, from Johannesburg to Shanghai, workers are fighting back." Luis constantly saw it as one grand struggle.

Before he became ill, he chaired PLP's International Committee and continued to meet with it as his health permitted. He wrote a huge number of international articles for CHALLENGE. He would read all the bosses' papers, both English- and Spanish-language, from New York to Europe to Latin-America and searched the world's websites for information that would find its way into a communist analysis of global events.

Although he was now working from his apartment, he checked the politics in all the articles he was translating for DESAFIO and then offered changes to strengthen them. He was especially sharp on matters relating to racism and war. Thus, Luis's grasp of PL's politics found its way into the paper and helped other comrades to take the initiative to write more and raise the level of the paper's content. This made for a smooth transition for an expanded editorial board composed of many younger comrades.

As the paper's press deadline approached, he would help out by suggesting corrections, raising ideas and writing short articles at the last minute.

As long as we are writing articles for CHALLENGE-DESAFIO, we will be visualizing Luis, standing behind us looking over our shoulder and saying, "What about including this point?"

When his cancer was first discovered, we thought he would only have a short time left with

us, weeks or months at the most. Yet slowly but surely he fought the disease, even after his doctor said that with chemotherapy he'd hardly last a year. That prognosis never seemed to get him down, at least outwardly.

Luis was a brave comrade, right through to the sudden end. He rarely complained as he endured constant changes of medications and MRI's and a myriad of tests while he battled for hours on the phone with insurance companies and in the offices of government bureaucrats over bills charged to him and benefits due him.

Through it all, that first year came and went, and then a second year, and a third. Astounding!

His continuing to write and translate from his home seemed to keep him going. It may have been the best "chemotherapy" he could have had, and may very well have done more than any medication to prolong his life.

He was an amazing translator. While sitting at his computer, he would be reading an article in English and translating it into Spanish, as he simultaneously carried on a conversation with whomever approached him. Expert translators marveled at the nuances embedded in his work whose content would come across with such clarity to DESAFIO'S readers.

Luis was also a sports enthusiast, writing about baseball or some so-called "earthshaking" event happening in the sports world, under a pen name, "S. Port." And he was a huge movie fan, writing reviews under the name of "Rex Red."

He accumulated a mountain of what he called his "files" — a big pile of papers and e-mail print-outs sitting next to his computer. Whenever he needed some information for something that he or someone else was writing, he would dive into the pile and just pluck it out.

Comrade Luis also was active in workers' struggles as well as writing about them. At his memorial service, a leader of his building's tenant's committee described how Luis would sit at meetings, seemingly "reading" a paper, but as soon as the management tried to pull something that attacked the tenants' well-being, Luis would immediately interject and expose their tricks. She said the committee couldn't have succeeded without him.

But, as everyone who knew him realized, Luis was not exclusively a political being. He took great care of his kids, worrying about their welfare and progress. He spent hours in hospitals and emergency rooms trying to obtain medical attention for his wife Lucia, provoking a storm of rage about the way the medical system treated working people.

Luis's apartment was always a bundle of ex-

citement. His grandchildren would be over on the weekends, along with his children and their friends. Rather than being disturbed about all this tumult, he seemed to revel in it, saying it kept him on his toes.

A lot of this love came from his thorough working-class make-up, his deep understanding of what we were all fighting for, to have a world filled with this excitement.

Food was a big thing in Luis's life, central to his working-class culture. He was always ready for lunches and dinners with whoever was prepared to join him.

He loved jokes. He would e-mail a load of them. He especially shared the ones about the foibles of old age.

Luis was always concerned about problems that had befallen others. Since he couldn't travel, he would always ask anyone who had just visited PLP's former chairperson Milt Rosen, out in LA, suffering from Parkinson's disease, how he was doing. He would keep up-to-date on anyone who was sick or hospitalized.

These days the words "awesome" and "amazing" are flung around so indiscriminately that it begins to dilute their meaning. But to say Luis was "amazing" is to use the word in its most profound sense.

Luis will never be forgotten. His legacy will endure, both in the love of his family which he embraced, and in the Progressive Labor Party which he helped build and lead.

So great is comrade Luis's contribution to the international working class's communist movement, it is difficult to measure. Suffice it to say he will be remembered and treasured for as long as the fight for communism goes on, setting an example for all to follow in working to build a revolution to which he was so devoted his entire life. ☛



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