

CHALLENGE



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Students, Profs Indict Racist General Petraeus: Wanted for Mass Murder

NEW YORK CITY, September 16 — Shouts of “David Petraeus you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide!” rang out as nearly 100 people protested against the former general and CIA Director as he entered the Macaulay Honors College to “teach” his seminar. City University of New York (CUNY) students and more than 20 professors and staff were joined by high school students and teachers.

The corporate media consider Petraeus to be a military genius, a warrior-scholar. In fact he is a war criminal. In Iraq he was put in charge of creating the Special Police Commandos, a paramilitary unit with thousands of troops known for exceptional brutality, and the establishment of 14 detention centers that tortured and killed prisoners on a daily basis. In Afghanistan, Petraeus terrorized the population with nighttime special-forces raids and drone plane attacks which killed thousands of civilians.

PLP students and professors helped plan and build the rally. CHALLENGE was distributed and banners displayed. A comrade spoke about the need for building a better world, a communist world. Others advanced the need to build a massive international movement to defeat imperialism. We need to build this movement on every campus, in the cafeterias and in the classrooms.

While many people with various ideas spoke, one highlight was the remarks of two high school students. One spoke about the horrors of war and how war was “unnatural.” The second explained that she would probably attend CUNY, but that her mother wouldn’t be happy with her attending a school with murderers on the teaching staff.

Petraeus’s invitation to teach at CUNY is only one part of a plan to militarize the university. A social science division at City College was named after General Colin Powell and Reserve Officer Training Programs (ROTC) have been established at three campuses.

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MEXICO — Thousands of striking teachers, battling tear gas and water cannons, are continuing their month-long protest against President Neito’s racist educational reform of privatization. Teachers occupied Zocalo Square for three weeks before being brutally evicted. Protesters used steel grates and plastic traffic dividers to block the streets. Many were arrested. This is a direct battle against the ruling class and its state. See back page.☺

STRIKE!



GREECE — Like Mexico, teachers and civil servant workers are on strike for a week in response to a new law of planned layoffs demanded by foreign creditors. While the bosses get bailed out, thousands of public sector workers are losing their jobs, and tens of thousands are coerced with pay cuts. Thousands marched through the streets of Athens to parliament chanting, “Let’s kick the government, the EU, and the IMF out!” Students and other workers occupied the schools in solidarity.☺



JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

★Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.

★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit black, Latino, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

★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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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

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Editorial

Putin-Obama Deal A Killer for Workers

For the international working class, the moves by Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin to rid Syria of chemical weapons ring hollow. Neither capitalist front man honestly seeks to end the slaughter of our sisters and brothers there. Even if chemical weapons were to be eliminated — a dubious outcome — the war in Syria will not end. Many more workers will still die. Already, two million people have been forced to flee their homes. More than two million live in extreme poverty, on less than \$2 per person per day.

Obama and Putin do not care about these workers or about the 1,400 who reportedly were killed in last month’s gas attacks. Both of these imperialist stooges are exploiting the attacks to gain leverage in a rivalry headed towards a far more deadly global war. Obama tried to use the gas attacks as an opportunity to launch sophisticated missiles and kill still more workers while proving yet again that the U.S. can unleash massive military force anywhere on earth. An unmatched capacity for killing underpins the U.S. global empire. It assures protection to allies and clients and destruction to enemies.

But Putin outfoxed Obama. He exploited the U.S. president’s difficulties —notably a divided U.S. ruling class — in mounting a strike on Russian (and Chinese) ally Syria. As a result, Putin comes across as the “the good guy.” (Can a Nobel Peace Prize be far off?) He succeeded in brokering a deal that halted U.S. action, at least for the time being. But Putin is no less hypocritical than Obama. He hopes to use the situation to increase Russia’s power in the battle for control of the region’s oil and gas reserves and pipelines.

Broader Regional War Looming

Reasserting Moscow’s influence, Putin has called into question the ability of U.S. imperialism to defend its interests with lethal force. If he gets away with it, he could enable others to develop their own nuclear capabilities. Far from establishing peace, the Obama-Putin bargain over Syria brings broader regional conflict even closer than before.

Weeks before Putin’s coup, Stratfor (8/27/13), an outfit that provides geostrategic intelligence to U.S. corporations, declared, “This is no longer simply about Syria. The United States has stated a condition that commits it to an intervention. If it does not act when there is a clear violation of the condition, Obama increases the chance of war with other countries like North Korea and Iran.”

Obama didn’t blunder when he drew his “redline” on Syria’s chemical arms a year ago. U.S. imperialism needs to establish these tripwires to justify its use of military force. But now that he has failed to follow through, the credibility of the U.S. war machine stands at risk. This sequence of events can only embolden other U.S. foes building weapons against Washington’s wishes.

U.S. allies, too, have cause for concern. Saudi Arabia and Israel, the cornerstones of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, were counting on the military umbrella that Obama aimed to open in Syria. Similar fears are shared by the twelve former Soviet bloc nations that belong to NATO but lie on or near Russia’s borders. In the Pacific, South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines must now be wondering about how far they can count on unconditional U.S. protection against aggression

U.S. Chemical Genocide

The following letters appeared in The New Yorker, 9/23/13, responding to an editorial by Steve Coll in the 9/9/13 issue on Obama’s proposal to bomb Syria.

Coll does not mention that since the Second World War the biggest user of lethal chemicals in warfare has been the United States. During the Vietnam War, more than ten million gallons of Agent Orange were sprayed across Vietnam, causing untold numbers of people (including U.S. troops) to die or become sick, and hundreds of thousands of birth defects, which continue to this day. Hundreds of thousands of tons of napalm were also used in Vietnam.

More recently, the U.S. used depleted uranium munitions in both the Gulf and Iraq wars, leaving a legacy of death, cancer, and birth defects; white phosphorus was used as a weapon in Fallujah [Iraq]. The U.S. government can deny these facts, and Coll can fail to mention them, but they are there for those who care to look.

Jim Henle, New York City

Coll mentioned that the Reagan Administration looked the other way when Saddam gassed the Kurds. In the interest of further democratic deliberations, it would be appropriate to mention, as “Foreign Policy” did last month, that the C.I.A. gave Saddam coordinates so that his gas rockets could strike Iranian troops more accurately.

Robert Shetterly, Brookville, Maine

from China’s bosses.

Back in 2008, Putin made clear his anti-U.S. imperialist intentions by invading what was formerly Soviet Georgia. The world saw “Russian tanks entering a U.S. client state, defeating its army and remaining there until they were ready to leave” (Stratfor, 9/10/13). At the time, the U.S. was bogged down in both Iraq and Afghanistan. But even as they have withdrawn and wound down from wars in those countries, it has taken a toll on the U.S. rulers’ home front.

Masses Oppose Obama’s War

While George W. Bush’s “shock-and-awe” invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq gained a measure of popular support in the U.S. (though not without mass demonstrations in opposition), this is no longer the case. Polls show nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population opposed to Obama’s strike in Syria. Students and faculty at the City University of New York are campaigning to kick out former CIA director and war criminal general David Petraeus from his new post as honors professor. Mass popular resistance to Obama’s proposed war strikes

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DC Rallies vs. Racist Attack on Transit Workers



WASHINGTON, DC, September 12 — Today 60 anti-racists — transit workers from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, community residents and others — picketed the transit authority’s monthly board meeting to protest its racist hiring and firing policies. Some challenged the transit authority’s board directly in the public comment time. We demanded they hire and retain workers who’ve been jailed in the past and “done their time.”

We explained that many former inmates have already worked successfully for years at Metro. Now that opportunity is gone. Communists, lawyers, civil rights activists, returning citizens and public health workers demand the policy be reversed!

Metro workers are also under attack. The DC region officials are gradually breaking up the unified transportation system to create multiple non-union systems. Privatization in transit, as in schools and hospitals, is aimed at making profit at the expense of the workers by driving down wages and benefits in a “race to the bottom.” Signs calling for “One System, One Union” signaled the transit-worker fightback.

Power of Multiracial Unity

The rally’s multi-racial alliance of workers and other anti-racists exemplified the power we can exert to win this demand, build our strength and eventually create a communist system where the working class actually controls transit systems, along with all aspects of society.

The Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association’s Health Disparities Committee (MWPCHA) organized the rally along with Progressive Labor Party, Metro workers, returnee organizations, community residents, civil rights groups, and workers’ rights coalitions. For months, we’ve had community meetings on the issue of jobs for returning citizens (former prison-

ers returning to the community). Workers have eagerly signed petitions in Wards 7 and 8, at health outreach efforts, Metro garages and on-line.

We’ve met several workers who’ve been fired or refused hiring under this policy. Some spoke to the Board and joined the rally. In a growing movement, others are working with progressive lawyers to challenge the policy as well as their individual firings.

Metro workers have the power to overturn this current hiring ban and to stop Metro’s plans to sell bus lines to a for-profit company that will lower wages and break the union. To build for this rally, we struggled with our co-workers at Metro to see these battles as everyone’s fight. This is an important step in raising broader issues and class consciousness among Metro workers. In the recent contract the policy was not even debated by the union leadership, which still does not want to defend its members or fight for jobs for all. In fact, the union president attacked the rally against racism as a diversion from their focus on opposing privatization. If they were serious, they would instead see how the issues and struggles are interrelated and can strengthen each other. But basically they defend the bosses’ system.

The New Jim Crow

Our discussions at the garages exposed many contradictions besetting workers. Some thought it was okay to have harsher hiring practices, even though they themselves might have a criminal record. As we spoke more about the “New Jim Crow” criminal injustice system, many workers changed their minds and agreed that people in our communities shouldn’t be shut out of a decent job because of a criminal record.

People agree that the jail system is inherently racist, but it is still a struggle to win current Metro workers to care about those who might be hired after them. One co-worker at the rally said people must see that this struggle affects all of us, even if it doesn’t seem so right now. He had a true class outlook and took a CHALLENGE and a handful of flyers to take back to his garage. Another co-worker spoke about the bravery of the civil rights marchers, which we need to emulate.

The mass imprisonment of black and Latino workers since Nixon and Reagan instituted the war on drugs results in millions of people with records for minor drug possession. The police arrest black and Latino workers at much higher rates than whites. White residents in DC use drugs at the same rate as black people, but 8 out of 10 people arrested for drug violations are black.

Metro’s refusal to hire people with convictions makes this racist inequality in criminal justice much worse since returnees are prevented from getting relatively high-paying jobs when released. A Metro speaker said that Trayvon Martin’s killer walked away free while black people are locked up on a daily basis for much less!

MWPCHA will continue to pressure Metro to overturn this policy. PLP members invite our friends to our study/action groups to organize to overthrow the entire capitalist system, which only enriches the top 1% while driving down our wages and living standards to the lowest possible levels.✊

PL Exposes Bosses’ Racist Assault on Health, Jobs

CHICAGO, September 16 — “You PLers!” The nurses’ union organizer nearly shouted. “What is this s***? All you do is attack our union!”

The doctor and the half dozen nurses witnessing this sudden outburst while waiting for the Board meeting to begin were taken aback. The doctor responded, “I read that leaflet. It also criticizes my union, the Doctors’ Council, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), for not doing much to fight the administration’s attack. And I agree with what it says. Neither union has done much, really.”

“Well quit trying to organize my nurses.” She turned to the nurse who was writing down her phone number for the doctor. “This is what those people are about!” the union hack went on, jabbing her finger into the “Fight for Communism” logo part of the PL leaflet.

“I don’t see why you are getting so mad at him,” the nurse replied calmly. “He takes care of patients just like I do and just wants to keep the administration from closing his unit. We’re fighting for the same thing.” The doctor was pleasantly surprised when the nurse finished writing down her phone number for him.

The PL leaflet that angered the union organizer exposed the hospital administration’s plan — together with the politicians and bankers — to privatize Stroger Cook County Hospital and bust all the unions. The doctors and nurses from the newborn unit would be the last ones to disagree with PL’s analysis, since their unit has been under the most attack. As the only unit in this public hospital with 100 percent insured patients (thanks to Kid Care Medicaid payments), it’s the only unit that actually brings in money for the public hospital system.

Profiting Off Sick Babies

So the bosses of the private hospital across the street, Rush Presbyterian, have their eye on those well-insured sick babies. When Rush built their new hospital, they doubled the size of their newborn unit, apparently planning on taking those public patients (as long as they are insured).

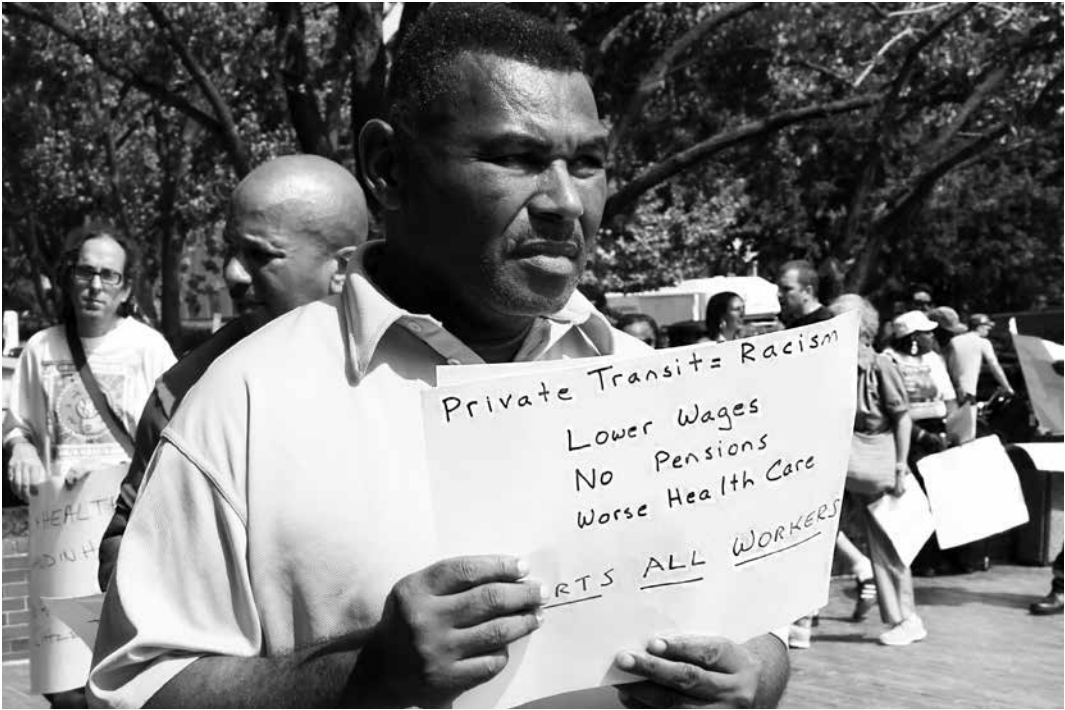
It is unclear why the public system’s administration wants to put their newborn unit out of business to lift the profits of the rich hospital across the street. Some think the County bosses are just trying to speed up the financial collapse of the public system so it can be privatized. One politician even said she wanted to “get the County out of the healthcare business.” This makes sense from her capitalist perspective — hospital costs keep rising and federal dollars keep declining. Others speculate that Rush has made a pledge to the campaign fund of County Board president, Toni Preckwinkle, so she will pay them off with \$20 million a year’s worth of Medicaid neonatal intensive care unit patients.

Whatever the bosses’ motivation, it amounts to a racist attack on low-income black and immigrant working-class patients and another union-busting scheme to lower the living standards of healthcare workers.

PL’s analysis resonated with hospital workers. One department chair was bemoaning the fact that his resident doctors were all calling up to ask if Stroger hospital was really going to privatize. They demanded to know what would happen to their training program. Apparently somebody liked the leaflet enough to make copies and stuff them in all the medicine residents’ mailboxes. A lab worker saw to it that all the clinics and exam rooms got a copy.

At the Board meeting Dr. Ram Raju, the CEO who is always smiling and slapping people on the back in a jovial mood before meetings, looked like he had severe indigestion that morning after the leaflet came out. With a growing number of doctors and nurses questioning the motives of the administration, the CEO has ample reason for discomfort.

Under capitalism, decisions on healthcare and all other aspects of society are made based on what will make the most profit for the bosses, regardless of how many may die. And the union misleaders, by defending capitalism, take the bosses’ side. Under communism, healthcare will be a right for all. All decisions will be made based on our class’ needs. So how will our Party turn this increasing mass distrust of the administration and politicians into trust in communist leadership and action? Stay tuned. The struggle continues.✊



Israel-Palestine:

Fight Racist Eviction of 40,000 Bedouin Workers

TEL AVIV, August 31— A multi-ethnic group of 1,500 protesters marched in central Tel Aviv today to demand the cancellation of the racist Prawer Law. The essence of this law is the theft of the land of tens of thousands of Bedouin workers for the sake of U.S. real estate tycoons and their allies in the Israeli ruling class. The demonstrators called for the recognition of all Bedouin villages and for the abolition of the government’s plans of demolition, removal and land theft. Several protesters raised the workers’ red flag to challenge the fascist Israeli regime.

Although Bedouins make up 30 percent of the population of the Negev, the desert of southern Israel-Palestine, their villages contain only three percent of the region’s land area. Under the Prawer Law, which was passed by the Israeli Knesset in July, the capitalist government’s “solution” to the “problem” of spontaneous Bedouin settlements is a mass eviction of 40,000 Bedouin workers and peasants. They would be resettled to “recognized” ghettos where unemployment stands at 50 percent and where 60 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

The confiscated land, meanwhile, will be used for towns for the rich. The Israel Land Administration ignores the fact that many Bedouins hold title to their land. So much for the capitalists’ sacred principle of “private property”!

Zionism = Theft

This is a war of attrition, with the forces of the regime pitted against the working class. It also reflects the same colonialist policy that dates from the birth of modern Zionism in 1882. The Zionists made their move in the Nakba of 1948, when 750,000 Palestinians were deported from what is now the State of Israel. They consolidated

The Zionists made their move in the Nakba of 1948, when 750,000 Palestinians were deported from what is now the State of Israel.

their control in the violent confiscations of “Land Day” in 1976, and in the murder of 13 Palestinian Arabs by cops in October 2000.

The essence of Zionism may be summed up in one sentence: As many Jews on as much land as possible, as few Arabs on as little land as possible. Since the days of the Rothschilds, the Zionists have deported and robbed native Palestinians for the sake of the Zionist colonial project and the profits of Zionism’s patrons: U.S. and Western European capitalists. Even as the regime sheds tears over the alleged “robbery of open lands” by the Bedouins, it hands out property to private farms owned by the capitalists. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish settlements known as kibbutzim and moshavim benefited from their strong ties to the Israeli Labor party, which was in power until 1977. But residents of the Development Towns, the state-built industrial slums where Jews of Middle Eastern origin were sent to live, received minimal land and resources. The Palestinians, including the Bedouins, were simply robbed.

Billionaires Profit, Peasants Starve

Among the beneficiaries of the theft of Bedouin land is Ronald Lauder of New York, the billionaire heir to the Estee Lauder cosmetics empire and president of the World Jewish (read: Zionist) Congress, as well as Irving Moskowitz, the Miami casino tycoon who is behind the robbery of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and the rest of the country. Lauder sits on a \$3.3 billion fortune while his servants at the Jewish National Fund evict workers and peasants from their lands to plant the “Forest of Ambassadors” in the Negev. Lauder and his ilk are following in the footsteps of the U.S. ruling class, which deported Native Americans from their lands in a genocide that took millions of lives.

Jewish workers in Israel-Palestine, now suffering from a severe housing crisis, will gain nothing from this land grab. In fact, they will only lose from it. The racist ideas pushed by the government divide Jewish and Arab workers, allowing the capitalist bosses to rule us all. The same government that robs Bedouin workers of the right to live on their ancestors’ land also robs Jewish workers of the right to roofs over their heads. The struggle to recognize Bedouin “unrecognized” villages, and to give the land to its tillers, is the same as the struggle for public housing and for housing for all.

The time is ripe for Arabs, Jews, and Christians, for workers and peasants who live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, to take charge of our destiny and put an end to the deadly profit system that serves only the big bosses. We fight for bread on every worker’s table, for collective ownership of resources, for multiracial unity, and for uncompromising class war against the capitalists.✪

Putin-Obama War on Workers

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in Syria has grown in Britain, Germany and the rest of the European Union. In France, President Francois Hollande’s backing of Obama has met with widespread protests. Polls show a majority of the population in opposition to Hollande’s Syria policy.

Obama tried to share the responsibility for a U.S. strike in Syria by seeking Congressional approval, on the premise that Congress represents the “will of the American people.” Hogwash. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives routinely endorse policies that oppress the working class. While cutting all manner of social services, they repeatedly approve war budgets in the hundreds of billions to fund more than a thousand military bases in 130 countries. This spending has been sanctioned by every president since World War II.

Obama has tried to weaken working-class opposition to his war plans with the claim that conditions are “improving” in the U.S. In fact, unemployment and underemployment remains well above 20 million. One of five children lives in poverty. Racist murders by the rulers’ cops are regular events. And 95 percent of the recovery from the Great Recession has landed in the pockets of the top 1 percent (NY Times, 7/10/13).

The liberals who say they oppose Obama’s war adventures claim that Putin’s deal will yield a “peace dividend” to fund social services for the working class. But capitalism does not function that way. Workers have yet to see a dividend from the end of the Vietnam War or from any conflict since then. Wages have stagnated for the last 50 years. The purchasing power of today’s minimum wage is less than what it was in the 1970s. Bosses always drive for maximum profits and

always will, as long as capitalism exists. That is the nature of the beast.

Workers Fight Back

Now as always, however, the working class is fighting back against this profit-mad system. Workers in the fast food industry, among the lowest-paid in the country, have engaged in a thousand strikes in 60 cities to demand that their minimum wage rates be doubled. In Mexico, 80,000 teachers have struck and demonstrated in cities across the country, fighting the rulers’ cops in their struggle against anti-worker government reforms. In France, 80 percent of the working class opposes another pension reform that would lower their standard of living even more. Many of them are fighting back in mass street demonstrations.

Striking subway motormen have stormed train stations in Buenos Aires to win their annual bonus. Sanitation workers have joined them. Teachers in Uganda have struck for a 40 percent wage hike.

Demonstrations, strikes and mass protests are a good start. But they cannot overcome the fact that the bosses control the means of production and also hold state power through their laws, courts, cops and military. They use this power to enforce their system and control the mass media. Their politicians attempt to divert our class into dead-end reforms.

This is why the Progressive Labor Party is organizing for a communist revolution to wipe out the bosses’ system and its wars, unemployment, poverty, racism and sexism. This can be achieved only in a society that eliminates bosses and profits and puts the working class in control. Building a mass PLP to smash the bosses’ dictatorship is our goal. Join us!✪



U.S.-Colombia Bosses' Trade Pact Death Penalty for Farmers

COLOMBIA, September 16 — For the past two weeks, thousands of farmers, truckers, miners and students have been on strike to protest sharp drops in their living conditions due to the “free trade” agreement between the U.S. and Colombia. The agreement, an extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), was signed a year ago. It forces small farmers in Colombia to compete with huge U.S. agro-conglomerates.

The government is trying to end the strike, which has blocked 30 roads around the country, by promising negotiations and millions in investments — promises they have repeatedly broken in the past. No one should be surprised by the crisis the trade agreement has caused. For years, both farmers and social organizations predicted the effects it would have on the impoverished rural majority in Colombia. Farm family incomes, already the lowest in the country, are down 70 percent. That amounts to a death penalty for peasants.

When the agreement was signed, former Vice President Francisco Santos acknowledged there would be “losers,” but that didn’t concern him. With visible excitement, he stated there would also be “winners.” He must have been referring to the big agribusiness companies and the local capitalists who work with them! One year later, they have increased subsidized rice imports to Colombia by an astronomical 2,000 percent. The small local farmers cannot compete with the artificially low price of imported rice.

It was no exaggeration when the archbishop of Tunja, Luis Augusto Castro, called the trade agreement a “betrayal.” As Karl Marx said, the state is the office from which the capitalist class runs its business. In Colombia, the state is a transnational office run by people who despise Colombian workers and are closer to New York than to Ciudad Bolívar.

In reaction to workers’ anger, the bosses have committed huge violations of human rights. They have used the Safety Act to criminalize social protest and the military to repress “the internal enemy” — protesting workers and farmers. These arrogant bosses want passive workers who will just vote and support the rulers’ parties.

Arbitrary arrests have led to the imprisonment of more than 300 leaders on charges of “rebellion.” They have also exposed the vaunted Colombian democracy as a class dictatorship, which we in Progressive Labor Party know we must destroy.

Militant friends and readers of CHALLENGE have been at these demonstrations with our literature and slogans. They bring our message of internationalist struggle against nationalism. While participating in immediate reform struggles, they also make it clear that only communist revolution can fundamentally change the system we live under. Only communism can end imperialism, nationalism, racism, sexism and the lethal profit system. ☸



Italy: Bosses, Pope Gang Up on Migrant Workers

ROME, September 3 — As the war in Syria spreads, those who have the financial means to leave are escaping. Many have fled to Turkey, while others risk their lives and many die — just as do migrants from Latin America to the U.S. — boarding small boats heading to Italy. Almost 3,000 have drowned or died of dehydration since 2011. On August 31, more than 300 migrants, including many from Syria, landed in three different places in Italy. The Italian government reports that 24,277 migrants have landed in the last twelve months, 8,932 of whom arrived from July 1 to August 10 of this year.

In June, 95 people were rescued, but seven drowned, while clinging to the floats of a tuna net. Their deaths prompted a politician of the racist Northern League to comment that it would have been “better to save the tuna than the foreigners” and “here is one more reason not to eat tuna.”

Not all Italians agree. On August 16, the President of Italy tried to sound noble by praising those in Sicily who swam out to sea to help Syrian refugees reach Sicily safely. “The television broadcasts of dozens of swimmers generously assisting refugees coming from Syria, many of whom were children, to reach the shore and safety, make Italy proud,” adding that, “humanity is stronger than prejudice.”

What the proud President failed

to mention, however, is that Italy’s rulers made aiding and abetting undocumented immigrants “illegal,” ever since Italy criminalized undocumented migrants in 2002. He also neglected to mention that the Italian Coast Guard escorted all of these migrants to the detention centers that undercover reporters have denounced as concentration camps staffed by fascist police. Hundreds of migrant men and women from a center in Sardinia, for example, blocked traffic with a sit-down strike in the street in September to protest their conditions. The President’s “humanitarian” language hides the ugly political and economic reality.

The Pope of the Catholic Church plans to visit a refugee center in Rome. This follows his earlier publicity stunt of visiting a detention center for migrants on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, where he celebrated mass and prayed for the migrants who cross the Mediterranean from North Africa each year. He threw a wreath into the sea for the thousands who have died during those voyages. Such public performances of humanitarian sorrow hide imperialist geopolitical strategies behind prayers and handwringing.

The Catholic Church’s NGOs actively recruit immigrants to fill low-paying jobs in wealthier countries. Monsignor Giancarlo Perego, the director of the Church’s Migrants

Foundation, has recently called for the creation of “humanitarian channels for those fleeing the situations in North Africa and the Middle East,” but he noted “patrols are needed to help these migrants reach their destination.” What this means is armies and charitable organizations will help to swell the ranks of the reserve army of the unemployed, needed by capitalism to keep wages low and profits high.

This is not new. The Catholic Church has worshiped at the shrine of capitalism since 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum* (“The Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor”) condemning Socialism, which continues to be the Catholic Church’s fundamental social doctrine. Pope Pius XII later reinforced this teaching by excommunicating anyone who so much as read a communist newspaper at the end of the Second World War.

U.S. imperialist war, proclaimed as “humanitarian intervention,” is anything but that. Obama’s hypocritical words about bombing Syrians to save them from poison gas is more imperialist violence to control resources and to guarantee the subservience of North Africa and the Middle East. The “War on Terror” is a war on workers everywhere in the world. Join PLP and fight for communist revolution to free all workers. ☸

Racist General Petraeus: Wanted for Mass Murder

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At a fourth campus, College of Staten Island professors are organizing to resist the administration’s imposition of ROTC on their campus (more on this next issue).

Last week after the rally, students chased Petraeus, screaming at him as

he walked toward the subway. This time the NYPD whisked Petraeus into an SUV parked in front of the building. With an unmarked police car following, the vehicles moved quickly down the block where police cars with flashing lights were ready to clear the intersection. Despite these maneuvers, students were able to block the intersection and catch up with the SUV,

chanting “Petraeus, Out of CUNY!” and “Every week David!”

Yes, we will be back every Monday to harass this monstrous war criminal but we must certainly step up our daily campus activities to win masses of students to see that only by destroying capitalism can we have a decent future. ☸



LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Rulers Streamline Schools to Get More Bang for their Buck

I teach at a community college in Massachusetts. Every year before classes begin, the administration holds an all-college meeting. It reveals the state of the class struggle at the college as well as the local bosses’ agenda.

The faculty and staff continued a pattern of passively colluding with management by failing to assert ourselves as a force with our own interests. The ruling class, however, is ramping up its agenda: competition among colleges, vocationalizing the curriculum, and winning allegiance of faculty and staff.

For ten years, the college has had an ineffectual president. Last Spring, in a bold move coming straight from the Governor’s office, he was fired. The new president seems to be a very efficient technocrat with a background in developing curriculum for industry. The first “challenge” she talked about was complying with regulators.

The state government will no longer tolerate “sloppiness,” which in the past, sometimes worked to the benefit of the students (i.e., waiving tuition/fee deadlines, allowing students to take courses outside of their major requirements). The new president is also moving full steam ahead partnering with industries (hospitality, health care, and transportation) to develop tailor-made academic programs and high school. This would enlarge the vocational mission of public high schools and public community colleges.

Invited as a special guest to the meeting was Matt Malone, the Secretary of Education from the Massachusetts State House, speaking directly for the governor and mayor. They take their marching orders from business think-tanks, like the Boston Foundation and the Business Council. In a very compelling speech, dramatically walking among us to break down the “us/them” walls, he said, “I ask for your hand as a team player. If we don’t do it here [inspire people to carry out the agenda] nothing else matters.”

Malone implemented changes that will help students “succeed in the global economy.” Privatizing is one way Massachusetts is desperately competing for investment as the national economy continues to slow down and more good-paying jobs are outsourced or replaced by technology. But if you want to really know what’s going on, “follow the money.” The austerity budgets allocated for the Massachusetts community colleges (a third less than in 2001) exposes Malone’s promises as empty for the vast majority of our students.

PLP has always said that it will be liberals who usher in U.S. fascism. Well, this is the change we were witnessing. One of the earmarks of fascism (capitalism in crisis) is the capitalist class more directly running the government. Another is centralization. As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, they can no longer tolerate the crazy-quilt chaos in their schools and colleges.

Streamlining operations to get more bangs for their buck is what the capitalists are demanding. To whatever degree education and critical thinking existed at the community college level, it is rapidly being transformed into training, pure and simple — narrow skill sets that serve industry.

Some faculty and staff were skeptical. This is good, but not good enough. As a group, we need to get clear that these ruling-class reforms are serious attacks on our students, and we can be a force that pushes back. We need a vision of a humane and equal world where workers’ lives are truly valued. Reading and writing for CHALLENGE can help develop this consciousness among us.

A loyal reader

The Deception of Cuba

I was in Cuba recently and the truth remains sad to witness workers’ lives. I am aware there is no socialism, yet I expected to see a better life, more so after Fidel and his party assaulted U.S. imperialism.

Sexism is rampant. Women sell their bodies, but not as openly as in other capitalist countries. Workers’ wages are laughable, as it only covers very basic needs. The means of production are not used in the interest of the working class, therefore there is unemployment.

Racism is a given under this system. Workers suffer discrimination and some are entitled to almost nothing. The food is for the tourism sector, and eating meat or selling it lands you in jail. Workers and families who do not belong to the party are also discriminated against. Far from having recreational facilities, they don’t even receive funds to improve their homes. Their homes look like ruins, contrasting with the neighborhoods of politicians.

Talking to several workers in Cuba revealed they are dealing with the capitalist nationalist discourse. They do see it is very difficult to change their situation. Also, the cult of personality of Fidel Castro has led them to believe that Fidel has lost power and authority and thus the revolution has deviated because of its leaders.

Workers in Cuba are generally interested in politics and are less influenced by capitalist ideology, but are influenced by music. They are very friendly and have a great sense of family unity and camaraderie among workers. Leaving Cuba is almost impossible due to costs and bureaucratic obstacles.

I talked to some, explaining that we must fight for communism. I introduced them to PLP. We have a program that our class should organize society and rule our own destiny. Revolution will be made by us, the working class, not the usual opportunists. The Cuban revolution since its inception made too many mistakes — wages, the market economy, the division between manual and mental labor, and failure to destroy the capitalist state.

I gathered workers, asked them to recognize our ideas and they must work to organize millions here and worldwide to destroy capitalism — that is what workers in Cuba need.

Red Colombia Worker

Editor’s note: The problems described by the writer — racism, sexism, prostitution, wage differentials — are among those endemic to state capitalism, which is what now exists in Cuba. Its source stems from, among other things, the Castro leadership following the Soviet example of socialism, which retained much of the baggage of capitalism, such as the wage system with its built-in divisive differentials, along with the cult of the individual in glorifying Castro. While some of its reforms produced advances like its medical system, the absence of any fight for communism left it with the only option of trying to reform capitalism — an impossibility. This led it to openly encouraging a cardinal element of that system: private property and profits and all the ills that they produce.

Applying Dialectics A Complex Task

I am concerned about the letter in the 9/18/2013 issue of CHALLENGE that criticizes the editorial in the 9/04/2013 issue. The letter-writer claims that the editorial violated a principle of dialectics that the internal is primary. Specifically, the writer felt that the current war in Syria was/is “caused” by the Syrians, themselves, rather than “outside” forces such as the U.S. and Russia. The writer bases this judgment on the extreme poverty of the majority of the Syrian population and the incredibly harsh and atrocious character of the government.

It is certainly true that the Assad government is a brutal dictatorship of a small number of wealthy Syrians dominating the vast majority of the population. At the same time, I don’t believe there is a viable communist movement in Syria that is leading a rebellion. In the absence of such leadership as well as the refusal of the “rebel forces” to embrace even socialist reform, let alone communism, it seems clear to me that this conflict is another in the long line of surrogate wars between the U.S. and one or another of its capitalist rivals, in this case Russia.

This does not mean that the principle of dialectics that the internal is primary is wrong. In the long run, this principle is quite correct. In the case of Syria, a communist revolution will not occur until the vast majority of the populations (the internal) understands and supports communism. However, in the short run, the capitalists (both “domestic” and “foreign”) now have the power to impose their will on the working class. As a result, right now the external capitalist class is the primary factor in the Syrian conflict.

Of course, our Party’s response to this is to INCREASE the fight for communism, not wait until “things get better.” In fact, the only way that “things will get better” is if the struggle for communism continues, during the “good times” as well as the “bad times.” Applying the very general principles of dialectics to a particular situation is never easy. It is incumbent on all of us to be aware of this and to help each other learn how to apply it.

A Comrade

Bosses Are Masters At Defrauding Workers

Here is a perfect illustration of the way capitalism works. The bosses and their government never stop finding ways to enrich themselves while exploiting the workers.

The 50 workers at the brickworks in Remchi, Algeria, a town of 47,000, haven’t been paid for three months. After appealing in vain to the local and national authorities, they blocked the highway to publicize their situation. Still no official response.

The brickworks was privatized on the cheap in 2004, with the complicity of the local and national authorities. The purchaser never paid more than \$91 million of the \$916 million sales price. At the time, the factory employed 150 workers.

The boss ran the factory with no respect for the workers’ health and safety. His only aim was maximum profits. He never paid his taxes, nor his suppliers nor his gas bill, which now stands at \$85,500 for natural gas and \$49,000 for electricity. He now lives in neighboring Morocco with his stolen wealth and the factory has been shut down for six months. The workers, with families to support, have nothing.

No wonder the only solution is communist revolution.

A Friend in France

Lessons of the Movie Salt of the Earth

We watched the 1950’s movie “Salt of the Earth” on the bus ride from Downstate Hospital in Brooklyn to Washington, DC to attend the memorial for the famous 1963 March for Jobs. The hospital workers on the bus, mostly black women, were really impressed by the many stories in it. There was lively booing and cheering as the miners’ wives were put down because of sexist stereotyping in the ‘50s only to rise up, win the day and change their husband’s ideas with their successful and militant picket duty.

In our year-long and continuing struggle to keep Downstate open and stop layoffs, we are up against the might of the whole power of the state in New York, stemming from Governor Cuomo on down. In the movie we saw practical applications for the working class.

Cecilia: “it was great when, after the judge made it illegal for the miners to picket, the women and children took over picketing for months and organized even in the jail, despite early objections from their husbands. Nothing could stop them, from beatings to injunctions. It showed me that we need to show more of these kinds of movies on these trips to build up our spirit.”

Georgia: “it was so good I want my son to see this; he needs to understand this history.”

Violet: “it shows how evil the managers are and that the worker’s struggle was really life and death in the mines. Conditions today are getting worse and we are heading towards that period of working conditions. We are nearly back there.”

Mimi: “The movie was REAL. It showed that our working-class progress in last 50 years is so slow it can be measured in nanometers. Minimum wage has fallen behind. The bosses are still oppressive. The struggle must go on and we must muster the spirit and tenacity to keep up the fight. The movie was uplifting and educational. I will watch this movie again and recommend it to teach that we can win if we unite and fight.”

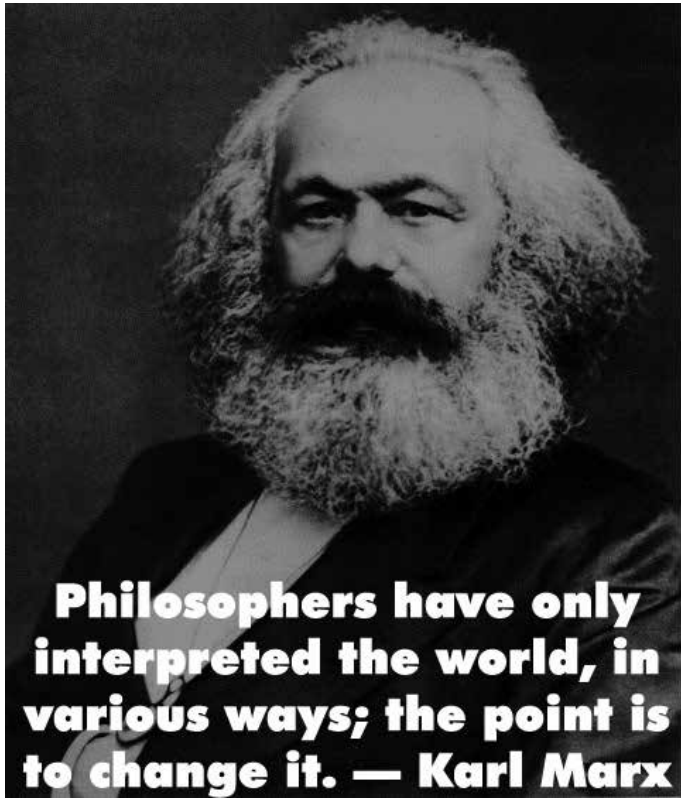
Red hospital workers

Correction

A Chicago article on page 8 had a kicker titled, “Mother’s Battle for School Library.” It should have read *Mothers’* with an apostrophe after the s. Several workers gave leadership and many fought for that library.



Debating Marxism and Revolutionary Practice



Nine members and close friends of PLP participated in the week-long annual summer institute of the Marxist Literary Group/Institute on Culture and Society (MLG-ICS) at Ohio State University. Over many years, a number of us have attended this gathering — which draws together faculty, graduate students and artists in the humanities. This year's experience was the best ever.

The worldwide economic crisis has generated pro-

found skepticism about the ability of capitalism to meet the needs of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the planet. While a decade ago it was difficult to utter the word "communism" — even among self-described Marxists! — the word is now on the lips of many. Although the "New Communist Philosophers" — most notably Alain Badiou, Slavoj Zizek, Jodi Dean, and Bruno Bosteels — hardly envision the same path to communism as PLP, the fact that leftist academics are vigorously discussing how to get past capitalism opens up significant possibilities for deeper political work.

Our presentations ranged over a wide array of topics. We offered critical commentaries on the representations of race, class, gender and nation in popular movies and TV shows.

We argued that widely accepted anti-communist versions of Soviet history are false. We examined the financially-saturated language in which sexual and romantic relations are formulated in the mass media. We urged a critical reexamination of the unscientific terms in which the connections between capitalism and nuclear power are widely construed. We proposed friendly but sharp critiques of the shortcomings of various New Communist Philosophers, particularly in connection with the need for antiracism and internationalism. No one could fault PL members for being focused on a narrow agenda!

In the sessions where papers were given, we engaged in sharp but friendly commentary and critique of the ways in which Marxist theory was being applied

to literature, philosophy and history. In conversations with fellow graduate students and faculty members, we discussed matters of common concern, such as turning academic labor into more contingent, temporary, unstable jobs without benefits. We discussed the dismal job market, as well as the need for a mass communist movement in which the fight against racism plays a central role. Although we could have done a better job of distributing CHALLENGE, we had better discussions this year than in the past about the role that PL is currently playing in the building of that mass communist movement.

The barriers to political work in this group remain formidable. Neo-Marxism and post-Marxism, while less fashionable than they were a decade ago, continue to divert potential radicals into hyper-theoretical discussions having little to do with revolutionary practice. Anticommunism, while more on the defensive, continues to guide many assumptions about politics and history.

Too many presumably leftist academics remain unbothered by the nearly all-white participation in gatherings like the Summer Institute. We need to wage a continuing struggle for a more objective and dialectical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the past century's attempts to move past capitalism and build egalitarian societies.

Most of the PL members and friends who took part in this summer's MLG-ICS meeting built new friendships, consolidated old ones, and deepened our ties with a number of academics who take seriously the need for communism. We were also energized to enter the fall semester with a renewed commitment to campus organizing.☺

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

Stop-and-frisk is racist tactic

NYT, 8/15 — [NYC] police commissioner...Kelly says that the stop-and-frisk tactics were intended to frighten minority men into leaving any guns they owned at home. A precinct commander described "the right people" to stop, with a reference to young black men. And a statistical analysis of millions of police interactions revealed that few people subjected to stop-and-frisk methods had been engaged in wrongdoing.

These three items of evidence were central to [the]... conclusion that the Police Department has a policy of conducting stops "in a racially discriminatory manner."

Widely evading pro-worker rules

NYT, 9/2 — As Western companies overwhelmingly turn to low-wage countries far away from corporate headquarters to produce cheap apparel, electronics and other goods, factory inspections have become a vital link in the supply chain of overseas production.

An extensive examination by the New York Times reveals how the inspection system is riddled with flaws. The inspections are often so superficial that they omit the most fundamental workplace safeguards like fire escapes. And even when inspectors are tough, factory managers find ways to trick them and hide serious violations, like child labor or locked exit doors....The audits frequently [have]...little enforcement or follow-through to guarantee compliance.

....The auditors are put under greater pressure on speed, and they're not able to keep up with what's really going on in the apparel industry....

Factory-monitoring companies have established a booming business in the two decades since Gap, Nike, Walmart and others were tarnished by disclosures that their overseas factories employed underage workers and engaged in other abusive workplace practices. Each year, these monitoring companies assess more than 50,000 factories worldwide that employ millions of workers....

The inspections carry enormous weight with fac-

tory owners, who stand to win or lose millions of dollars in orders depending on their ratings. With stakes so high, factory managers have been known to try to trick or cheat the auditors. Bribery offers are not unheard-of. Often notified beforehand about an inspector's visit, factory managers will unlock fire exit doors, unblock cluttered stairwells or tell underage child laborers not to show up to work that week.

'Lenders' trap poorest workers

NYT, 8/30 — The predatory industry known as payday lending... [are gouging]...low-income borrowers...into long-term debt running at impossible interest rates of 500 percent or more.

....Lenders are now looking for other ways to ply their abusive trade — by conducting business offshore via the Internet....

Payday lenders gull people into supposedly short-term borrowing until their next payday under terms that turn out to balloon the obligation into unsustainable long-term debt under a crescendo of interest costs. Millions of borrowers have been entrapped in situations where a supposed two-week loan rolls forward for an average of five months....

Borrowers averaged 10 payday loans a year and paid \$458 in fees....

Jailing can't cure homelessness

NYT, 8/26 — This summer, cities like Tampa, Fla., and Portland, Ore., have pursued aggressive policies against the homeless....enacting prohibitions against activities like panhandling and loitering....

All of these ordinances and policies just redistribute homeless persons. They don't solve the problem of homelessness. You can't jail people out of homelessness.



"The word 'slave' is so degrading. Why don't we call you 'intern.'"

Diabetes epidemic raging in capitalist China

NYT, 9/10 — China has the world's biggest diabetes epidemic, and it continues to worsen....

...The newest [studies] published last week by the Journal of the American Medical Association shows that China has just passed the United States: 11.6 percent of Chinese adults have the disease, compared with 11.3 percent here; in 1980, prevalence was below 1 percent.

The total — 114 million people — means China has about a third of the world's diabetes sufferers, who are at greater risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney failure.

Inter-Imperialist Rivalry Behind Mexico's Energy Reform

The document below is the flyer that members of the Progressive Labor Party distributed at the striking teachers' encampment in Mexico City and during the protest against energy reform. In total, we distributed 3,000 flyers. Most teachers welcomed them. Many are already familiar with CHALLENGE and some asked for the paper. There was a huge national teachers' rally to demand the repeal of the approved reforms, including clashes with the police and arrests. A group of comrades once again distributed our literature. There will be more protests in coming weeks, and we will be there to show our support — and, more important, to advance our revolutionary communist perspective.

Global capitalism is in crisis and inter-imperialist rivalry is sharpening, particularly between the U.S. and China. Eventually the bosses' economic competition will lead to armed confrontation and push the world toward a broader war. The center of this fight is over the control of oil and gas, the raw materials essential to the capitalists' militaries and industries.

The struggle over energy reform reflects the inter-imperialist rivalry within Mexico. The accord forged by President Enrique Peña Nieto — along with other politicians in the PRI, PAN and PRD parties — is mainly an attempt to benefit the biggest oil companies in the U.S. and Britain: Shell, BP, ExxonMobil, and Chevron.

Over the last three decades, U.S. Imperialists have massacred millions of workers in the Middle East in the name of oil profits. In spite of their ruthless brutality, their control of the region grows weaker by the day. As inter-imperialist war looms closer, the U.S. will need more secure and accessible sources of energy. Mexico's energy resources are a big part of the U.S. bosses' plan. They have already placed their reliable servants in key positions. For example, Emilio Lozoya Austin, the CEO of PEMEX (Mexico's state-owned petroleum company), is closely tied to Condoleezza Rice, former Chevron director and former U.S. Secretary of State.

The Mexican Secretary of the Treasury, Luis Videgaray Caso, is allied with Pedro Aspe, his predecessor under former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Aspe is now co-chairman of Evercore Partners, a leading U.S. investment bank. Through his ties to Alberto Bailleres, Mexico's third richest man, he also is connected to the largest bank in the world, JP Morgan Chase. In turn, JP Morgan Chase is closely linked to ExxonMobil and Chevron (Bajo la Lupa, July & August 2013). As inter-imperialist rivalries sharpen, these relationships are critical. Some day the U.S. may be in a position to militarily occupy Mexico's oil reserves.

Nationalism: A False Option

Energy reform will wreak havoc with the lives of workers, perhaps even more so than labor or educational reform. PEMEX currently contributes 40 percent of the federal budget. If the company is privatized, that number would drop sharply and lead to budget cuts to health, education, and social development.

The bosses are using tax hikes to try to compensate for their falling rate of profits. This affects all workers, but particularly public-sector employees working at the mercy of the Secretary of the Treasury. Both the budget cuts and tax increases will deepen misery and inequality. Meanwhile, the super-rich keep getting tax breaks that amounted to 132 million pesos in 2008 alone. This year the Treasury forgave millions of pesos owed by Televisa.

Andres Manuel López Obrador and Cuauhtémoc

Cárdenas have called on workers to oppose oil privatization with the argument that natural resources "belong" to the nation. In reality, they are defending the interests of a competing group of capitalists. Their struggle revolves around the question of which set of bosses should own the oil. Even when oil is state property, it is never used to meet workers' needs.

Bosses like Carlos Slim (Carso Group), the Garza Sada family from Monterrey (the ALFA conglomerate), the Del Valle brothers (Latina Drills and Mexichem), and Carlos Ruíz Sacristán (IEnova), among others, have business deals with PEMEX of about \$3 million USD (El Financiero, August 2013). A similar amount will be required to build the gas pipeline Los Ramones, which is licensed to the Spanish company OHL (in alliance with British capital), IEnova, and the financial division of Protego de Aspe (Reporte Indigo, August 2013)

During the last five years, PEMEX had earnings of \$550 million USD (Bajo la Lupa, August 2013). In the same period, the number of poor people in Mexico

increased by 4.5 million (El Economista, July, 2013). Whether they nationalize or privatize, the bosses prosper as workers get poorer. Nationalism is a false option.

We Need Communism

As long as the capitalist system is in place, it doesn't matter which group of millionaires controls the oil wealth. Under capitalism workers get only crumbs. Assets are concentrated in the hands of the greedy, predatory minority that holds political and economic power.

Only a communist society can be organized for the benefit of the working class. Only under communism can we use oil wealth to meet the needs of the population.

The struggle for a communist society must be led by the workers themselves, united and organized by the revolutionary Progressive Labor Party. We fight to overthrow the dictatorship of the bosses and establish the dictatorship of the working class. Join us!✪

Mexico Teacher Strike



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