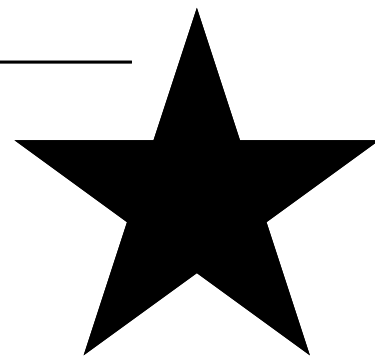

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PL



BLACK WORKERS' LEADERSHIP: KEY REVOLUTIONARY FORCE

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OUR FIGHT:

- ✱ PLP fights to smash 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. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.
- ✱ Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, 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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The purpose of PL Magazine is to deepen the Party's and the international working class's understanding of the world situation, history, class struggle, and communist theory and organizing. PL Magazine, aspiring to be a leader in communist thought, is for the working class, produced by the working class. Our publication practices logically flow from the Party line and our vision of the communist society we fight for—anyone can think, write, organize, and lead. We aim to cultivate red and multiracial intellectuals who are grounded in the working class.

The fact that essays are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. All knowledge belongs to, and comes from, the masses. We want to thwart the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual. While an article may be written by one or two people, the final version is based on collective investigation and criticism. Many times the collective discussion precedes an individual's writing.

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World Situation

The volatility of the capitalist world order is rapidly increasing. It is driven by the weakening position of U.S. imperialism, the rising influence of the Chinese and Russian capitalists, and the sharpening of conflicts among these imperialist rivals.

One result of this instability is the intensification of fascism worldwide. As the post-World War II world order teeters, infighting among capitalists has intensified. Bosses across the globe are moving to discipline their own class in preparation for war and massive attacks on the working class.

The decline of U.S. imperialism underscores the basic contradictions of capitalist empires. U.S. rulers have been rocked by two catastrophic failures. First, after spending nearly \$6 trillion on the war in Iraq, the second-leading source of cheap petroleum, they find themselves in a weaker position in the Middle East than before they invaded. Iraq's oil supplies remain insecure. European allies are meeting energy needs by turning to Russia, the power now calling the shots in war-devastated Syria.

Second, the financial crisis of 2008, spurred by short-term greed in financial institutions like Lehman Brothers and Goldman Sachs, dealt the U.S. ruling class a body blow. Obama's subsequent bank bailout cost \$17 trillion but failed to resolve the long-term problems of slowing growth and a diminished base in manufacturing. By 2014, according to the International Monetary Fund, China had surpassed the U.S. as the world's largest economy (bbc.com, 12/16/14). By 2050, India is projected to outrank the U.S. as well (fortune.com, 2/9/17).

As the finance capitalist main wing of the U.S. ruling class struggles to hold onto its empire, it is also threatened internally. A faction of domestically oriented capitalists, spearheaded by the Koch and Mercer families and Sheldon Adelson, among others, have forged an opportunistic alliance with U.S. President Donald Trump and his white supremacist base.

GROWING FASCISM ACROSS THE GLOBE

The main international trend today is growing fascism. By contrast to the U.S., both China and Russia have disciplined and unified ruling classes. Their media outlets serve as a reliable arm of the state. Opposition voices are neutralized, silenced, or killed. The U.S. main wing is envious—and taking notes.

In Russia, shortly after assuming the presidency in 2000, Vladimir Putin consolidated his control: "Oligarch owners were either co-opted, jailed or exiled, and by 2006 most major Russian media were either directly or indirectly under Putin's administration's control.... The editors-in-chief of all the major media in Russia attend regular 'strategy meetings' with Putin's staffers" (The Guardian, 3/24/17).

In China, state control over the news media "is achieved through a complex combination of party monitoring of news content, legal restrictions on journalists, and financial incentives for self-censorship" (2006 Freedom House report). China also cracks down on video-streaming websites and social media, with users required to register their real names on online forums. "New rules also require online news websites to be overseen by government-approved editorial staff and for workers to have reporting credentials from the central government" (CNBC, 10/26/17).

For now, despite growing internal tensions, the Chinese ruling class has coalesced around President Xi Jinping, who has been granted mostly unchallenged control over the state apparatus. In March 2018, the National People's Congress rubber-stamped a proposal to remove term limits, which could allow Xi to remain president for life. "The supersizing of Xi's power comes as Beijing steps up efforts to go global ... Xi doesn't tweet, boast about his IQ or make geopolitical threats he's not prepared to back up. What he does do is beat economic growth expectations year after year, steadily increase China's market share and play the long game...." (Japan Times, 10/31/18).

Xi pledged to make China a great power by 2050 (South▶▶▶)

China Morning Post, 11/16). In fact, it is already happening. China's mixed state and market capitalist economy is outpacing the U.S. It is "the second largest economy by official exchange rate, the largest manufacturing country and the largest trading nation in the world" (bbc.com, 10/19). It also boasts one-third of the world's billionaires (Center for American Progress, 4/27/18). China has established a military beachhead in the South and East China seas while pursuing its strategy for worldwide economic dominance, the Belt and Road Initiative.

U.S. RULING CLASS AT WAR WITH ITSELF

With the U.S. capitalists' political and economic influence in decline, the split within their ranks is growing clearer and sharper by the day. The main wing of the U.S. ruling class is pulling out all the stops to contain the internal threat to its liberal capitalist world order—the military, political, and economic system that has sustained the U.S. bosses' dominance since World War II. The bitter fights for control of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the White House point directly toward civil war.

The Big Fascists of finance capital, represented by the Democratic Party and the remaining mainstream Republicans, is desperate to rein in Trump and his racist base. Their goal is to protect institutions like NATO and prepare for World War III. Meanwhile, the overtly racist domestic bosses, the Little Fascists, are advancing their isolationist agenda through the erratic Trump, his "anti-globalist" policy-makers like Stephen Miller (and formerly Steve Bannon), and media outlets like Rupert Murdoch's Fox empire and Breitbart News.

Trump's undisciplined approach may make him seem like an incompetent rogue, if not a tool of Russian interests. In essence, however, his wrecking-ball style represents something even more dangerous to the Big Fascists' interests. While the main wing initially hoped it could work with Trump, he has cast his lot with the "small America" strategic vision pushed by the Little Fascists, who are less reliant on overseas profiteering. These bosses are suspicious of multilateral ties to Western Europe, as embodied by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The isolationist alliance that now controls the White House, the U.S. Senate, and the Supreme Court is unacceptable to the main wing imperialists.

The recent midterm elections saw a massive effort by the competing factions to turn people out to vote. With the Democratic Party taking back the U.S. House of Representatives and a number of governorships and state legislatures, the main wing showed that it still owns an advantage in resources and its popular constituency.

More generally, the U.S. bosses could claim victory in sucking more of the working class into the dead end of voting. But the bitterness of their partisan fight also shows that their conflict is unlikely to be resolved through the electoral process. The possibility of civil war, where one



side will attempt to crush the other, is increasing. So is the likelihood of a violent crackdown on the working class.

The Trump phenomenon is most significant as a marker of rising fascism worldwide. It reflects the advanced decay of the liberal world order and the profit system's glaring inability to meet workers' basic needs. The extreme instability of capitalism worldwide has generated massive unemployment and wage stagnation, the erosion of the European safety net, an epidemic of opioid addiction and suicide, and more than 68 million refugees, internally displaced people, and asylum-seekers (www.unhcr.org).

To divert workers' anger from these capitalist disasters, the rulers are scapegoating the most vulnerable victims—with a vengeance. Hence the monsoon of anti-immigrant racism, a basic building block of electoral success for Trump and his European counterparts. Open fascists or right-wing "nationalists" have taken power in Italy, Hungary, Poland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Turkey. They share power in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Norway, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Armenia, and Lithuania. They've built significant opposition forces in the three largest European economies—Germany, France, and Britain. In the 2018 parliamentary elections in Sweden, widely romanticized by the bosses' media as a bastion of enlightened "social democracy," the fascist Sweden Democrats polled a record 18 percent (rt.com, 9/9/18).

The liberal world order is in panicked retreat. It would ➤➤

be a grave mistake for the working class to pin our future on trying to save and reform this rotting system. The bosses' latest crisis must be met with intensified efforts to build the fight for workers' power and a communist society. By strengthening our anti-nationalist, anti-racist fightback, by uniting workers wherever we are active, we can both grow as a revolutionary organization and expose the insoluble contradictions of capitalism.

Workers around the world are under escalating attacks. The wars raging across the Middle East have created millions of refugees. Workers in Central and South America are enduring devastating violence and poverty from U.S. imperialism. Around the globe, genocide, ethnic cleansing, slave labor wages, and state terror are the norm.

In the face of more and more capitalist violence, workers are being pressured to choose sides in the bosses' battles. But there is no future for our class in ruling-class nationalism or some mythical "lesser evil." It's worth remembering that in the former Soviet Union and communist-led China, we once held state power across a third of the globe. The one way forward is to fight for a communist future led by the international working class. Progressive Labor Party is fighting for that future.

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue, we look at three topics important to understanding the current period:

Our feature piece **Black Workers' Leadership: Key Revolutionary Force** updates a historic Progressive Labor Party document on the essential role played by Black workers in overcoming racism and building a communist movement to free all workers from capitalist exploitation.

Youth Work & Building the Party distills a comrade's 45 years of experience with building in high schools and offers eight lessons for new organizers.

The Birth and Decline of U.S. Imperialism outlines the history of U.S. imperialism, its deadly impact across the globe, and how it is coming under increasing pressure from rival imperialists.

Wherever the working class fights back around advanced ideas of class consciousness, anti-racism, and anti-sexism, PLP can grow. From spontaneous rebellions, as in Ferguson, to organized, worker-led struggles, opportunities to restore confidence in our class are out there. Only communism can end racism by destroying it at its root of capitalist exploitation. Only a communist society can free our class from sexism, mass unemployment, poverty, and profit-driven wars. As the capitalist world descends into fascism and a looming inter-imperialist conflict, we must build PLP and the fight for communism—for a new society run by and for the international working class.✪

Black Workers' Leadership: Key Revolutionary Force

Progressive Labor Party is reevaluating our political line and our strategy for building a mass party for communist revolution. In this issue of PL Magazine, we are revisiting a landmark document in our organization's history: "Black Workers: Key Revolutionary Force," originally published in February 1969. We are also reaffirming that the leadership of Black workers is an absolute necessity for the revolutionary future of the international working class.



“Black Workers: Key Revolutionary Force” came out in a time of great political upheaval. In Vietnam, Black GI's led insurrections against genocidal U.S. imperialism—refusing orders, deserting en masse, killing their criminal officers. Mass rebellions turned dozens of U.S. inner cities into armed battlefields. In two-front wars against the bosses and sellout union leaders, Black workers led bold wildcat strikes. They disrupted Detroit's auto plants. They shut down the U.S. Post Office, coast to coast.

Half a century later, objective conditions for Black workers are little better, if at all.

As of 2017, 28 percent of Black children were trapped in poverty, as compared to 11 percent of white children.¹ Black adults are five times more likely to be incarcerated as their white counterparts.² In the poorest Black ward of Washington, DC, both unemployment and infant mortality rates are ten times higher than in an affluent, predominantly white ward just four miles away.³

As U.S. corporations grab and hoard record profits, \$2 trillion in the second quarter of 2018 alone, racist inequalities have intensified. As of 2016, the average Black household earned half as much income as the average white household, about the same as in the 1950s. The racist wage gap is wider than in 1979, and widest of all among college-educated men⁴; the white-Black household wealth gap has stretched to ten-to-one or more.⁵ U.S. public schools are both separate and grotesquely unequal, more segregated than in 1968, and most segregated of all in the

proudly liberal state of New York.⁶

Under arch-racist U.S. President Donald Trump, racist terror by Klan-type vigilantes—in and out of uniform—is once again on the rise.⁷ In 2017, police killings of Black workers and youth exceeded the number of lynchings in the worst year of Jim Crow.^{8a}

Today, as 50 years ago, Black workers are the most brutally attacked section of our class. Now as then, they must help take the lead in building an international communist movement. U.S. history is a chronicle of genocide, slavery, segregation, and enduring racist oppression. Black workers have less invested in the capitalist status quo. Since racism infects all relations within the profit system, they stand to hold fewer illusions about “justice” or “democracy” under the bosses' dictatorship. Though not immune to the false hope of reformism, Black workers are better equipped to understand its limits. As the young rebels in Ferguson declared: “It's the whole damn system!”

And so: Black workers are a key revolutionary force because of their basis for class consciousness—for class solidarity with all workers and class hatred of all capitalist rulers.

Our Party has developed the understanding that racism and capitalism are bound together; one cannot exist without the other. Only an international communist revolution can liberate the world's working class from the ravages of racist imperialism. Only a united, multiracial working class can win the fight for communism. Black workers are central to that struggle.

Black workers are a key revolutionary force because of their role in the U.S. military, where they represent 17 percent of active-duty enlisted men and 30 percent of active-duty enlisted women.⁹ They will play a major part in the next global war—and in turning an imperialist war for profit into a class war for communist revolution.

Black workers are a key revolutionary force because of their disproportionate numbers in basic U.S. industry and transportation. Within major U.S. cities and metropolitan areas, Black workers are concentrated in mass transit, ➤



health care, education, the U.S. Postal Service, UPS, and FedEx. They retain the potential to shut down major population centers and critical infrastructure.

Workers in general are degraded by capitalism; as a class, we have nothing to lose but our chains. Latin, Muslim, Asian, and women workers all suffer under special oppression by the U.S. ruling class. From the U.S. and Mexico to Europe and the Middle East, immigrant workers—most of them dark-skinned—are terrorized and scapegoated at the fault lines of rising fascism. Anti-Blackness is a global epidemic.

Black workers have an especially urgent case to revolt and smash the bosses' state. Throughout U.S. history, from the time they were brought from Africa by force as a pool of no-wage labor, they have served at the forefront of every working-class movement: the war against slavery, the struggle for civil rights, the mass strikes against the industrial bosses, the fights for jobs and housing and decent schools. Wherever workers have confronted the profit system and its parasites, Black workers have stood at the front lines.

Anti-Black racism is deeply rooted. It is the very foundation of U.S. empire. More than 500 years after Europe's colonial powers first invaded the Americas, racism exists for one reason and one reason alone: It generates billions upon billions in profit for the capitalists.

If our class is to seize and hold state power throughout the world, Black workers and their leadership are essential for another fundamental reason. Our class cannot possibly

destroy racism—the lifeblood of capitalism—without their leadership.

HOW RACISM HURTS WORKERS

Racism weakens the working class in two ways. By weaponizing the myth of “race,” fostering segregation, and pitting workers one against the other, racism undermines our strength in reform struggles against the capitalists. More damaging still, it blocks the development of revolutionary class consciousness. As Karl Marx wrote in 1867, “Labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin.”¹¹ As “Black Workers” noted a century later: “Racism is the main tool the ruling class has to divide the working class.”

Racism reaps super-profits from its victims. It enables the capitalists to pay Black workers and other super-exploited groups significantly less than the prevailing wage for male white workers. Historically, the rulers have used these lower-paid workers—along with the “reserve army” of the unemployed—as a wedge to discourage fightback for better wages and working conditions.

Capitalism is absolutely dependent on racist super-profits, on the one hand, and a divided working class, on the other. To build a mass revolutionary movement, Progressive Labor Party must make anti-racist struggle primary in every political struggle. As “Black Workers” notes, “[T]he special oppression of Black people sharpens the contradictions for the whole population.” Racism is both an essential aspect of the profit system and, potentially, its point of greatest vulnerability. Wherever racism runs rampant, all workers lose. Wherever racism is forced to retreat, all workers can advance. As “Black Workers” affirmed: “We must make the fight against racism a cardinal principle....a question of strategy not tactics.”

When Black and white workers—with Latin, Muslim, immigrant, and other workers—join in the fight against racism and confront capitalism at its rotten core, they unite at the highest level. As “Black Workers” noted, this reality must guide how we build the Party: “A real measure of whether we’re fighting racism among the masses is whether we’re recruiting Black workers to a Marxist-Leninist party, which in turn is a reflection of how well we’re fighting racism among white workers.”

CAPITALIST DECAY AND WORKERS' FIGHTBACK

“Black Workers: Key Revolutionary Force” marked a sharpening of anti-racist struggle within PLP:

Though it's been said that fascism will come to the U.S. in the guise of democracy, it is more important to say that racism will be the main tool the ruling class uses to turn white workers and the white middle class to fascism. The bosses will try to present the Black workers as the main enemy...thereby preventing the specially oppressed Black workers from lead-



Anti-Black Racism and Imperialism

Racism is part and parcel of U.S. imperialism. In their escalating inter-imperialist rivalry with China and Russia, the U.S. bosses need racist super-profits to sustain their empire and fund their military. Back in 1969, PLP analyzed this dynamic in “Black Workers”:

Imperialism has one primary need—to amass maximum profits. Therefore, the oppression of Black workers at home and the domination of oppressed peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America is not merely an aberration of deranged imperialists, but the necessary operation of imperialism.

Racism is the political expression of imperialism.... Imperialism as a system must perpetuate racism in order to thrive; it must continue to reap the super-profits derived from the “racial inferiority” thesis it has drummed home into both Black and white workers.

Consequently, the ability of the working class to reject racism is crucial to its ability to end class oppression. U.S. imperialism cannot exist without the brutal super-exploitation of Black people and, therefore, will never grant equality to Black workers.

The question of racism and imperialism may be even more pressing in the current period, as U.S. rulers turn to rising fascism in their runup to the next global war. Despite its relative decline versus China and Russia, U.S. imperialism remains the dominant cultural force in the world today. While basic U.S. industry is shrinking and the trade deficit ballooning, anti-Black racism persists as a thriving U.S. export—the model for racism worldwide. In Germany, where the fascist Alternative-for-Germany (AfD) is best known for anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism, native-born “Afro-Germans” face hate crimes, violent racial profiling by police, and systemic discrimination in jobs, housing, and education.¹ An AfD lawmaker recently called the artist Noah Becker a “little half-negro.”² We’re reminded that Hitler’s Nazis learned their murderous racial pseudoscience from U.S. Nazis like the Columbia-educated eugenicist, Madison Grant.³

Anti-Black racism is the creature of capitalist ideology. It is an international phenomenon, however large or small a country’s Black population may be:

- In South Korea, a television comedy skit featured a character in blackface and a mockery of African garb. It ended with a dance from *The Lion King*.⁴
- In China, similar caricatures were televised in a Lunar New Year gala watched by 800 million people. Air China’s inflight magazine cautioned travelers to avoid areas of London inhabited by “Indians, Pakistanis, and Black people.”⁵ Until recently, the Chinese messaging app WeChat translated the words for “Black worker” into a racial slur.⁶
- In Thailand, a police operation called Operation

X-Ray Outlaw Foreigner targets undocumented workers and visa overstayers. The country’s immigration bureau chief said his agency’s job was “to classify who are the good dark-skinned people and who are the ones likely to commit crimes.”⁷

- In Kenya, with its own history of anti-Indian and anti-Pakistani racism, Chinese project managers have revived Jim Crow by segregating worksite bathrooms and calling super-exploited Kenyan workers “monkeys.”⁸
- In Italy, home to millions of African migrants, a Klan-inspired banner was found hung at a school that was about to host a debate on immigration: “Non ci sono negri italiani.” (“There are no Black Italians.”)⁹
- In Mexico, darker-skinned workers earn 41 percent less than white workers. The “skin-color gap” in Mexico is twice as large as the gap between northern and southern Mexican workers, and five times as large as the gap between urban and rural workers. Aeromexico, the country’s leading airline, recently issued a commercial casting call saying that “nadie moreno”—no dark-skinned people—would be allowed to audition.¹⁰
- Racism has long divided the working class in the Dominican Republic, to the point of stripping citizenship from hundreds of thousands of workers of Haitian descent and requiring others to carry apartheid-style passes. Newspapers in Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital, warn of the “invasion of a dark army whose greatest weapon [is] a high birth rate...” and the need to “defend the fatherland against uneducated savages.”¹¹
- In South Asia, where the African slave trade predated the Atlantic market, Pakistan TV recently aired its own blackface segment for a bridal makeup contest.¹² Pakistan’s Sheedi minority, descended from slaves from East Africa, continue to “face discrimination in social and economic spheres such as marriage and employment....”¹³
- In India, darker-skinned Dalits (formerly known as untouchables) continue to be beaten or killed for violating unwritten caste rules: swimming in the wrong well, wearing “royal” leather shoes, adding an “upper-caste” suffix to one’s Facebook name.¹⁴ “The law of mobs is always there,” said a Cameroonian MBA student.¹⁵
- In Israel, beyond the officially sanctioned racism against Arabs, anti-Black racism is a daily reality for darker-skinned Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews of West Asian or North African origin. Israel’s “Law of Return,” which supposedly welcomes every Jew in the world, has excluded thousands of Ethiopian

Jews, even those with children already living in the country.¹⁶ The national police commissioner said it was “natural” to suspect Israeli workers and youth of Ethiopian origin to be criminals.¹⁷

In Brazil, where a majority is categorized as Black or “mixed-race,” the open racist Jair Bolsonaro was the landslide winner in an October 2018 presidential election. Bolsonaro campaigned against affirmative action at Brazilian universities and called African refugees “the scum of the earth.” Young Black males in Brazil are nine times as likely to be murdered as their white counterparts.¹⁸ Bolsonaro’s anti-crime program consists of unleashing trigger-happy security forces into Black neighborhoods, with a license to shoot to kill.

The international fight against racism sharpens the essential contradiction of capitalism, the fundamental tension between bosses and workers. Black workers are a key revolutionary force because we cannot possibly end racism, the lifeblood of capitalism, without a unified, multiracial movement—from Tel Aviv to Mexico City, from Karachi to Port-au-Prince. Black workers—and Black youth, in particular—are demonstrating and rebelling in Britain, France, Israel, and Brazil. “Fight Like Ferguson” became an inspirational battle cry that rallied masses around the globe.

With these bold young anti-racists showing the way, it’s clear that the bosses’ borders cannot wall off working-class anger. The rulers’ terror cannot stop our communist movement. Workers are fighting back. Workers always fight back. The struggle advances.

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ing the whole working class in revolution against the bosses....

A two-pronged drive has unfolded, raising racism among white workers to new heights and also pushing anti-working-class Black nationalism to an unprecedented degree....

The fight against racism is a life and death matter in the United States. To succeed means to bring the militant and revolutionary leadership of the specially oppressed Black workers to the working class as a whole in the total fight against the same exploiter—the bosses who own and run this country....

Though much has changed in the world over the last half-century, these words might have been written yesterday.

The rulers fear nothing more than a multiracial resistance. For well over three centuries, they have used their state apparatus—their laws, their courts, their banks, their killer cops—to segregate workers and institutionalize racism. Beginning in the mid-17th century, as Lerone Bennett observed in “The Road Not Taken,” laws were passed to keep newly invented racial groups separated, and enforced with state terror:

It was all done deliberately, consciously, with malice aforethought... In every colony, from New York to South Carolina, the same mechanisms of separation and subordination were elaborated and imposed.... [T]he same penalties were used to keep blacks and whites apart, the same rewards were developed to make poor whites support a system that penalized them, the same statutes were elaborated to crush and diabolify blacks....

[B]y the middle of the eighteenth century a solid white front was developing....[C]oncerted action by blacks and whites virtually ceased after the creation of the white front. What is even more interesting is that white revolt against the system almost disappeared....

As it turned out, the emerging slave system had an immediate and disastrous impact on poor whites. Unable to compete with the large planters, poor whites retreated to the marginal land in the hills, where they eked out a hand-to-mouth existence. To the untutored mind of the poor whites, it seemed that blacks were the cause of their misery. They therefore began to hate black people with a passion.... The poor white was wrong: slavery, not the slave, was his enemy. But it would take time—and blood—to see this.

In short, anti-Black racism was born as a strategic cal- ➤➤

culuation by the ruling planter class. The “solid white front” anticipated Trump’s hardcore, white supremacist base. Like the poor hill people of the 1700s, these workers are paying a heavy price—from depressed wages to misdirected hatreds—for the racist divisions imposed by the ruling class.

Though racial segregation became technically illegal in the U.S. by the 1960s, the bosses have enforced their de facto apartheid to this day—in public schools and neighborhoods, in social clubs and executive suites. It’s no accident that Trump’s racist fearmongering has resonated most strongly in states with among the smallest Black populations, or from the old Jim Crow South, or with the smallest numbers of undocumented immigrants.^{12 13}

To divide is to conquer. The defeat of the old communist movement and the poison of racism have devastated the white working class. Despite a recent decline in the meaningless official unemployment rate, the U.S. labor force participation rate^a is stuck below 63 percent, or about three percentage points less than in 2008, at the height of the Great Recession.¹⁴ Millions of white workers have fallen into alienation, despair, opioid addiction, and suicide. Their life expectancy is falling.¹⁵ Their millennial children are buried by student debt and earning 20 percent less than their parents at the same age.¹⁶ The profit system has failed them all, at every turn, in every way.

With no future under capitalism, and no mass communist movement to point to an alternative, white workers are easy targets for the bosses’ scapegoating of immigrants and Black and Latin workers. Trump is looting the U.S. Treasury for tax cuts for the wealthy. He is destroying what little health care workers can afford. Yet racism has blinded many white workers from seeing their true enemy: the capitalist rulers.

Meanwhile, Black nationalism and identity politics continue to undermine class consciousness. Black Lives Matter is old, rancid wine in a new bottle, an exercise in wrong-turn separatism. A wave of Black politicians led the Democratic Party charge in the 2018 midterm elections; a number of them are already vying for a spot on the 2020 presidential ticket. Black billionaires and celebrities, from Oprah to Jay-Z and Beyoncé, will be cheering them on, pitching the same fraudulent non-solutions as ever. They’ll try to sell Black workers and youth on the fantasy that the profit system can work for them, too—if only there were more Black presidents and governors and congresspeople, more Black mayors and police chiefs.

Under the capitalist electoral system, workers have no good choices. A significant minority is susceptible to the gutter-racist appeals of Trump and his toadies. Others are turning, out of desperation or habit, to the Clintons’ brand of liberal racism, or the fake “socialism” of the likes of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Their phony promises notwithstanding, all of the Democrats are fronting for more fascism and imperialist war. The vicious, lethal profit system is their system, too. They are neck-deep in organized crime, in the most powerful gang in the world: U.S.

finance capital.

This new generation of class traitors is following the lead of ex-president Barack Obama, who deported 3 million undocumented workers and families, and whose bank-slanted policies devastated Black homeowners after the last recession. Or of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, who built the corrupt, thuggish African National Congress that killed 34 striking coal miners in South Africa. The big capitalists need these stooges and sellouts to pacify and deceive Black workers, in particular. They are desperate to steer them from the street to the voting booth. They lie and subvert to rob our class of revolutionary Black leadership.

In today’s decadent capitalist culture, popular Black heroes are bought and sold as commodities. Colin Kaepernick, the professional football quarterback, risked his career by refusing to stand for the National Anthem, a hymn to early U.S. imperialism, the slaughter of freed Black slaves, and (in its original version) anti-Muslim racism. Two years later, in September 2018, Kaepernick cashed in on his rebellion by signing an estimated eight-figure deal with Nike, a company with “an appalling history of labor rights violations in the 300-plus factories in nearly 40 countries around the world where its products are made. Nike has also been exposed for fostering a sexist work environment that included discrimination and harassment towards women.”¹⁷

But the news is not all grim—far from it. Millions of Black workers are refusing to buy the bosses’ false solutions or defer to self-serving misleaders. The last five years have seen an upsurge of fearless, anti-racist uprisings led by the most exploited and oppressed members of our class. The latest wave of racist police murders, most prominently in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked a wave of protests by white, Latin, Muslim, and Asian workers, led mostly by Black resisters. Defying the state’s tanks and tear gas, these working-class fighters joined a tradition dating back to the earliest slave insurrections. By resisting alongside them and learning from their militancy, by sharing jail cells and withstanding the cops’ violence, young people in and around Progressive Labor Party deepened their commitment for the many hard struggles to come.

To this day, the capitalist rulers dread the overwhelming power of a class-conscious, multiracial movement with a revolutionary outlook. They are deathly afraid of the leadership of Black communists, most of all in solidarity with white communists. Multiracial unity repudiates U.S. history and ruling-class ideology. It puts a knife to the bosses’ throats by proving that class interests are primary.

Mix together these ingredients—militant Black leadership; a mass, multiracial, centralist organization; revolutionary communist ideas—and our force will be unstoppable. The bosses will not stand a chance. United, the workers truly cannot be defeated.

As the U.S. and its imperialist rivals lurch toward World War III, never has it been more important to struggle to win *all* workers, as the Party said in 1969, “away from racism



and to a class line.” When tens of millions of workers and youth understand that racism cannot be destroyed until we smash capitalism, we will be well on the road to revolution.

SLAVERY: FOUNDATION OF CAPITALISM

Beginning in the 16th century, when the first slave ships set sail for the New World, slavery became indispensable to capitalism and its worldwide spread and devastation. The slave trade built the Portuguese, Spanish, French, and British empires. It ravaged the African continent, which has yet to recover. (As of 2008, 60 percent of the world’s poorest people lived in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁸) It forced 12 million Africans across the Atlantic, with more than a million dying in the passage.¹⁹ Workers everywhere need to understand how Black workers have been instrumental to capitalist expansion, beginning with the ruling-class theft of Black labor under chattel slavery.^b

Financed by the Spanish queen, Christopher Columbus came to the New World looking for gold. Later on, the sugar and cotton trades became immensely profitable. All of these enterprises demanded cheap and plentiful labor. The bosses had slaughtered Native Americans in huge numbers, and white indentured servants were too scarce and expensive to serve capital’s needs.²⁰ As a result, Black African slavery became the economic keystone for royalty, plantation owners, shipbuilders, insurance brokers, mine operators, and bankers on both sides of the Atlantic:

Centuries of buying and selling human beings, of moving them across oceans and continents, treating humans as property, paying taxes on them, putting them to labor, making profit off of their reproduction, and using them as collateral and capital, brought together the Western Hemisphere’s diverse parts, even those parts that didn’t seem to be directly implicated in the slave trade, into a greater whole.²¹

In sum: Slavery defined what became the United States of America, and more. It created the modern capitalist world.

BLACK WORKERS HAVE ALWAYS FOUGHT BACK

Workers everywhere have always fought back against the bosses, with Black workers frequently leading the way. This tradition dates to the time of runaway slaves, many of whom fled to the mountains. They created self-sufficient communities and defended themselves with armed violence, as necessary.

In 1739, the Stono Rebellion involved as many as 60 slaves in the British colony of South Carolina. The rebels ransacked for weapons, battled a militia, and killed 25 slaveowners before being defeated and mostly executed. The colony’s legislature was so terrified that it placed a costly 10-year moratorium on the import of Black slaves from Africa. The bosses’ property and lives were at risk.

In the 1790s, the Haitian Revolution defeated Napoleon

Bonaparte’s army and repelled British and Spanish invaders, abolishing slavery in the richest colony in the Caribbean. These Black liberators spread fear among slave owners throughout the Western Hemisphere. They inspired hundreds of rebellions throughout the Americas, all of them violent.

In 1831, Nat Turner led more than 60 slaves and Black freedmen in blazing a bloody trail through Virginia. The rebels did away with Turner’s master and the master’s family, then terrorized the owners of 15 other plantations. They killed more than 50 people before they were put down. Turner inspired John Brown, who led a multiracial group in an 1859 attack on a federal arsenal in West Virginia. Though these anti-racist fighters were likewise defeated, and Brown was hanged, the raid on Harpers Ferry sparked the American Civil War to end chattel slavery.

These famous revolts were not isolated incidents. Over the two centuries preceding the Civil War, historians have documented more than 250 uprisings involving 10 slaves or more on U.S. territory alone.²²

In the Caribbean, rebellions like the First Maroon War in Jamaica (1728-1741) grew into all-out military combat. After the Maroons repeatedly defeated British forces, the imperialists were forced to sign a peace treaty. In 1760, an even larger rebellion called Tacky’s War became “a massive shock to the imperial system.”²³ Tacky, once a chief in West Africa, led hundreds of slaves from plantation to plantation, killing white owners and overseers as they marched. Though government troops and militias eventually quelled the outbreak, the pattern was set: persistent, relentless, violent rebellion, followed by harsh repression by the slave owners, followed by more rebellion.

Black workers from the North and newly freed slaves from the South played a vital role in the U.S. Civil War (see “Marx and Du Bois,” p. 18). In the aftermath, the victorious Union capitalists—Rockefeller, Morgan, Vanderbilt, Carnegie—relied on racism to keep workers divided. In the North, mainly white and immigrant workers waged fierce battles against steel, railroad, and coal industrialists. In the South, mainly Black workers—often led by women like Ida B. Wells, a former slave—fought against lynching and other racist abuses throughout the Jim Crow era.

BLACK REBELS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Between 1898 and 1902, rising U.S. imperialism defeated Spain and then attacked Filipino independence fighters in the Philippine-American War. The Filipino warriors, many of whom identified as Black, made anti-racist, class-conscious appeals to Black U. S. soldiers. As one wrote, “Why don’t you fight those people in America who burn Negroes, that make a beast of you, that took a mother’s child and sold it?”²⁴

In a foreshadowing of the Vietnam War, many Black U.S. soldiers deserted. One of them, David Fagen, became a captain in the Philippine Revolutionary Army and “for



two years wreaked havoc upon the American forces.”²⁵ As a Black infantryman wrote from Manila: “This struggle on the islands has been naught but a gigantic scheme of robbery and oppression.”²⁶

EARLY BLACK COMMUNISTS

World War I gave rise to the Russian Revolution and with it the birth of an international communist movement. The Russian communists inspired working-class leaders worldwide, including the African Blood Brotherhood, a group of militant Black activists in the U.S. Many of the Brotherhood’s members and most of its leaders joined and effectively integrated the Communist Party USA (CPUSA, or CP).

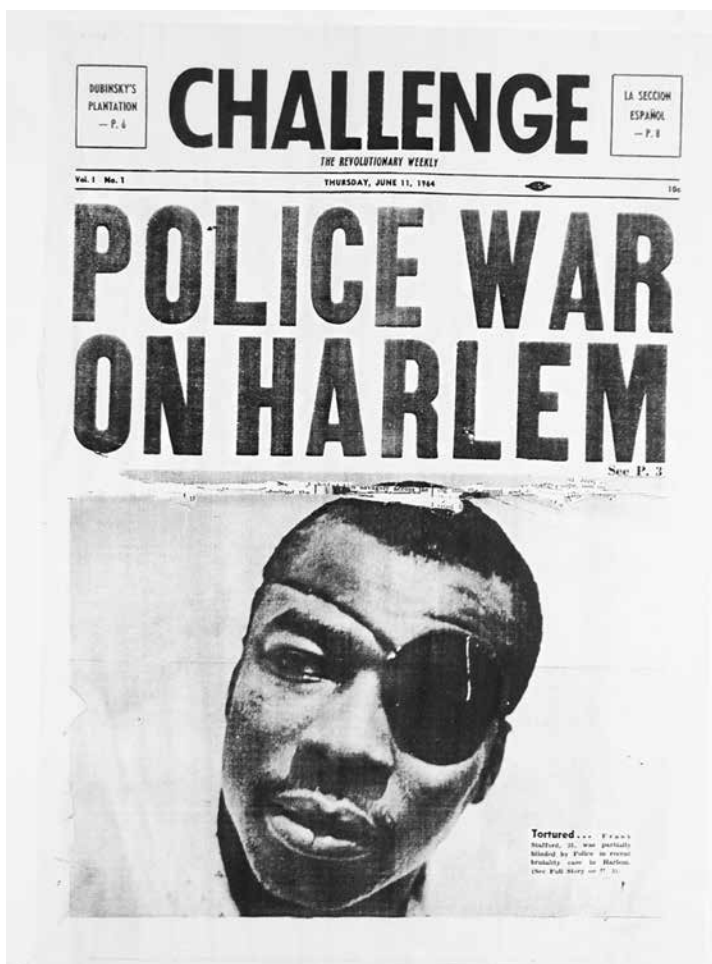
In the 1920s, these early Black communists, including the novelist Claude McKay, the journalist Cyril Briggs, and Williana Burroughs, a New York City schoolteacher, were struggling within the CP to make the fight against racism primary. After visiting the Soviet Union, Burroughs wrote that her experience in an anti-racist worker’s state “inspired me to put my heart and soul into the work for a new society which would be devoid of suffering and race hatred.” Her work with Black and white comrades led to her fervent belief in multiracial unity: “I also began to realize that it was only through a united fight of both the Negro and white workers that the Negro could be freed.”²⁷

By the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Black communists in the CP were heading major anti-racist struggles. A multiracial, anti-racist Party attracted increasing numbers of bold Black leaders—including Paul Robeson, the world-renowned singer, actor, and activist. Robeson’s actual membership in the CPUSA is a matter of dispute. But there can be no doubt about his staunch anti-racism and anti-fascism, or his loyalty to the international working class and what was still a workers’ state in the Soviet Union. When Robeson bravely attacked the racists and anti-communists on the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee, he emboldened millions.

Within the CP, many of those with the most advanced politics and strongest commitment were Black women. Steeled by fighting both racism and sexism, they became the vanguard’s vanguard. As Maggie Jones, a CP organizer in Cleveland, declared, “We unemployed workers stand ready like soldiers, for the many hard battles ahead, looking to the Communist Party for its leadership ... to fight our enemy the capitalist class.”²⁸

In CP-organized Unemployed Councils and the League of Struggles for Negro Rights, Black women mobilized fellow workers around evictions, job discrimination, and cutbacks in relief allotments.²⁹ In 1935, Bonita Williams, a CP organizer, led a successful protest against high meat prices in Harlem, pressuring butchers to lower their prices—or face the consequences.

Hundreds of Black women wrote letters to *The Daily Worker* and *The Working Woman*, exhorting their readers



to join “the Party of your class, the Communist Party.”³⁰ In Birmingham, Alabama, Capitola Tasker led the Share Cropper’s Union Women’s Auxiliary and became an international leader of the CP. In 1934, at the International Women’s Conference against War and Fascism in Paris, she spoke “of the misery, of the starvation and slavery” forced upon Black southerners and the “discrimination, Jim Crowism, and terror used by landlords to keep Negro and white separated.”³¹

The Cleveland Unemployed Council, led by Maggie Jones, counted more than 500 women members, most of them Black. According to CP leader Ann Damon, Black women were “the most militant and leading forces in the unemployed activism.”³²

THE SCOTTSBORO CASE: BLACK WOMEN STEP UP

In March 1931, in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine Black teenagers were arrested and falsely charged for the rape of two white women. Within a matter of months, they’d been threatened by a lynch mob, framed, and convicted. Eight of them sat on death row. The CP-led International Labor Defense (ILD) took up their cause. They furnished strong lawyers and a platform for Black women to take the lead in a worldwide anti-racist campaign.

Despite opposition from the anti-communist NAACP, the mothers of these “Scottsboro Boys”—notably Janie

Patterson, Ada Wright, Mamie Williams Wilcox, and Viola Montgomery—insisted on sticking with the ILD. The alliance strengthened both sides: “Their direct involvement in the campaign to save their sons transformed them from poor, semiliterate southern workers into confident and fiery social activists.”³³

The mothers led mass demonstrations with seasoned protesters like Lucy Parsons, who later joined the CP at age 86. They wrote opinion pieces for local newspapers and went on international speaking tours. In Europe, Ada Wright “highlighted the hardships of southern Black women and the attempts of a mother to try and save her son’s life.”³⁴ Her exposure to communist ideas led her to share a broader analysis of “class struggle, advancing fascism [and] the need to eradicate racism in the United States and ... to mobilize ‘the masses against imperialist war.’”³⁵

In fighting back for the Scottsboro Nine, countless Black workers became international leaders of the working class. Their example had a multiplier effect, drawing the next generation of Black leaders into the struggle. Hosea Hudson was moved by the Scottsboro campaign to join the CP and eventually to lead industrial organizing in the steel factories of Birmingham, Alabama. As an 18-year-old, Claudia Jones joined the cause through the Young Communist League in Harlem. As she recalled:

*I was like millions of Negro people and white progressives and people stirred by this heinous frame-up. I was impressed by the Communist speakers who explained the reasons for this brutal crime against young Negro boys, and who related the Scottsboro case to the struggle of the Ethiopian people against fascism, and Mussolini’s invasion. Friends of mine who were Communists began to have frequent discussions with me....*³⁶

As Jones rose through the CP, she helped it develop a more advanced line on racism and sexism, and on the “triple oppression” endured by Black women workers, then as now shunted into the lowest-paying jobs.³⁷ In 1949, she addressed the special role of Black women in the multiracial “struggle against Wall Street imperialism,” and the need “for rooting the Party among the most exploited and oppressed sections of the working class.” As Jones wrote:

*The bourgeoisie is fearful of the militancy of the Negro woman, and for good reason. The capitalists know...that once Negro women begin to take action, the militancy of the whole Negro people, and thus of the anti-imperialist coalition, is greatly enhanced.*³⁸

CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN REBELLIONS

In the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, a landmark struggle against racist oppression, masses of Black workers and youth led the way. They heroically took on the Ku Klux Klan and the no less murderous local cops.

In February 1960, four young Black students sat down

SEEING NATIONALISM FOR WHAT IT IS

In February 1969, when “Black Workers: Key Revolutionary Force” was first published, our Party had yet to break completely with nationalism, a reactionary, anti-working-class ideology. PLP inherited the nationalist ideas of the Third International. At one point, the old Communist Party-USA backed the establishment of a separate Black nation in the southern United States. Our Party had yet to fully grasp the danger posed by the national liberation struggles of the day. “Black Workers” defined the ‘60s-era “Black Liberation Movement” as the ‘vanguard of the revolutionary process’ in the U.S.”

Our leap came four months later, in “Revolutionaries Must Fight Nationalism,” when the Party took a sharp left turn:

National struggle instead of class struggle must lead to imperialism. National struggle denies class struggle....Communists must intervene and put forward a Marxist-Leninist line. This gives the workers and oppressed people the correct and only alternative to capitalism.

The following year, in Road to Revolution III (1970), after an objective analysis of events in China, Vietnam, and Indonesia, and much trial and error within our own practice, PLP reaffirmed that nationalism was essentially anti-revolutionary. Our Party firmly rejected Mao’s opportunistic pursuit of all-class unity with “progressive” nationalist bosses. We settled upon the internationalist line we follow today: “One World, One Class, One Party.”

But though it was still undeveloped, the germ of the Party’s principled rejection of nationalism—and of identity politics in general—can be found in “Black Workers.” The document attacked “the capturing of the Black movement by anti-working-class nationalism, using the very increase in Black consciousness itself as a weapon against both Black and white workers.” It put forward the necessity of multiracial unity in building a mass working-class movement, a repudiation of “Black Power” theory and practice of its day.

The bosses’ greatest fear is a united, multiracial working class. They will stop at nothing to try to keep white workers from struggling side by side with Black, Latin, and Asian workers. The capitalists have little to fear from nationalist groups that sideline white workers as guilt-ridden “allies” who supposedly benefit from racism. In the real, material world, racism hurts all workers. Anti-nationalist anti-racism is the path to worldwide communist revolution.

at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina—and made the world take notice. In May 1961, 13 young activists left Washington, DC, on a Greyhound bus to New Orleans, with the goal to integrate public buses and bathrooms throughout the Jim Crow South. Of the more than 400 Freedom Riders who followed, about half were Black. One-quarter were women. Young white co-riders were fortified by their courage. “The Black guys and [women] were singing,” one recalled. “They were so spirited and so unafraid. They were really prepared to risk their lives.”³⁹

In 1963, in one 10-week period alone, the U.S. Department of Justice reported 758 mass protests and 13,786 arrests. No statistics were kept on killings, beatings, bombings, police dog attacks, and other acts of racist terror. But while the main-wing capitalist media continues to celebrate the famous march from Selma, Alabama, where a police attack hospitalized more than 50 people, the civil rights movement was never as nonviolent as advertised. Guards with guns were often posted to protect demonstrators where they slept. By 1964, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, a Black self-defense group, had spread to 23 communities across the South. Intimidating the cowardly racist goons, the Deacons helped win many an integration struggle without absorbing a single casualty.

In 1965, in Jonesboro, Louisiana, when cops and deputized Klansmen threatened to fire-hose a group of defenseless high school students, they were deterred by a loud order from an armed Deacon leader: “When you see the first water, we gonna open up on them. We gonna open up on all of them.” The racists stood down.⁴⁰ Once again, Black workers showed their willingness to break the bosses’ laws and return the state’s violence in kind.

In the historic Black neighborhood of Harlem in New York City, workers suffered from the worst racist inequalities of the profit system: three times the city’s unemployment rate, half the citywide income level, nearly twice the infant mortality. The community was routinely abused by the racist New York Police Department. In 1963, the young Progressive Labor Movement established a PL center in Harlem. Weekly rallies exposed case after case of savage police brutality. Demonstrations were organized in front of the local precinct. In May 1964, PLM put out the very first issue of CHALLENGE. Our front-page headline: “POLICE WAR ON HARLEM.”

One month later, the first big-city, anti-racist rebellion erupted after a police lieutenant in Harlem murdered James Powell, 15 years old, in cold blood. The Black masses’ anger boiled over. Thousands of youth took to the streets, hurling Molotov cocktails at police cars and price-gouging stores. Thousands of cops were rushed to the neighborhood in a futile effort to crush the revolt. Thousands of gunshots were exchanged.

New York’s mayor placed the community under virtual martial law. In an act of class treason, every mainstream civil rights leader urged the masses to “cool it” and leave the streets. The spontaneous rebellion had only one source of



A plan for

BLACK LIBERATION

(articles by the Progressive Labor Party)



The original cover of the landmark document “Black Workers Key: Key Revolutionary Force,” as printed in PL Magazine in February 1969

political direction: the communists of PL, spearheaded by our Harlem center. Thousands of PL posters—“WANTED FOR MURDER, GILLIGAN THE COP!”—circulated through the neighborhood and beyond. Thousands of Black rebels marched holding CHALLENGE aloft as their flag. After PLM defied an injunction banning further protests, Bill Epton, the Harlem center’s leader, was convicted and jailed for “inciting a riot.” Several other comrades served prison time for contempt.

While the Harlem Rebellion gave PL credibility in black communities throughout the U.S., our Party failed to consolidate these gains. Our main weakness was a concession to nationalism (See “Seeing Nationalism for What It Is,” p 13). White comrades were assigned to organize and recruit white workers and students; Black comrades were asked to do the same in the Black community. The resulting disunity weakened our collective commitment to all aspects of the class struggle. PLP lost an opportunity to arm thousands of Black militants with the most powerful weapon of all: revolutionary communist consciousness.

Even so, the Harlem Rebellion marked a new stage in the fight against racist oppression, and a leap forward in PL’s understanding that revolutionaries must rely on the



working class. The Party demonstrated its potential to reach and recruit masses of Black workers and youth. We saw the enthusiasm of those masses for a communist analysis of racism, and their capacity for leadership in the movement. This was PL's formative experience. One year later, the Progressive Labor Movement became the Progressive Labor Party.

The spirit of revolt spread to Black workers in more than a hundred U.S. cities. In 1967, U.S. rulers were forced to divert the 82nd Airborne Division—then en route to Vietnam—to suppress a rebellion in Detroit. The link between Black workers and the revolutionary struggle against imperialism became clearer than ever before.

These violent expressions of anti-racism triggered the “War on Crime” under U.S. presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, as well as the “War on Drugs” started by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and later championed by Bill Clinton. Distorted FBI statistics hid the fact that crime in the inner cities had actually declined in the Reagan years. The war on Black communities was engineered by a united ruling class—Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives—as a counterattack against the civil rights movement and Black-led armed resistance to racist policing.⁴¹ Mass incarceration represented “the backlash to black radical movements and urban uprisings.”⁴² The real “crime” was rebellion.

As U.S. cities hemorrhaged jobs amid the decline of U.S. empire, the bosses created a prison-industrial complex. To this day, the U.S. has the largest prison population in the world and the highest per-capita incarceration rate.⁴³ The capitalists recognize the most dangerous threats to their rule. They target Black workers and youth above all others: “Odds are 50–50 that young black urban males are in jail, in a cell in one of the 1,821 state and federal prisons across the United States, or on probation or parole.”⁴⁴

VIETNAM: TURNING THE GUNS AROUND

The Vietnam War marked the first major conflict where the U.S. military was fully integrated, though still mired in racism. In 1967, when the Black proportion of the U.S. civilian population stood at 11 percent, Black troops totaled 16 percent of all draftees and 23 percent of all combat troops in Vietnam, though only 2 percent of the officer corps. At one point early in the war, they accounted for nearly 25 percent of combat deaths. Since Black troops were both less compliant and more likely to be punished, they made up more than a third of military courts-martial and 58 percent of the prisoners at the notorious Long Binh Jail, near Saigon.⁴⁵

Black troops took the lead in fighting back against their racist officers and sabotaging U.S. imperialist genocide in Southeast Asia. In April 1968, after Martin Luther King was assassinated, their rebellion became more open and widespread. That August, “hundreds of black prisoners overwhelmed prison guards at Long Binh Jail, captured the stockade commander and set the mess hall and adminis-

tration building on fire.”⁴⁶

By 1971, according to a report in the *Armed Forces Journal*, soldiers were commonly paying bounties to kill reckless superiors. In one division, grenade attacks on officers, or “fraggings,” were up to one a day. Whole platoons became “no-go” units that refused to enter the field. Between 1966 and 1973, half a million troops simply deserted. Col. Robert Heinl estimated that “the morale discipline, and battle-worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces...are lower and worse than at any time in this [20th] century and possibly in the history of the United States.”⁴⁷ (Progressive Labor Party sent a number of members into the Vietnam-era military and played a modest role in this mass revolt.)

In the U.S. Navy, as Heinl noted, “When the USS *Kitty Hawk* was ordered to return...to Vietnam...black sailors led a major rebellion, including hand-to-hand battle with Marines sent to break up a meeting on board the ship.”⁴⁸ The *Kitty Hawk* was forced to return to San Diego and retired from the war.

To this day, the capitalist rulers need Black workers for the next global war. But if history is any guide, Black troops—armed with class consciousness and communist ideas—could be the bosses’ Achilles’ heel.

SHUT IT DOWN!

By the late 1960s, mass movements against racism and the Vietnam War were shaking capitalism to its foundations. It wasn’t long before the shock waves reached the U.S. workplace. Between 1967 and 1976, the bosses were hit by 332 major strikes per year and 27 million lost work days.⁴⁹ Many of the most militant strikes were in public-sector union locals that were significantly or predominantly Black.

In 1968, Memphis sanitation and sewage workers were paid as little as \$1.60 an hour. They could be fired without warning by white supervisors, and weren’t even afforded the dignity of uniforms. That February, after two Black workers were crushed to death inside a faulty compactor, 1,375 men went out on strike. They defied orders to return to work from Mayor Henry Loeb, a famous racist, and used violence to stop Loeb’s strikebreakers. After police assaulted workers on a march to city hall, tensions escalated. In late March, the cops shot and killed a 16-year-old Black protester. Martin Luther King came to Memphis to support the strikers three times; he was killed there on April 4.⁵⁰

After a subsequent downtown rebellion, an occupation by four thousand National Guardsmen, and two months of unflinching solidarity, the sanitation workers settled for a wage increase and full union recognition. They are remembered for their courage in fighting the local bosses to a standstill. And for their iconic slogan, “I Am A Man!”—a stirring rebuke to the dehumanizing racism of the capitalist system.

BLACK STRUGGLE STOPS THE MAIL

The U.S. Post Office was home to masses of Black workers, including many Black college graduates who'd been frozen out of the viciously segregated private professional sector. The Post Office became "both an avenue of black mobility and incubator of black struggle."⁵¹ Annual pay maxed out at \$8,442 after 21 years of service, regardless of the local cost of living.⁵² Workers in New York were forced to apply for food stamps. Benefits were poor and working conditions deplorable. Like other federal workers, postal workers were granted the right to organize but not to collectively bargain or to strike.

In the 1960s, with the abolition of "Jane Crow"-gendered postal job registers, the New York post office hired thousands of Black women as postal clerks and mail handlers. The women challenged the conservative, male-dominated craft unions and instilled a new militancy in the rank and file. As a white male local leader recalled, they "brought a new force with them, a dramatic change....[T]hey wouldn't take abuse, they fought back, they hit back, and it was good."⁵³

On Tuesday, March 17, 1970, the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 36 in New York City voted to walk off the job. By week's end, the action had spread from New England to Chicago to San Francisco, shutting down or disrupting service in more than 30 major cities. It eventually involved more than 210,000 postal workers in 671 locations, the largest walkout ever against the federal government and the largest illegal wildcat in U.S. history.⁵⁴ "The strike was strongest in cities with the largest concentrations of black postal workers" and weakest in the South, where branch workers were still divided by Jim Crow segregation.⁵⁵

The rank and file defied their own leadership and ignored a court order and threats from President Richard Nixon. In New York, in spite of Nixon's call for the military to move the mail, the action was 100 percent effective. The postal strike disrupted the garment industry. It paralyzed Wall Street and nearly shut down the New York Stock Exchange. It gave 9,000 young men a temporary reprieve from the military draft and shipment to Vietnam.⁵⁶

The strike ended after eight days without a single worker fired. Nixon backed down, and postal workers gained full collective bargaining rights.

SEIZING THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Terrified by the 1967 rebellions in Detroit and Newark, the auto bosses hired thousands of Black workers. Soon they represented a third of the industry's total hourly work force, and half or more in Detroit. Many of these workers were militant, class-conscious Vietnam veterans with few illusions about capitalism or U.S. imperialism. Two groups emerged: the all-Black Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) and the multiracial, PLP-led Workers Action Movement (WAM). Both challenged the racism of the auto

bosses and their partners in crime, the United Auto Workers leadership.

In April 1973, after a New York City cop named Thomas Shea fatally shot 10-year-old Clifford Glover in the back, WAM distributed a leaflet and petition on the factory floor of a Ford assembly plant in Mahwah, New Jersey. They demanded that the UAW local take a public stand against the police, including a call for a murder indictment against killer cop Shea. The workers' response was electric. By early June, after a dangerous speedup, excessive forced overtime, and a racist incident involving a white supervisor, WAM worked in concert with a Black caucus to stage a wildcat strike. When Black workers led the walkout, white workers had their backs. They shut down the plant for a week.

Two months later, at Chrysler's Mack Avenue stamping plant in Detroit, the bosses refused to buy fans for workers toiling in temperatures over 100 degrees. On August 14, a member of PLP snuck back into the plant after being fired. He sat on an assembly line, stopping the framing department cold. When Chrysler security tried to remove him, they were repelled by 350 workers who seized the factory and then fought off the cops—one of the few plant occupations since the communist-led Great Flint Sit-Down Strike of 1937.⁵⁷ Black workers, whom the bosses routinely assigned the most dangerous and backbreaking jobs, once again took the lead.

AND THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

In the mid-1970s, the Cultural Revolution in China was defeated. The fight for communism in the Soviet Union had already been smashed. Lacking communist leadership and a living model for a workers' state, the working class fell prey to mass cynicism, hopelessness, and ideological confusion. In losing sight of their class interests, workers became vulnerable to the exploiters' divisive attacks. Those on the bottom suffered most of all.

But even in the resulting "dark night," Black workers continue to help steer us to a new day. In Washington, DC, Black Metro transit workers—with significant leadership from PLP—have led the fight against cuts in jobs and bus service, lower salaries for new workers, and Jim Crow hiring policies that exclude anyone with a criminal record. In Brooklyn, Black women and immigrant hospital workers are at the forefront of the struggle against the closings of public hospitals, a profit-driven attack against the entire working class. In Ferguson and Baltimore, in Paris and Tel Aviv, brave Black youth have confronted hyper-militarized police forces and inspired the world.

Just as Black slaves risked everything to rebel in the 1800s, and Black communists and other militants fought the state tooth-and-nail in the 1900s, today's Black workers and youth are resisting the capitalist rulers in a time of rising fascism. What they need are communist ideas.

That's where Progressive Labor Party comes in.

Based on objective world conditions and lessons from



PL's own practice, Black workers still hold the key to revolution. If anything, it is even clearer today that the leadership of Black workers—and of Black women workers, in particular—is essential to a communist future for the international working class.

With principled, long-term, anti-racist struggle, millions of Black workers and youth will emerge as leaders in a revolutionary communist movement. Our Party will be stronger and more militant. More class-conscious. More united.

With multiracial unity, Progressive Labor Party can defeat the imperialist bosses and seize state power. With an unwavering commitment to the fight against racism, PLP can build a communist world.✱

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Marx & Du Bois

When Progressive Labor Party declared that Black workers “are an essential part of the revolutionary potential of the U.S. working class,” we were following the path laid by Karl Marx, the mid-19th-century communist revolutionary. Along with Friedrich Engels, Marx developed the philosophy of dialectical materialism, the idea that history results from the clash of opposing forces or classes. This is the theoretical basis of communism.

Marx understood how racism weakened class consciousness and hid the fundamental conflict between capitalists and workers. As early as 1846, more than a year before *The Communist Manifesto*, he made a pointed connection between modern capitalism and chattel slavery in the former British colonies that became the United States: “Direct slavery is as much the pivot upon which our present-day industrialism turns, as are machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery there would be no cotton, without cotton there would be no modern industry. It is slavery that has given value to the colonies, it is the colonies that have created world trade, and world trade is the necessary condition for large-scale machine industry. Slavery is therefore an economic category of paramount importance.”¹

Marx followed the U.S. abolitionist movement with keen interest. He saw the fight to end U.S. slavery as the political struggle of the time. In January 1860, after John Brown led a multiracial band of abolitionists in an armed attack against a federal arsenal in Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia, with the aim of instigating a slave revolt, Marx wrote:

*In my view, the most momentous thing happening in the world today is, on the one hand, the movement among the slaves in America, started by the death of Brown, and the movement among the slaves in Russia, on the other ... I have just seen in the Tribune that there was a new slave uprising in Missouri, naturally suppressed. But the signal has now been given.*²

Though Marx understood the democratic liberal limitations of the Civil War (1861-1865), he also recognized its great importance: “Just as in the eighteenth century the American War of Independence sounded the alarm bell for the European middle class, so in the nineteenth century the American Civil War did the same for the European working class.”³

Marx was living in England at the time, and he published several articles on public mass meetings by British workers to rally support for the North. These workers stood firmly opposed to slavery, and to their own pro-South bosses, even at the cost of short-term job losses in

British textile factories. As historian Andrew Zimmerman noted, “This constituted one of the finest examples up to that time—and since—of proletarian internationalism.”⁴

In his biography of John Brown, W.E.B. Du Bois, the 20th-century activist and historian who joined the Communist Party at the age of 93, showed that the catalysts for the abolition movement were the slaves themselves: “the living, organized, combatant group.” Where Marx tended to cast Black workers and slaves in a vital but supporting role, Du Bois viewed them as the essential force in the war against slavery. (As did the abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass, who declared: “[Those] who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.”)

By the end of the Civil War, close to 200,000 Black soldiers and sailors—10 percent of the North’s total fighting force—had served in the Union Army or Navy. Masses of former slaves abandoned Southern plantations and worked for the Union cause. In *Black Reconstruction* (1935), Du Bois “analyzed the southern slave as ‘the black worker’ and portrayed the central drama in the Civil War as the ‘general strike’ by which these black workers transformed the war between Union and Confederacy into a revolution against slavery.”⁵

Marx believed the outcome of the Civil War would determine the future of class struggle worldwide. He imagined that defeat of the U.S. slave system might set off widespread revolution in Europe. While that hope proved premature, the liberation of four million Black people did much to lift up the international working class. In 1864, those British textile worker meetings evolved into the First International, the beginning of an organized communist movement. In 1866, barely a year after the Confederacy surrendered, the first U.S. national labor congress called for an end to “capitalistic slavery”—the birth of the movement for the eight-hour day. And just five years after that, the Paris Commune marked the first instance of workers violently seizing power on behalf of their class, an embryonic communist revolution.

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Youth Work & Party Building

—8 lessons from 45 years of organizing high school students

INTRODUCTION

One of our Party's leaders commented that, over the years, she's noticed that I've been able to win a number of strong young people to the Party. And she asked me to write up my experiences at doing youth organizing. So I'll try to put my finger on some helpful things and what my experience with Party work has taught me.

Progressive Labor Party membership, for me, goes back forty-five years. Before that, I was around the Party for about five years. In other words, if you're newly in the PLP, when you read about some of the work, it's possible you'll feel as if it's daunting.

I often felt like that myself, listening to the stories of older comrades, during my earlier years in the Party. The truth: if you stick with the Party for a lifetime, and if you keep trying your best, you'll reach a point when you can look back and see you've had the honor of successfully serving the working class. You'll probably have more success stories to share with the next generation of upcoming revolutionaries, because it would be hard to make mistakes as much as I have. Try, and fail. Try again, fail. Try again, succeed!

Eight points are included in this essay: mass advocacy of communism, fighting racism, base building, concentration, combating liberalism, commitment, personal organization, and learning from mistakes.

1. MASS ADVOCACY OF COMMUNISM

We need to be bold, not hesitant, about widely sharing our communist political ideas. Don't soft-pedal it. Spit it out! This is an important aspect of bringing youth around PLP.

During forty years as a teacher, I worked at five different public high schools, all in one city. At two different junctures, they fired me: once for an arrest record, once for fighting racism and advocating communist politics. Part of what precipitated the second firing, was a struggle to stop school districts from buying McGraw Hill textbooks because the company was publishing racist books in South Africa during apartheid. One of those books, hard to be-

lieve in terms of racist brazenness, was entitled "How to Manage Black Workers."

In terms of the teaching job, things worked out well. We were eventually able to win back my job, both times.

The second firing occurred during the 1978-79 school year in response to my teaching of communist ideas. I was teaching a course in television production and videography. Mostly, the course was practical, with students writing and producing videos. The course also dealt with analysis of mass media, and how the content and ideas in TV programming are controlled by and for the benefit of the major capitalists. The main reading material, for that part of the course, was a section of Progressive Labor Party's older, but still outstanding pamphlet, "Who Rules the United States?"

At the time, I wrote an article for CHALLENGE, explaining this approach regarding media education. It was entitled, "A Lesson Plan for Communist Ideas." Somehow, the principal got a copy of the paper. She called me to her office, suspended me, and sent an armed school cop to escort me out of the building.

On that particular day, students were scheduled for only a half-day of instruction. Afraid of a possible walkout against my suspension, the principal didn't want students to know about it, and therefore didn't initiate the process until students were out of the building. Often, the bosses are more afraid of the working class than we realize.

That suspension later became a firing, and the fight to get me rehired went on for some months. The Field Rep for the teachers' union told me that we had to stop handing out PLP flyers about the issue, outside the high school, but we refused to stop. When we finally won, including back pay, the front page of the city's main newspaper read, "Communist Wins Back Teaching Job."

A year-and-a-half later, the Party, though tiny in our city, organized a campaign demanding more funding for the school system, in a district with a student body that has been predominately Black, ever since the assassination of Martin Luther King, and real estate profiting sparked white flight to the suburbs. In earlier years, when the student population was mainly white, in the mid-60s, the ➤➤

city's school system was 4th from the top, among dozens of school districts in the state, in terms of money per pupil. However, by the time of our campaign, the vast majority of young people in the schools were Black. Due to racism, the district's education funding had been cut, again and again, to the point where per-pupil funding had fallen to nearly the very bottom of all the state's school districts.

From a reform point of view, we were actually able to help win a modest improvement in the budget. During the struggle, at one of the School Board's public sessions, I was the comrade giving a speech for the Party, saying:

Only a socialist [now we'd advocate communist] revolution can take the nuclear trigger out of the bosses' hands. Only a dictatorship of the working class – democracy for our class, and ruthless suppression of the old exploiters who will try to take power back – only such a system can put an end to their murderous wars of greed, put an end to racism and finally educate all our young people as fulfilled, conscious, and secure human beings.

In other words, communist politics were right up front. That's how the Party trained us, as part of the struggle against revisionism. Every flyer and every speech needed to include the Party's most advanced ideas: fighting for socialism (now communism) and dictatorship of the working class.

CHALLENGE is a crucial tool to spreading communism among the masses

A high school student here, who had joined the Party and helped to lead it for several years during that time period, went to New York City for a personally-arranged "designer" summer project, working with the comrades who put CHALLENGE together. When he returned, we were in the midst of a new struggle against a vicious, racist cop who killed young Calvert Hazleton. Calvert was from a section of the city where we were regularly distributing CHALLENGE, door-to-door on Saturdays. We were therefore able to pull together several hundred people at a community center to protest the killing.

Partway into the evening, the meeting evolved into a major, passionate debate about whether or not to march to the police station, a couple of miles away. Our young comrade, who had just returned from New York, was fired up, and politically sharper than ever. He gave a short, rousing speech, and that did it! The march was on. We didn't succeed in getting the cop fired, but we did get him removed from that particular neighborhood.

That former young comrade, who hasn't been in the Party for a good while now, will be having his 60th birthday

later this month. His sister is organizing a large celebration. Along with several others, I've been asked to speak, and you can probably guess what story I'll be telling.

The point is that the process of bringing young people around – and into– the Party necessitates, among other things, being bold, and advocating communist ideas to masses of people.

One way to think about this process is comparing it to dropping a pebble into a puddle. It creates a set of circular ripples. The strongest circle, with the highest wave crest, is closest to the pebble. That inner circle is analogous to our immediate base, people close to the Party, perhaps in study groups, getting CHALLENGE regularly, participating with comrades in the class struggle. The farther-out concentric circles, smaller ripples, are representative of the people who are hearing about the Party's ideas, but aren't yet active with the Party. They are learning. They are beginning to compare what they know, from their own experience, to the Party's ideas.

Some of them will be future recruits, at some point down the road, after current base members have joined PLP, and reach out to them personally. But, even before that happens, right now, we need the farther-out, mass base to already be thinking about communism, thus laying the groundwork for future Party growth. Even more importantly, arming the working class with communist ideas, right now, is the closest thing we have to a guarantee, after the revolution, that the new society won't backslide into inequality and the re-creation of capitalism.

That's because – with a vision of communism firmly in mind – the working class won't readily allow inequalities to fester or grow anew. This is one of our main responsibilities: mass advocacy of communism. It's not good enough for the mass base of the Party to be thinking only about reform struggle.

If people come around the Party based mostly on respect for the Party's leadership in reform struggles—and not based on some level of agreement with the need for revolution, smashing the capitalist state, communism, dictatorship of the working class, and struggle for a fully egalitarian world—then, over time, as more and more people join the Party with a mostly reformist mindset, there is a serious danger that the Party itself will become reformist, and will sell out the working class. We cannot allow that to happen.

One time, at another school where I was teaching, I had handed out a large number of Party flyers, outside the building, before school, as students were coming in urging people to attend May Day. Then, during that morning's homeroom session – in response to those flyers – the principal got on the PA and spoke to the whole school, attacking May Day and Progressive Labor Party. He argued that May Day was not an official activity, and stated unequivocally that no one should go. I immediately went down to his office, requesting equal time on the PA.



True to form, he refused. I happened to glance down at his desk. Ironically, there was a miniature artist's easel holding a piece of polished stone. Etched on it was a quote by Woody Guthrie. It struck me, humorously but also seriously, that capitalist culture is so vacuous that even their front-line flunkies must sometimes turn to communist culture, in an effort to find any values worthy of memorializing. Anyway, when I went back to homeroom, one of my students said—regarding the principal and May Day, “If he’s against it, I want to go!”

Jumping forward in time, here’s another example of how it’s possible and important to advocate communism really broadly. As part of putting out the word for the 2017 May Day march, our Party club decided we would like to have a young comrade talk about May Day in a speech at the annual concert of a high school student club. It’s a club that a group of students and I started thirty years ago. Students in the club write and perform original lyrics for their own hip-hop pieces, spoken word poetry, and songs. I’m now retired, but continue to work with this club as a volunteer. The club’s collective student leadership, and the current faculty advisor, all having some familiarity with the politics, agreed that it would be fine for a former Club President—now a college student and a member of PLP—to not only perform, but also give a speech explaining May Day, and encouraging folks to participate.

During this comrade’s speech, he told the audience he’s a member of Progressive Labor Party and said, “I’m a communist y’all.” At one point he said, “If you’re against capitalism, can I hear you say something?” which brought on boisterous cheers, to which he responded, “Y’all really woke!” When finished, he earned rousing applause and, again, lots more high-energy cheers.

The successful reception of this comrade’s speech, the communist nature of it, and his willingness to give it, are illustrative of an important organizing principle. The Chinese communists used to say that providing leadership requires issuing a general call, while simultaneously working hard and thoughtfully to achieve a particular breakthrough. They applied this mainly to Party leadership in the class struggle.

However, it may be even more important to apply it, the general call and the particular breakthrough, to inner-Party struggle. In this case, the general call – made in the Party club for quite a while – was for our open members to advocate communism in their speeches, and in their comments during discussions within mass organizations. For the breakthrough – the May Day speech at the high school concert – we focused beforehand on the importance of it, and on the details of how it could be done. Prior to that, the general call had kind of fallen flat. We had even looked at videotaped speeches given by comrades at a number of rallies, and self-critically evaluated the essentially reformist politics being advocated. Finally, however, all of that inner-Party struggle – plus the detailed planning – did indeed succeed in achieving a breakthrough, an important one.

In addition, the young comrade who gave that communist speech –having learned, from his own experience, how to begin making politics primary – did really well bringing people from his own mass organization to the 2017 May Day march.

Three months later, there were the August 2017 events in Charlottesville, including the murder of an anti-racist, run down on purpose by a fascist driver. On the next day – as in many cities – a solidarity rally was organized here. Over 1,000 people attended, a large turnout for this city. A college student who had been among our city’s enthusiastic participants in the Chicago summer project, along with two personal friends, and me – brought and carried the PL banner that had been made, earlier, for May Day. It declared, “Progressive Labor Party Says: Put Killer Cops in Cell Blocks; Smash Racism & Capitalism.”

The folks, who were the main organizers for the Charlottesville solidarity rally here, are in a predominately anarchist group. With a few exceptions, their average age is three or four decades younger than mine. A number of them participate, as I do, in the weekly rallies against police terror, where I have given a number of communist speeches for the Party, and where most participants get CHALLENGE every two weeks.

After an hour-or-so of speeches at the huge Charlottesville solidarity rally, it was time to march. The large crowd wasn’t yet organized, so one of the leaders called out my name on the bullhorn, asking me—and those with me—to take our banner into the street, and also requesting that everyone line up behind it.

Though our Party here remains much too small, and needs to grow tremendously, we have nevertheless succeeded modestly at bringing our politics into three mass organizations, and – to a certain extent – into the mass anti-racist movement here. Without hiding our revolutionary communist politics, we have earned a certain degree of respect from several circles of youth.

2. FIGHTING RACISM

Young people read us. Carefully and accurately. They hear what we claim to be, as communists. Then they decide how real we are at living up to those standards.

For that reason, and of course, because—as W.E.B. Du Bois wisely said—racism was the main question of the 20th century, and is now the main question of the 21st century too, we need to be anti-racist fighters. Fighting racism and organizing among Black youth are essential to building for communism.

In addition, for the political growth of the young people

*‘Antiracism’
is an action verb.*

ple in our base, it's important, for their development, to be involved as much as possible in anti-racist struggle themselves. Sometimes there's a struggle that can be waged directly at the school. It's also helpful, if possible, for the adult comrade to be involved, outside the school, in a major campaign against some aspect of racism. Then, students who come around can be brought to activities in that campaign, and get their feet wet in this vital aspect of the class struggle.

I should mention—in the interests of objectivity—that, before retiring, it would have been pretty much impossible, way beyond my limits, to simultaneously do school-based youth organizing and union work with teachers, plus be seriously active outside of school in the struggle against police murder. It's only since retiring that I've had time to get active with the fight against police brutality. I continue to do volunteer work with the student club for which I used to be the advisor, so it has now become possible—on occasion—to integrate youth work at the school, and citywide work against cop killings.

In this city, there is a weekly rally against police terror, led by the family of an unarmed man who was beaten to death by the cops. Twice, members of that family have come to speak at the school, at meetings of the club with which I work. On a number of occasions, students in the club have attended one of the rallies, and have helped to inspire activists at those rallies by performing original, passionate, anti-racist poems, raps and songs. One of those young people is now in the Party.

Whenever we become aware of an aspect of racism that's nearby, we should stand up forcefully against it. In March of 1990, a member of the student club I was advising, came to school and showed me a flyer that his mother had found on their front steps, as she was leaving to go to work, at around 6AM that morning, when it was still dark outside. The flyer had been issued and distributed by the local branch of the skinheads, and was disgustingly racist. It threatened that they were going to make the neighborhood "a N***** free zone." I went that evening to meet with his parents, who are Black, and they, in turn, had invited the parents of a neighboring family, friends of theirs—who happened to be white—to join our discussion. That particular neighborhood, at the time, was about 50 percent Black and 50 percent white. The four parents all wanted to do something opposing the skinheads, but were fearful of taking the lead. I said PLP would be happy to do so, and they were pleased.

A neighborhood rally against racism was set for several weeks later. We went through the neighborhood repeatedly, distributing flyers and announcing the rally over a bullhorn that we mounted on a car. From conversations, we learned there had been quite a few earlier skinhead flyers, not just the one shown to me at school, and we learned that the skinheads had actually firebombed one home in the neighborhood, the home of a white family, who they targeted because one member of that family was dating a

Black person.

In planning for the rally, we chose a trusted comrade to make quick tactical decisions, if need be, and we mounted our signs on heavy two-by-four wood planks, ready to fight. Comrades from a nearby city actively joined in, making our bold rally possible. On the day of the rally, at one point a man from the racist rally across the street suddenly walked aggressively and rapidly toward us, waving a large confederate flag. Our point-person, understanding that the best defense is a strong offense, said, "Get him!" What happened next was described by local TV news as "War on the Streets." We were pleased that one of the vicious racists had to go to the hospital with a possible broken arm.

Many students at my school saw me on the news, swinging a two-by-four, and hitting one of the racists. They named me "Hacksaw" after a wrestler at the time, who would always go into the ring with a two-by-four, and Hacksaw was my nickname at the school for the next two years. The principal said I was a bad example, but the students loved it. More importantly, the skinheads, as far as we know, never again did anything in that neighborhood. To this day, it's one of the things about which I'm most proud.

Because of that, and because of many classroom discussions, and because of other stances against racism, students generally seemed to conclude that I was not a hypocrite, and that the Party and I were worthy of their respect.

Finally, in terms of opposing racism on a personal level, it's important that we're attentive to the makeup of our circle of good friends. We need to strive to make it a multi-racial circle. Not only is this very important, in and of itself, but also students will observe and respect this.

3. BASEBUILDING

This may well be the most important part, the make-or-break part, of the work. It involves developing unbreakable personal ties that embody two things simultaneously: very strong, sincere, mutual friendship, and deep, shared, political understandings. There's no single correct way to do this, and I've made many mistakes. Building a base can develop in lots of different ways.

To bring youth around the Party, it's vital to work with a student group, or another mass organization of mostly youth. If you work in a school, it's good to think of an activity you enjoy, and then figure out how to work with young people in a student club that's focused on that activity – keeping it going for decades, if possible.

Together with a circle of interested students, you may need to take the initiative to start such a club, if one doesn't already exist. In my case, the majority of my forty teaching years were at my fifth school. The club, that some students and I founded there, is still going strong (though it did have a few years when it teetered on the brink of going out of existence).

In that club and in your classes, it's important to make people feel welcome. There also needs to be an open at- ➤

mosphere at your home (to the extent possible that your spouse or partner or roommate, agrees).

At the risk of stating the obvious, young people are human beings, like adults. They are the future. We need to fully respect them. We need to talk with young folks frequently, at length, about almost everything. In those frequent and sometimes protracted conversations, we need to be good listeners. Listening is the most important part of conversation. Few people have respect for know-it-alls who talk a lot, and barely listen. Not only do we need to listen, but we also need to ask—and sincerely want to hear about—progress and difficulties at school, personal issues and achievements, thoughts about the future, the well-being of a young person's friends and family members, and the experiences and insights of their adult relatives whose working-class lives. Their horrendous mistreatment under capitalism and splendid resilience will heighten our love for our class and our hatred for the system that oppresses us.

We have much to learn from the wonderful people in the Party's base. Besides, virtually all knowledge comes from experience. Even book-knowledge, in essence, is a summation of another person's experience, or – depending upon the type of book – from many other people's experiences. How can we help young people to grow politically, if we don't listen carefully to all their experiences, discussing which lessons, based on all that experience, are most important.

We never know which young person is most likely—down the road—to become a strong, dedicated comrade. Even for those who do indeed become part of the next generation of revolutionaries, we don't know who, among them, will stick with the Party for a lifetime. Amidst this complex process, it's wise, when possible, to win young people who are personable, and who can readily bring others around too. When a young person does bring others around, we should give lots of thoughtful attention to encouraging that process.

Whenever a young individual takes an interest in the Party, we need to make a long-term commitment to our relationship with that person. There is, of course, a place for sharp, comradely struggle about the Party's ideas, and struggle about commitment to the working class, to communism and to the Party. But we shouldn't rush the development of a person's political understanding. In my case, it took five years for me to overcome uncertainties about the need for revolutionary violence. Only then did I join the Party. If there hadn't been people in the Party keeping up strong personal and political ties with me, I'd have probably drifted away.

Making a long-term commitment to base building with a particular person, an aspect of real friendship, almost always, is sharing that connection with each other's families. We need to share our biological/immediate family with our extended working-class family. When doing this, we need to work hard to make our home life – and

'Listening is the most important part of the conversation'

also Party activities elsewhere – positive, stable, ethically healthy, and drug-free.

There will be young people who come around or even join, but don't stay active. We must try, as best we can, not to lose touch with them.

For example, one of the people who went with us to the Chicago summer project, in July of 2017, was a student of mine 20 years ago. When she was in high school, she was interested in the Party's work, but just a bit. I brought CHALLENGE to her home (and to other homes) on the weekends, for her mother and her to read. Over the years since then, we were sometimes in touch, often not. I should have done better.

Then, two years ago, I noticed she was passionately badmouthing capitalism and racism—and discussing their inter-connectedness—on her Facebook page. Of course, this warmed the cockles of my heart! We stepped up discussions, got together for coffee, and began to re-establish the relationship between our families. At one point, four generations of her family came to a cookout at our home. It was really nice to have all of them with us. Her Mom, a nurse, has been a bit helpful with medical advice for my wife, who has had to grapple with some difficult health issues. And this former student, along with her teenage son, came to May Day, and loved it!

Expecting that the Chicago summer project would be dope, and would give her first-hand interactive experience with some of the Party's strongest comrades and best work, I waged a sharp, friendly struggle, explaining why she ought to participate. There were obstacles, but—convinced of the project's importance—she overcame the main obstacle, and went with us to Chicago. Not long afterward, she decided to join the Party.

As a brand new Party member, she then took the initiative to organize a wonderful send-off Party for a young man, who had also been part of our group at the summer project. He was about to leave for college, out of town. This young man, on his own, had voraciously read Party literature, following the Chicago project, and he planned to start a CHALLENGE readers' group at his school. Everyone enjoyed his send-off party and, as a result, we will probably be more successful at maintaining our social and political ties across the hundreds of miles divide.

When youth take an interest in the Party's work, even just a modest interest, we need to get to know their whole family and their close friends too. We especially have to give parents plenty of opportunities to get to know us and trust us, deeply. When dropping off a student at home, after an activity, for example, it's good to ask, "Would this be ➤➤

'We must give parents plenty of opportunities to know us and trust us'

a good time for me to come in and talk with your mom or dad or grandma or grandparent?"

One reason for getting to know whole families is that it's not unusual for a particular young person to begin getting active with the Party but, over time, for that person to drift into inactivity while – at the same time – a sibling may be the one who ends up stepping forward and becoming the main pro-communist activist in the family.

Another reason for getting to know whole families is that there may be an aunt – or uncle or whoever – who is the source of some anti-communist influence. It's helpful to know that. One way of thinking about organizing for communist revolution is the strategic view that our task is to win over as many people as possible, isolate the enemy (an ideological "enemy" in this case, not a physical enemy), and neutralize everyone else. It may be possible to earn the respect of the aunt or uncle, partly winning them over, and seriously diminishing that individual's anti-communism. Or, even with good work – if winning them over proves unattainable in the medium run – we may be able to sufficiently neutralize or isolate their political influence within the family.

Here's a story that illustrates the importance of base building. The Party in our area used to organize youth camping trips—part fun, part learning about communism—once a year, when school ended in June. They were popular, and grew to include about 60 people. That was about 20 times larger than the size of our Party collective. Adult comrades from a nearby city helped out, and made the trips possible.

One year, at the prompting of an anti-communist parent, a local TV station aired a vicious attack on the Party and the camping trip, shortly after we got back home. The TV station falsely claimed that parents hadn't been informed about the communist politics.

In the midst of that attack on the Party, I answered a knock at my family's front door, and found myself face-to-face with a TV news reporter, already on our porch, holding a live mic, with a live video camera across the street, using a telephoto lens to videotape us. The reporter was aggressively in my face, rapidly spewing anti-communist commentary and adversarial questions. Trying to think quickly on my feet, I offered to let him into the house for a discussion, but on the condition that there be no videotaping, and no audio recording (either of which could later be manipulated to distort reality and impugn the Party). The

reporter agreed.

Seated inside, after talking for a bit, I showed him the actual permission slip for the camping trip, the original copy of the particular one that had been signed by the accusatory parent. It clearly stated that a parental signature indicated an understanding that the trip was not school-sponsored, that it was sponsored by Progressive Labor Party, and that the parent had received – together with the permission slip – a copy of PL's newspaper, CHALLENGE. The permission slip further explained that having and reading CHALLENGE was for the purpose of enabling the parent to be fully informed about the viewpoints of PL, and—on that basis—to decide if they were comfortable with their child's participation.

The reporter had no choice but to recognize that the parent's complaint was unfounded, and the TV station dropped that particular crusade against the Party. As it turned out, the child of that complaining parent was not from the school at which I taught. She attended a different school, and was a friend of one of my students. I had never previously met her, or any of her family members.

It just goes to show, by contrast, the vital importance of having close, mutually respectful ties with whole families. We have to become an important part of the lives of folks in our base, and they have to become an important part of our lives too. Because we had honest, principled, mutually respectful relationships with many of the parents whose sons and daughters went camping with us, people stood by the Party.

Our ties with a particular young person who has been around the Party, at points in time during recent years, is a positive example of base building. I was once greeting her mom, at their home, and extended my hand, ready for a handshake. The Mom refused to put out her hand. She just looked at me, mock-accusingly, and said with warm-hearted, friendly sternness, "You know me too well for that!" What she meant, of course, was that the appropriate greeting was a hug, not a handshake.

I had been at that family's home many times. As with some other parents, of students around the Party, I had also visited her in the hospital during an illness. The whole family, each year, for several years, had attended the annual concerts of the student club I advised, for which their daughter was one of the leaders. The daughter and her boyfriend have come to May Day. The daughter has attended a number of the weekly rallies against police terror where she has performed powerful, inspiring, original anti-racist poems. She has also attended a number of Party club meetings. Along with other young people, she has been at our home for dinner, with my wife and me, quite a few times. I was honored to be invited, two years in row, to the send-off parties at her home, organized by her Mom, as her daughter was preparing to go, first to the junior prom, and then to the senior prom.

Another important aspect, of base building with young people, is developing communist understanding among ➤➤

the non-family adults in their lives. Teachers are part of that non-family network of adults. At the high school from which I retired, I was impressed with the faculty's willingness to accept open communist politics as an established part of the fabric of the school. For a dozen years, once I decided to become more active in the teachers' union, and until I was ready to retire, the faculty elected me repeatedly for successive two-year terms—six times—to be the school's union rep.

I did my best not to restrict that work exclusively to struggles about wages and working conditions. In addition to such reform issues – in our school-based union newsletter, in discussions, and in struggles – I also talked about our Party's communist analysis of many things. This was controversial, earning attacks from the administration and from sellout citywide union leaders. Even some members of our five-person union committee at the school would sometimes tell me, "You can't put that communist shit in the newsletter." However, over time, with strong backing from some faculty members, we won that battle, and I was able to widely advocate a communist analysis of the Iraq war and many other things.

We were also able to lead and win, over eight years, a major anti-racist struggle against disproportionately and routinely overcrowded classes in the school's academic program that serves the majority of the school's students, and which has the highest percentage of Black students, about 90 percent. Most important of all, many teachers – probably more than half the faculty – were happy to get CHALLENGE newspaper. My own inefficiency generally kept the hand-to-hand circulation of the paper down to about a quarter of the faculty. That was not as good as it could have been, but it was nevertheless important and impactful. To this day, there are about 20 current and former teachers from the school who continue to get the paper.

One of the faculty CHALLENGE readers, while I was there, moved from being a teacher to being an administrator. This person pulled me into the office one day, to tell me that I may not remember, but when I used to bring the paper to her classroom, I would explain a little more about communism each time. (Yes, I had forgotten those particular conversations.) This administrator wanted me to know how much she personally appreciated and respected that Party work.

The widespread awareness of communism, and the general acceptance of communist politics as part of the fabric of the school, made a big difference during the year after I retired. That November was when the grand jury in Ferguson decided they would do nothing at all to prosecute kkkop Darren Wilson for the racist murder of Michael Brown. Students organized a massive sit-in. They contacted me to come in and help. The principal tried to take over, and – after some discussion of the Ferguson events in the auditorium – he tried to send everyone back to class. But students weren't having it, and they maintained the sit-in.

At that point, the principal made a decision to leave

'No one wants to hang out with a crabby communist'

just one administrator in the auditorium, to be an administrative presence while the sit-in continued. The students showed a film, made by friends of Progressive Labor Party, about the Ferguson rebellion, and held an organized discussion about the issues. The administrator, who stayed in the auditorium, turned out to be the administrator who had told me how meaningful the CHALLENGE newspapers – and our short communist discussions – had been, back before she had left the classroom. During the remainder of the sit-in, this administrator didn't try to interfere at all, leaving the students to run the sit-in entirely as they saw fit.

The administrator's respect for a comrade's political ideas, and the long-term mass distribution of CHALLENGE to many faculty members, along with respect for the Party's work in leading the fight against racist overcrowding of classes that have the highest percentage of Black students, all combined to create an atmosphere where the students were able to conduct a massive protest with no disciplinary consequences. There were two additional, powerful student protests at the school – walkouts which included outdoor rallies – in the spring of that same academic year, after cops killed Freddie Gray in Baltimore, and thousands of people rebelled in that city. Once again, there were no disciplinary consequences for the students. I was escorted off campus by a school cop during one of those walkouts, but student leaders of that protest went, later that same day, to meet with the principal, and the students forcefully said they expected him to apologize to me.

Those events reminded me of the difference between fascism in Germany, and fascism in Italy, during the 1930s and 1940s. In Germany, there was hard fascism, and the communist movement was largely wiped out. However, in Italy there was soft fascism. Of course the Italian fascists also attacked the communists, but those communists had such a strong base that they grew under attack to become a much larger Party, a Party – as I understand – with about two million members. And they were able to play a key role in the defeat of fascist leader Mussolini, and the defeat of fascism in general (though, unfortunately, not yet the defeat of capitalism).

Returning to the helpfulness of base building with non-family adults, the teachers at the high school are important in the lives of the students. Our years of political work, among the faculty, helped to significantly strengthen our political base with students. One of those students – who is currently in the Party, and who, as a high school



senior in 2014, helped lead the mass sit-in against the non-prosecution of Mike Brown's killer, Darren Wilson – is now a Party leader here.

Another aspect of base building is having lots of enjoyable social activities: things like cookouts, camping trips, sports, one or two or three people coming over for dinner, swimming trips, trips to other cities, game nights, movie nights, and going out to dinner along with laser tag or bowling, or going to a trampoline park. We should try to let loose with our base, be fun to be with, and have fun ourselves.

At some point, like me, you may retire. If I were religious, I would say – regarding retirees – that comrades, who have spent a lifetime doing youth organizing, are truly blessed. The fruits of base building are a two-way street. In retirement, the fun continues. It's wonderful to have former students who are inviting my wife and me over for dinner, to birthday parties, weddings, baby showers, one-year sobriety celebrations at NA, asking us to come stay with them on vacation for a week and be shown around in the new city where they now live, saying super-kind things on Facebook (where most of the 1,600 folks who have friended me are former students), coming by to visit, sharing warm embraces and radiant smiles at the mass cookouts for thousands of people at the high school reunions while we happily reminisce, coming early in the morning to get me up to go jog with them, and so on.

The years of base building lead to a wonderful, joyful network of friendships with folks who are younger than us, are more active and vigorous, and keep us going. This is something that noncommunist teachers often miss out on. I have an image in mind of my final years, when – who knows – I may be decrepit, stuck in some bed in some assisted living place, with a computer on my lap, keeping in touch with many of the 5,000 or so students I've taught. It's a happy thought, envisioning myself enjoying developments in their lives, along with enjoying the lives of our biological children and grandchildren.

Getting back to the here-and-now, base building means being helpful with other peoples' needs, but real friendship is a two-way street. When a young person wants to teach you a new dance, or throw you a birthday Party, accept the kindness. If a student's parent invites you, spontaneously, to come into their home and have a plate of food, by all means say thank you, yes. Or if a young person wants to help your sick spouse or partner, accept that help too.

Base building is probably the key, make-or-break aspect of Party building. Our overall Party work is complex and challenging. Sometimes it's hard to know how to best utilize our time, what to prioritize. So I have a personal motto to share that I think is helpful: when in doubt, hang out!

In other words, when you're not sure what to do, just get with somebody (or get with a few people) in your mass organization, or who are otherwise around the Party, and spend time with them.

4. CONCENTRATION

Reading this article, you might get the impression that I have organized students, teachers, and opponents of police terror, all at the same time. That's not the case. In actuality, some years focused primarily on organizing among teachers, other on youth, and yet another stretch of time partly focused on the fight against police brutality. At times, the focus wasn't clear enough, and the efforts overlapped, keeping me too busy with various necessary tasks, unable to spend enough time doing one-on-one base building, thus watering down the Party's influence. But decisions about concentration are somewhat complicated because, on the other hand, some of the long-term effects from one area of work did, at times, have helpful synergistic influences on another area of Party work.

Overall, having a clear, long-term focus leads to a much higher likelihood of breakthroughs and advances. Uncertainty and lack of clarity about this—over the years—have been significant weaknesses in my Party work. Before retiring, I usually attended 18 or 19 meetings a month. These included Party meetings, mass meetings of the student organization, union meetings, school advisory team meetings, meetings of a union caucus, and education committee meetings with a citywide civil rights group. For about half of those meetings, I was responsible for planning the agenda beforehand. For about a third of the meetings, I functioned as the main organizer, responsible for motivating people to attend. Whether or not I helped plan a meeting, trying to be a responsible participant meant doing many time-consuming follow-up tasks. Along with that, my work as a teacher took about 60 hours a week. About three more hours were earmarked for the hand-to-hand distribution of each new issue of CHALLENGE. Time with family is also wonderful, and shouldn't be short-changed. With a to-do list, a calendar, and an agenda book, all of this was do-able. But clearly, the amount of free time remaining—for base building—was insufficient.

Here's another issue that can arise from focusing insufficiently. Though it was do-able to engage in all the activities, it often meant going without ever getting a full night's sleep. Sure, being an active communist sometimes necessitates giving up some sleep. No problem. But when a major sleep deficit accumulates over long stretches of time, many human qualities decline: easygoing friendliness, patience, attention, memory, wit, the ability to think well, and one's sense of humor. Even when a comrade, in that state of mind, succeeds in trying to devote a little time to base building, who wants to hang out with a crabby communist? Base building should be enjoyable! On top of that, being super busy also means not having time for regular exercise. This lack of exercise is likely to compound the problem, further impairing what ought to be a cheerful disposition. After all – with confidence in the working class, and confidence in our collective ability to create a wonderful new epoch in human history – we have good reason to be upbeat and enthusiastic! What are folks in our base supposed



to think, if we're the opposite of that?

An interesting reality –that helped me recognize this problem – was the contrast between the school year and the summer. With sufficient sleep and exercise, my summer persona was so profoundly different, that – when in that amiable state of mind – I could barely conceptualize my other, bedraggled persona, the one prevailing during fall, winter and spring.

I don't always follow my own advice, but comrades can't effectively build the Party if we're trying to do too many things. (Though our main problem is getting comrades to do more, not less). You can't spend sufficiently large amounts of time visiting and hanging out with the families of students, if you're also trying to spend lots of time with educators – on and off the job – as part of an effort to build an activist caucus in the teachers' union, while at the same time arranging to have many one-on-one lunches and dinners with fellow citywide fighters who are fighting for prosecution and incarceration of killer cops. Trying to do all that, trying to do it well, and trying to build the Party in the midst of it, is like passing gas outdoors on a windy day. The impact is minimal.

Increase your commitment by putting yourself on the hot seat

Ideally, a collective of comrades should all be working together in one mass organization, or at a single workplace or at a single institution. When that's not possible, and a comrade must do solo Party work, then having a primary focus—on just one area of work—is even more important. It's like building a big fire. If there are matches scattered, rather than sufficiently all in the same place, nothing much happens. However, if enough spark is brought together and concentrated, the impact is huge. Concentration is an important organizing principle in our fight for a better world. And these decisions of what to concentrate on should be made, and evaluated, collectively.

5. COMBATTING LIBERALISM

The most serious criticism I have ever heard from students about other teachers is, "So and so doesn't really care about us. (S)he lets us do anything." In other words, there was probably some chaos in that classroom, and not much learning or skills development. Seeking peace and friendship with the students, superficially—by establishing a go-along-to-get-along atmosphere—should not be the goal for any teacher, certainly not for a communist teacher.

We have to struggle sharply against the capitalist ideas

and habits within our students: procrastination, doubt about one's capabilities, irresponsibility, discourtesy, and low levels of intellectual self-discipline. We have to push students hard—in terms of the difficulty and quantity of work—to the point at which they whine a lot. That's how we know we are advancing their intellectual capabilities to the max. They will come back and thank you years later, and their parents will thank you almost immediately. This is about having confidence in our working-class students to learn.

However, our job is not only to do our best at becoming an effective teacher. We also have the responsibility of trying to do things in a communist way. In the Soviet Union, experience led to the conclusion that education's most important purpose is nurturing collectivity (not *prima donnas*). A great two-volume book about this is *The Road to Life* by Makarenko.

It's not easy to give students lots of meaningful opportunities to get good at collectivity within capitalist educational systems. One little thing I did, that seemed helpful, was to have each class elect three co-leaders. They had two main jobs: 1) Organizing a class party to celebrate everyone's success, after accomplishing the challenging work of completing a rigorous, college-level research paper, and 2) Being class advocates.

Regarding the advocacy for fellow students, whenever class members felt that the deadline for an assignment was too soon, or the work was outrageously demanding, or was in conflict with work for another teacher's class, or they had any other criticism of my expectations, then the elected class leaders had the job of speaking up. On many occasions, they did not succeed in changing my mind.

Nevertheless, even when not succeeding, those moments actually did provide a good opportunity for discussion about the real value and do-ability of our work, winning students to its importance, rather than expecting hard work to be motivated simply by obedience. However, on some occasions, a class advocate did succeed in convincing me to change something.

One time, a student—in my first class of the day—argued wisely, fiercely, and respectfully that I needed to extend the deadline for a major step in a big project. He won. As students in my other classes learned about what happened, impacting them favorably too, the advocate who had won the debate with me became a folk hero. It was heart-warming to see the positive solidarity and collectivity of all the students in all those classes. And the major project, for which an adjustment was made, nevertheless still worked out very well.

Money is another arena where we need to resist liberalism. When it comes to money needed for participation in Party-organized activities, we should generally try hard not to be patronizing charity providers. Let's bear in mind—when the young people around us view an activity as really important—they will usually figure out a way to finance it. One common route is struggling with aunts, uncles and ►►

grandparents to contribute, along with parents. Another is finding work, to have one's own income, whether in the informal economy—doing hair, babysitting and so on—or from an actual part-time job.

Sure, sometimes we have to help out financially. But our main task is to convince our base—and their parents—that the activities are important. Then they'll work hard to scrape together the money. One mistake I made was agreeing to be the co-signer for a young Party member – three years out of high school—when he and his girlfriend were planning to move to a different apartment. I also co-signed a loan for them, so they could pay the security deposit. The young comrade had been led to believe that he would be hired imminently—fulltime at good pay—to be a community organizer with an NGO. The apartment was significantly more expensive than average, because it was in a luxury sort of building, and – in addition to living there – they wanted their new apartment to have extra space for a recording studio, from which they could make additional income. They moved in and did get the studio up and running, but the high-paid job with the NGO didn't materialize. I didn't learn that they were in arrears until months after they stopped paying the rent, and had been locked out of their own apartment by the building's management.

Long story short, their debt was turned over to a collection agency, my credit was seriously messed up, the young comrade left the Party, and bad blood grew between the young couple and me. In the end, I had to pay a lawyer to re-negotiate the debt with the collection agency and ended up paying over \$10,000.

This was a serious, negative consequence of liberalism on my part. In the end, liberalism hurt the Party by contributing to the loss of that comrade, who was a highly capable organizer. It also diminished my spouse's willingness to be supportive of the Party's youth work. Additionally, it contributed to the drifting away of an adult comrade who is related to the young couple. And, of course, it was a financial blow personally.

Another form of liberalism is not expecting that advanced communist ideas can become the property of young people. Sometimes we mistakenly think that their ideological development needs more scaffolding that it really does. We need to have confidence that young members and friends of the Party can lead advanced discussions about communist politics, dialectical philosophy, political economy, analysis of the world situation, and evaluation of our collective experiences in the class struggle. We need to struggle with them consistently to help them overcome the capitalist mindset that is constantly bolstered by this system's sick culture. In other words, we need to really win young people to communism.

The battle against anti-communism needs to be waged with sharp, friendly and thoughtful criticism. For example, many young people come to the Party under the influence, to some extent, of identity politics and privilege theory. These beliefs are an aspect of liberalism within the

antiracist movement. We won't be able to win communism until the working class as a whole understands that all of us—Black, Latin, Asian, Middle Eastern, indigenous and white too—must fight racism, in our own best interests. Of course, racism hurts nonwhite workers the most severely, but that doesn't change the fact that all working-class people need to recognize the divide-and-conquer aspect of racism, and smash it.

Identity politics and privilege theory, on the contrary, argue that racism was the brainchild of the working class, when our class began to emerge and develop historically, more than a century ago. Proponents of privilege theory argue that racism – and the exploitative practices it rationalizes – developed for some reason other than serving the needs of slave owners and capitalists. David Roediger, probably the most influential proponent of privilege theory, says he bases his analysis on the work of historian and activist, W.E. B. Du Bois (ironic, since Du Bois was pro-communist).

Roediger cites a paragraph of Du Bois' book, *The Civil War and Black Reconstruction*. That part of Du Bois' excellent book says, about white laborers:

They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools...

However, Roediger leaves out Du Bois' more-important companion point, that it was the bosses who paid those "psychological" wages, and the bosses' purpose was to divide workers. Who else, but the bosses, could grant such "privileges"? Du Bois clearly explained this central point of his, in the very same book, but Roediger deliberately and manipulatively ignores this key side of Du Bois' analysis. In other words, privilege theory and identity politics are rooted in liberal academic deception.

Du Bois actually wrote, within a page of the earlier quote:

The theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers, that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest.

The main way we must work to overcome the bosses' privilege theory is by participating vigorously in sharp struggles against racism. After all, Progressive Labor Party is primarily a fighting organization. However, we are also an intellectual organization, and we must struggle—firmly but in a warm-hearted way– to defeat incorrect, liberal ideas.

We need to engage in sharp struggle, not just to defeat privilege theory, but to uphold the overall general line of ➤➤

the Party, and also to help one another attain higher levels of commitment. There's a wonderful young comrade here who, leading into the first semester of his sophomore year in college, announced he would be taking a "leave of absence from the Party." He talked about it being for one semester, but the duration was uncertain, and it could have been permanent. On top of that, he became uncommunicative with me.

As far as I could tell, pretty much the only way to reach him was by old-fashioned letter-writing, so I thought about it for a good while, and then wrote him a serious letter. As it turned out, he now keeps that letter in a collection of what he considers to be some of the really important things in his life. He's been back in the Party for over a year, does good work in a mass organization, and brought two people to a recent summer project. Both of those people loved the experience! Even more significantly, he's taking steps toward becoming a local Party leader.

The letter wasn't magic. There was eventually—a good while after the letter—lots of discussion and hangouts. Plus, he was accumulating more and more independent experience with life, and with some of the multi-faceted, ongoing struggles that he, his family, and his friends had to face under capitalism.

But, earlier in my work as a Party member, influenced by liberalism, I probably would have been more fearful of sharp struggle, afraid of losing the friendship. Probably, if this had happened earlier in my political life, the effort – based on low expectations of what I could accomplish – would have only been to maintain a weak, some-timey friendship, and an even weaker degree of struggle with this person about the great importance and profound potential of our Party's work. But this time, I was able to sharpen the struggle. That's the way to resolve a contradiction, intensifying the struggle. Here is an excerpt of the letter I sent to our young comrade. I'm including it here as an example of combating liberalism:

First, Grandma [our comrade's affectionate name for my wife] and I value your friendship, for real. Whatever you decide in terms of participation in the Party – now and in the future – I would really like our friendship to continue to be strong. You're a good, thoughtful person – one who has a unique ability to have close ties with people of all ages, including us old fogies – and it would be great if we can continue to hang out and continue to enjoy one another's families and lives.

In addition to my hope that our friendship will persist, the main point I want to make is that your decision – about whether or not to be in the Party again, after this semester – may be a very important decision for the future of the Party here.

Think about it. I'm 67 years old. In a few years I'll be 70. Who knows how much longer I'll be able to do

vigorous political work. And think about your own political development; it has occurred over a period of more than three years. I may not have it in me to help assist a similar process with another individual, for as many years as it will take to reach your level of communist understanding and experience.

There are some wonderful people around. A former student of mine from our high school, is now a teacher herself. She seriously dislikes capitalism. Recently, she held discussions with her 6th grade class, preparing for each of them to write a letter to the national Attorney General [at that time], Loretta Lynch, urging Lynch to re-open a particular police brutality case in our city, and urging federal prosecution of the cops who so mercilessly took a person's life. It turns out that one of the students in her class is a nephew of someone else, who was also brutally killed by police. That student was in tears during the class discussion, which brought my former student to tears herself.

Yes, there are terrific people around. She's one of them. However, that was also true in our student organization when you were still at the high school. Some of them came to May Day, to study groups, to club meetings, to the rallies against police brutality, and so on. However, it was you who took a more profound interest. You are a capable organizer and brought others to the activities. You stuck with it. You now have social ties with young people in the Party from other cities. You have a sharp command of the ideas.

I've noticed with appreciation, from your Facebook posts about the mass organization you lead, that you've learned a lot about how to provide good leadership, based upon your experience in the Party: patience, persistence, respect for the people to whom you're giving leadership, confidence in the working class, being organized, being bold, having a long-term outlook, involving others in decision-making, collectivity, and so on. Good work!

However, if those capabilities are used only to serve the needs of reformism, then we're letting down the working class – not just a little, but big time. Our class will continue to suffer the horrific ravages of capitalism until we defeat this system, which we can do. And we can then devote ourselves to successfully building a really comradely world.

You should be a leader of the working class. But that means building Progressive Labor Party, and it means building a real understanding of communism. You can do that in your mass organization. You can do it anywhere. But when we leave the Party, when we abandon the advocacy of communist revolution,



we become the type of leader that will not serve the true needs of our class. Our class doesn't need more leaders who leave us on the treadmill of reformism and thereby keep us stuck in this awful system.

It's like someone, during slavery, who limited his or her leadership to fighting about the permissible length of whips, or for how many hundreds of miles family members can be ripped from one another. Looking back, we now know that reforming slavery was not an adequate goal. The people we respect most, are those who devoted themselves, during several hundred years, to the struggle to destroy – not reform – the institution of slavery. We need to take the same approach to capitalism today. If not, we won't be really helping to achieve liberation.

Here's the bottom line. It will make a profound difference if you decide to re-join the Party. The basic part of membership is simply coming to the club meeting once every two weeks, and being willing to be struggled with. That's not a big commitment of time. And the heart of doing Party work is not about being busier. No, the heart of it is doing what you're already doing, but bringing communist content to it.

In other words, you could continue to focus on giving leadership to your mass organization, as you're already doing. It would simply mean, in your relationships with some of the folks in that group, that you would no longer hide your communist ideas. They need that understanding to win, and you have the ability to share that very most important part of what it means to be truly conscious.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts. Do you want to keep up our friendship? Do you want to re-join the Party after this semester?

6. COMMITMENT

All things change, including our own level of commitment. As an organizer of youth, the strength of our own morale will make a big difference in what we're likely to accomplish. For that reason, it's good to be attentive to maintaining and strengthening our own personal level of commitment.

There are a variety of ways for doing this. It's helpful to purposefully put yourself in a situation where you can work with the most dedicated comrades you know. Doing political work with them will allow you to learn from them, and thereby expand your own limits. It's also great to participate each year in the Party summer projects, where you'll most likely have a chance to get to know – and be inspired by – the work of some of our most committed comrades.

A third way to strengthen your commitment is to put yourself on the hot seat. Instead of shying away from being

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criticized, encourage other comrades and base members to honestly tell you what they think of your Party work, your values, and your character. Ask them how you can be a better communist.

Another way to bolster commitment is to read, especially books, by pro-communists and actual communists—nonfiction and fiction. We're now living during a period when the communist movement has suffered serious setbacks. Consequently, most of the cultural influences on us are capitalist. There was a time, however, when most of the world's workers felt strongly that our class can and must take power, that communism is the way to go.

In one of Joseph McCarthy's major anti-communist speeches, in February of 1950, he correctly pointed out that six years earlier, just prior to the end of World War II, there were 180 million people in the Soviet "orbit," but there were 1.63 billion people on what he described as the "anti-totalitarian" side, by which he meant they lived in countries led by anti-communists.

In the year of his speech (1950) McCarthy said there were 800 million pro-communists in the world and "on our side, the figure has shrunk to around 500 million." That meant, in less than 6 years, as McCarthy pointed out, the balance of forces in the world changed from 9 to 1 in favor of capitalism, to nearly the opposite, a ratio of 8 to 5 for communism!

There are many inspiring books about those momentous struggles, and many additional books about the fight for communism in the decades before and since. For example, have you read the details about how Vietnamese communists succeeded in inspiring and mobilizing the masses, and – on that basis—were able to lead the first-ever defeat ➤

of a major colonial power, France, using positional warfare during the amazing battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954? The great Vietnamese communist general, Giap, wrote an inspiring book explaining exactly how they did it.

Or have you read James Ngugi's novel, *Matigari*—in the engaging style of magic realism—about a fictional African country where revolutionaries won a war for independence, but they allowed capitalism to persist, and therefore the “new” society was a bitter disappointment? One of that novel's inspiring themes is that there's no such thing as liberation without communism. Moreover, the main character actually devotes themselves to helping the working class recognize their potential for exercising collective strength and power.

Since the communist movement, for now, is relatively small – and we therefore have limited current experience to learn from, and to be inspired by – it's important to strengthen our resolve through knowledge of the powerful, communist-led struggles, revolutions, and value systems that preceded us (despite their weaknesses, about which we already have good insights).

Finally, about commitment, we need to keep in mind the law of uneven development. If you're at a school, and you do good work—over a protracted period of time, in a student organization—there will be years when wonderful young people begin developing class-consciousness, and start to do serious work with the Party. However, there will likely be other years when no one at all steps forward to be active with the Party. That's to be expected. Things don't develop in a smooth, linear way. Don't let it discourage you. Never give up!

7. PERSONAL ORGANIZATION

It's relatively easy to attend Party meetings, to wait for suggestions from someone else about things you ought to do, and to otherwise drift along without taking initiative. This subdued level of Party work—doing barely anything unless a Party leader talks to you about particular organizing work you should undertake—has a name. It's called having an employee mentality. Often, I'm guilty of this.

To break out of this mindset, have a meeting with yourself, once a week, for about an hour—at more or less the same time every week so it becomes a good habit.

During that time, you can start by thinking hard. How can the local Party work be advanced? Then make a to-do list. After that, assign each task on your list to a particular day during the upcoming week, and put it on a calendar. Each morning (or the night before), look at the day's to-do

Make a list—how can you advance the Party work this week?

list, to refresh your memory about what you've planned to accomplish that day.

When making the new week's list, look again at last week's list (and at notes from the recent mass and Party meetings) and include each thing that didn't already get done. Yes, there are many little tasks that need to be accomplished, and they do need attention, but try to focus primarily on base building: making arrangements to spend time with people, to build relationships that embody sincere, deep mutual friendship, and also embody lots of discussion about communism and the Party's work.

In other words, use your planning time, primarily, to keep yourself focused on the main thing: building unbreakable personal and political ties with a few of the wonderful people around you. They may one day do phenomenal things to serve the working class. And right now, if you get arrested, or fired, or need support during any other difficulty, they'll most likely have your back, just as you'll have their backs, when they're having a rough time.

8. LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

It's hard to be objective about one's own life, one's own communist work. As best I can figure, among my various weaknesses, the main one is spreading myself too thin.

More than once, comrades explained every base member cannot be primary. The problem with trying to recruit everyone all at once is that it's impossible to have really deep ties with a whole lot of folks. I have tended to err in this direction, having friendly relationships with so many people that most of the relationships are necessarily shallow. I guess I'm looking for insurance; in case some people drift away, I need to have quite a few other people around, who might then become closer.

In a nonpolitical context, this is the problem of having friendly ties with many people, but not having two or three best friends to hang out with and talk with, all the time. Human beings need best friends—more than one.

I feel that this weakness of mine afflicts men in general, more so than women, men are acculturated by capitalism to have this problem. Women often acknowledge who their main best friend is, and who their next level of two or three best friends are. Boys and men, at least in the framework of U.S. capitalist culture, not only don't vocalize this, often, they don't even know with whom, if anyone, they have such special relationships. Perhaps, for straight men, this prob-



*Who is primary in
your mass work?*

lem is partly rooted in anti-gay ideas, another aspect of exploitative culture.

A better approach, generally advocated as the Party's model for healthy base building and recruitment, is for each of us to work very closely with just two or three people. For Party growth, in addition to recruiting from that very close circle, another of our tasks is to struggle with each of those folks – as effectively as possible – to win them to build, like us, unbreakable social and political ties with two or three people around them. This way, all the human connections are stronger, and less dependent on a single comrade.

It means we have to spend lots of hours, with our very closest social/political friends, winning them to the politics much more deeply than is possible if we're fooling ourselves into thinking we have twenty-five best friends. Another important benefit of this approach is that we're helping to train, at a higher level, the next generation of Party leaders.

I am trying to be a better comrade in this regard. Lately, after years of Party work, it seems that I'm finally beginning to overcome this important weakness of mine.

Nevertheless, even with serious weaknesses, I have been able – over the years – to bring quite a few young people around the Party. You can too, probably more powerfully than I have done. You certainly can do better than I have at retention, helping young comrades stick with the Party for a lifetime.

CONCLUSION

I hope this article has been helpful. Let me close with a little story. One of our children lived in Zimbabwe for several months. During that time, she took a trip to South Africa where she visited Robben Island, site of the prison where Nelson Mandela, and many other one-time fighters against apartheid, were incarcerated for decades. Many of the tour guides themselves had been political prisoners on the island. At one point, our daughter had an informal, one-on-one conversation with the guide leading her group, and she mentioned that her Dad is a communist. In response, the guide became silent and solemn. He reached down slowly, deliberately, picking up a dark stone and a light stone. Years of imprisonment on the island involved daily work, breaking up large pieces of rock, by hand, in a limestone quarry. Those reflective stones, glinting in the sun's relentless brightness, led to "snow blindness," damaging prisoners' eyes. The guide stood tall, held out the two stones and said, "Give these to your father. Tell him, 'Never give up!'"

Dare to struggle! Dare to win! Fight for communism!✪

Birth and Decline of U.S. Imperialism

Imperialism is the stage of capitalism after colonialism when, the whole world having been divided up, the dominant nations fight each other for control of natural resources, markets and cheap labor. Just as capitalists within national borders must continually maximize their profits or be ousted by competitors, the capitalist class of each imperialist nation is compelled not only to optimize its exploitation of weaker nations, but to limit the access of rival powers to its acquisitions. By the late 1800s all the weaker nations had been brought under the sway of the more powerful ones, and the 1900s ushered in a century of world wars and many local armed conflicts. The primary aim of this article is to describe the declining place of the once dominant United States on the ladder of imperial power, and secondly, to assess how we as communists should relate to this shift.

The rising imperialist powers of China and Russia, once the beacons of hope for an anti-imperialist communist world, are now themselves the main capitalist rivals of the U.S. for power and resources. Many other PLP documents have discussed how and why this unfortunate transition occurred, so that is not our purpose here. We do hope to clarify the futility of siding with or seeing hope in any of these swings in imperial power.

It is imperative to win workers away from the idea that nationalism, loyalty to their own ruling class, whether of an imperialist power or the weakest country, will be to their benefit. The indigenous capitalists of the colonized nations seek only to gain the patronage and riches of their imperial masters and are no allies of their exploited workers. Nor is the struggle against exploitation any more noble in poorer, weaker nations than in global powers, for all workers must take part in the fight to overthrow capitalism. To do this we must also prioritize the fight against racism, which has been used to dehumanize the workers of the nations that have been deliberately underdeveloped by the imperialists and to divide workers within the imperialist nations. The PLP, instead, strives to build an international movement uniting working people in both the nations of the imperialist ruling classes and the weaker nations on which they prey.

THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN IMPERIAL DREAM



The military and economic power of the U.S. peaked in the decades after World War II, and is now on a steady, if lurching, decline. Before we begin to discuss the ongoing downslide of U.S. empire and influence, it is helpful to return to the beginning of the story. The saga of American imperialism and racist exploitation began even before the U.S. became an independent nation, but was still a set-



tlar-colonialist enterprise of the British Empire and was bent on controlling/exterminating the native population and expanding westward. As cotton cultivation and industrial production exploded, millions of men and women were kidnapped and imported from Africa to be enslaved. By the mid 1700s, the British, fearing slave rebellions and occupied with conflicts elsewhere, wished to curb westward settler migration and limit the slave trade. As a result, the colonies revolted against these constraints and won independence – all in the name of “freedom” and “equality,” while creating the first apartheid state.

The newly independent United States of America declared its ambition to control the entire continent and had eyes set on trade with the Orient (Asia) across the Pacific. Over the next half century, Louisiana was purchased from France in 1803, the Spanish were driven out of Florida by 1821, and the vast territory that became Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, California, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming was seized by war with Mexico in the 1830s-40s. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 proclaimed the U.S. domination of all of the Americas, in an effort to oust Spain and Portugal from their Central and South American colonies. Thereafter, the United States conducted military interventions in Panama, Argentina, Chile, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Many of these efforts were to protect the United Fruit Company, which had significant financial stakes in the production of bananas, tobacco, sugar cane, and various other products throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and northern South America.

All this preceded what is usually called the beginning of American imperialism, the Spanish American war of 1898. At that time, the U.S. military seized Cuba from Spain, and forcibly took over Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines. As Congressman William Alden Smith said in that year, “The United States is a great manufacturing nation [and] we must find new markets for our energy and enterprise.” In 1904 the U.S. assured its total control of the Panama Canal in perpetuity, which was critically important to global trade and naval power, as it was the only passage in the Western Hemisphere between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean other than around the southern tip of South America. As the American Empire grew by virtue of cruelty, injustice, exploitation, and genocide its workers and middle class were led to believe that their government was exporting liberty and enlightenment.

The United States was a late entrant into World War I in 1917, a war between the competing empires of England and France against those of Germany and Austria-Hungary. At the end of that war, the U.S. demanded a partial stake in the oil of Iran, as France and England divvied up the Middle East between themselves. Between 1914 and 1918 the U.S. also intervened in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, Haiti, Cuba, and Panama. In 1918, the U.S. joined with at least 15 other nations to invade Russia in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Bolshevik Revolution. During the 1920s, American companies set up shop in

various foreign countries based on the available resources needed to produce their wares. American meatpackers moved to Argentina; fruit growers established themselves in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala; sugar plantation owners went to Cuba; rubber plantation owners moved to the Philippines, Sumatra, and Malaya; copper corporations went to Chile; and oil companies went to Mexico and Venezuela.

By the end of World War II, when the former imperial nations of Europe lay in ruins, the U.S. was the dominant global economic and military power, with its ruling class possessing one half of the entire wealth of the world and producing half of its manufactured goods. The American rulers saw themselves as destined to dominate the Grand Area of the Western Hemisphere – the former British Empire and the Far East – for purposes of control of resources, markets, cheap labor, and trade and to prevent what it misinterpreted as a similar desire of the USSR for world hegemony. As Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson said in 1944, “We cannot have full employment and prosperity ...without the foreign markets.” Once the Soviet Union also gained atomic weapons by 1950, this need to dominate was expressed in increasingly strident and militaristic terms¹.

Control of the world's economy fell almost entirely into American hands. In 1944 the U.S.-empowered International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) were established and put in place a world currency system based on the dollar. The IMF was set up to make loans to countries to keep trade flowing, while the World Bank was to fund infrastructural projects such as dams, roads, and clean water systems. Western Europe was to be dominated by the U.S.; British and French interests were to be pushed out of the Middle East; and control of Latin America would be absolute. George Kennan, a major State Department figure, advised that the U.S. should “cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization” and must “deal in straight power concepts.”

Cold War conflicts became viewed as part of a global struggle against what the U.S. rulers saw as monolithic communism. The Korean war of 1950-3 began because the U.S. mistakenly saw North Korea's entries into the South as a Soviet-sponsored attempt to take over the peninsula and threaten Japan. The result was a costly war that ended in an unstable truce that persists to the present. Aid to the French to maintain their colonies in Indochina and to the Philippine government to fight a peasant insurrection was increased. The success of the Chinese Communist revolution in 1949 led to U.S. bases being established in Japan, Libya, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia and acceleration of the production of nuclear weapons, including the hydrogen bomb. Three quarters of the 1950 federal budget now went to military expenses.

During the 1950s, control of the world's oil became

¹ NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DOCUMENT 68
--TRUMANLIBRARY.ORG/WHISTLESTOP/STUDY_COLLECTIONS/_/DOCUMENTS/_/10-1.PDF

a priority of the U.S. rulers, though it had been of major import to many nations ever since oil fields were first discovered in the 1800s in the Caucasian region of what later became the Soviet Union. Indeed, the fight over Middle Eastern oil between Germany and Britain was the spark that ignited World War I, and all militaries have depended on it ever since.

In Iran, with the world's greatest oil reserves, the U.S. CIA deposed Prime Minister Mosaddegh in 1953 when he tried to nationalize oil production and put in his place the brutal and dictatorial pro-Western Shah. With Saudi Arabia, the world's greatest oil producer, an alliance was formed which persists to this day. By threatening overwhelming use of force, the U.S. let the U.S.S.R. know that it would be the primary power in the Middle East.

From 1954, the CIA orchestrated rightwing movements in Latin America to halt the growth of left-leaning movements, such as that led by Arbenz in Guatemala. Unsuccessful in militarily toppling Cuba's Castro in 1961, Kennedy did manage, through threats of a nuclear attack, to accomplish the removal of Soviet missiles from the island. The U.S. supported a military coup in Brazil and invaded the Dominican Republic in 1964 against a left-wing uprising. In Africa, the U.S. feared independence movements, and when diplomacy and foreign aid failed to win the day, force was used, as in the overthrow of Lumumba in the Congo by CIA led forces. As in the previous century, all of these enterprises were presented as exercises in exporting democracy and promoting international harmony, when the real point was to maintain stability for large U.S. enterprises and the local capitalists, whom they could control.

VIETNAM – THE FIRST CRACK IN THE FACADE

After World War II and the victory of the communist-led workers' and peasants' revolution in China, the U.S. rulers feared the ability of the Chinese to inspire the working class of neighboring countries in Asia, even Japan, to overthrow their own local capitalist exploiters and oppressors. This would remove them from the potential and actual domination and exploitation by American and European imperialists. From the point of view of the U.S. rulers this would be a disaster, one that they termed the "domino theory," with one domino after another "falling" (out of their reach).

In a concerted effort to prevent this dreaded series of events, the U.S. imperialists began by backing the French occupation of Vietnam – part of so-called French Indochina. By 1954, the U.S. was paying 80 percent of the French bill, but nonetheless, the French military was defeated in 1954 and forced to withdraw. When it became clear that at the communist leader Ho Chi Minh would garner some 80 percent of the Geneva Accord's scheduled election to lead Vietnam, the U.S. government divided the country into two halves and set up a puppet regime in the South.

In 1961, President Kennedy began sending in troops to occupy South Vietnam. The war continued for twelve more years, ended in a military and political defeat for the U.S.

and brought to a close the post-WWII era of unchallenged American military power. The dedication of the North Vietnamese population to what was really left wing nationalism, combined with the widespread anti-war sentiment of both the American public and a large number of U.S. soldiers—who began to turn their guns on their own officers (mutiny)—forced the capitulation of the once unstoppable U.S. military. However, in one sense it was not a defeat. Due to the collapse of communism in China, the unified Vietnamese nation has developed a capitalist economy ever more friendly to the U.S.

Never again would U.S. imperialism engage in a long-term all out ground war, as waged in Vietnam and Korea. The current U.S. war in Afghanistan, now dragging out for fifteen years, has been a half-hearted attempt to win on the cheap. The "Vietnam syndrome", the resistance of American civilians and soldiers—by the end of the war 25 percent were refusing to fight or even attacking their officers—led to a new era. U.S. capitalists were now forced to protect their interests through CIA operatives, air power, special operations troops, and reliance on native combatants.

TWO DECADES OF INTENSE COMPETITION

By the 1970s, the U.S. imperialists were no longer so far ahead of other global powers, but were no less determined to control access to resources, markets, and overworked and underpaid workers. Europe, Japan, and the USSR had largely recovered from the damage of WWII, and the Soviets had a comparable nuclear arsenal. Increased competition for markets from rival capitalists produced the first U.S. trade and balance of payments deficits since 1945. European banks, holding large amounts of excess dollars, demanded payment in gold. President Nixon, afraid of a huge capital drain, responded by going off the gold standard, making the dollar just another commodity on the world market. American capitalists, afraid of their potential losses, initiated an era of deregulation and government subsidies at home, causing massive service cutbacks. However, the U.S. share of world manufacturing and the power of its financial institutions began a fall that would not be reversed. In the past 40 years the dollar has fallen in value by more than 70 percent against the euro, the former German mark, and the Japanese yen.

As the Nixon administration was looking for a way out of the Vietnam War, it built ties with China, and signed the first arms control and trade agreements with the USSR. Despite Nixon's overtures to the "communist" (no longer revolutionary and now state capitalist) world, in Latin American left wing governments were not to be tolerated. In 1973 the U.S. engineered the overthrow and assassination of the elected socialist president of Chile, Salvador Allende, putting in his place the murderous military junta under Augusto Pinochet.

In other areas, the U.S. was losing its absolute power to control events. When the U.S. backed Israel militarily in 1973, there was a price to be paid. The Arab countries



of OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, began a reduction in oil output, enforced an embargo on shipments to the friends of Israel, and raised their prices. The U.S. rulers were unable to make them back down, and the rise in prices helped create an inflationary economic crisis, just as the U.S. had become dependent on foreign oil for almost half of its rapidly rising energy consumption

The overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR in 1979 caused a serious blow to U.S. influence in Asia and the Near East, causing President Carter to utter his famous doctrine: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the USA ...and will be repelled by any means necessary." All imperialists regard control over the rest of the world to be in their "vital interests" – a setup for endless inter-imperialist wars, both widespread and local.

The Soviet Union, by then another center of imperialism, was also funding leftist groups in Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. And Cuba, with Soviet support, was aiding leftists in Nicaragua and El Salvador. By this time, "leftist" or "left-leaning" only referred to groups with the goal of some socialist reforms but not of working-class revolution or rule. Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Sunnis were funding Islamic fundamentalists in the Middle East and Asia, including some groups, like Al Qaeda and the Taliban, that had been set up by the U.S. rulers to oppose the Russians in Afghanistan. Under President Reagan, elected in 1980, the U.S. again built up its military, directly opposing leftist movements in El Salvador and Nicaragua and intervening in the Lebanese civil war. Other U.S.-sponsored wars to overthrow left-leaning governments took place in Africa, including the Congo, Ghana, Namibia, and Mozambique, as well as in Indonesia, Chile, and tiny Grenada.

Symptomatic of U.S. rulers' loss of economic dominance, by 1980 the U.S. GDP per person had slipped from first to eleventh place, behind many large and small European countries.

THE SOVIET UNION IMPLODES

The next profound change in international relations came because of internal developments in the USSR, as Gorbachev ascended to power and capitalism was openly embraced, with little remaining attempt to hide it behind the mask of "communism." Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Berlin Wall came down, and the Soviet republics became independent. The change however, came from internal weaknesses and conflicts in the Soviet system, not because of any U.S. victory. But the U.S. Government, along with the IMF and the World Bank, declared capitalism to be triumphant and encouraged worldwide privatization of state enterprises, fiscal austerity, and decreased trade barriers.

Attempting to reassert U.S. military power, President Bush Sr. invaded Panama in 1989. Next he encouraged Iraq to send its troops into Kuwait, which was used as a pretext-

to assert U.S. control over Iraqi oil, with the world's second biggest known reserves at that time.

The sectarian wars in Yugoslavia, previously in the Soviet sphere of influence, from 1992-5 gave President Clinton the excuse for another military intervention, this time under the auspices of U.S.-led NATO. While killing thousands of civilians in the name of "humanitarianism," the war served as an excuse for a \$13 billion increase in U.S. military spending, building the largest U.S. army base, Camp Bondsteel, in the Balkan area and a new NATO policy allowing military action anywhere on the broad periphery of NATO's realm, such as North Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. The U.S. was now not only asserting its might ever closer to Russia's border, but was setting the stage for its upcoming wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Bush Sr's "New World Order" asserted that the U.S. could use its overwhelming military power to achieve its aims anywhere, an extension of the Monroe and Carter Doctrines.

While claiming that U.S. interventions in Kosovo and elsewhere were for humanitarian reasons, as always, the hypocrisy in this claim is underscored by the absence of U.S. intervention in Rwanda, among many other places, the scene of massive ethnic genocide in 1994, but where no strategic interests were at stake at the time. Whenever the U.S. rulers do see strategic interests, they have their government provide military, economic, and diplomatic support, as with Indonesia's slaughter of hundreds of thousands of East Timorese in 1975, and with Guatemalan dictator Rios Montt's slaughter of many tens of thousands of indigenous people in 1999 – only two of countless examples.

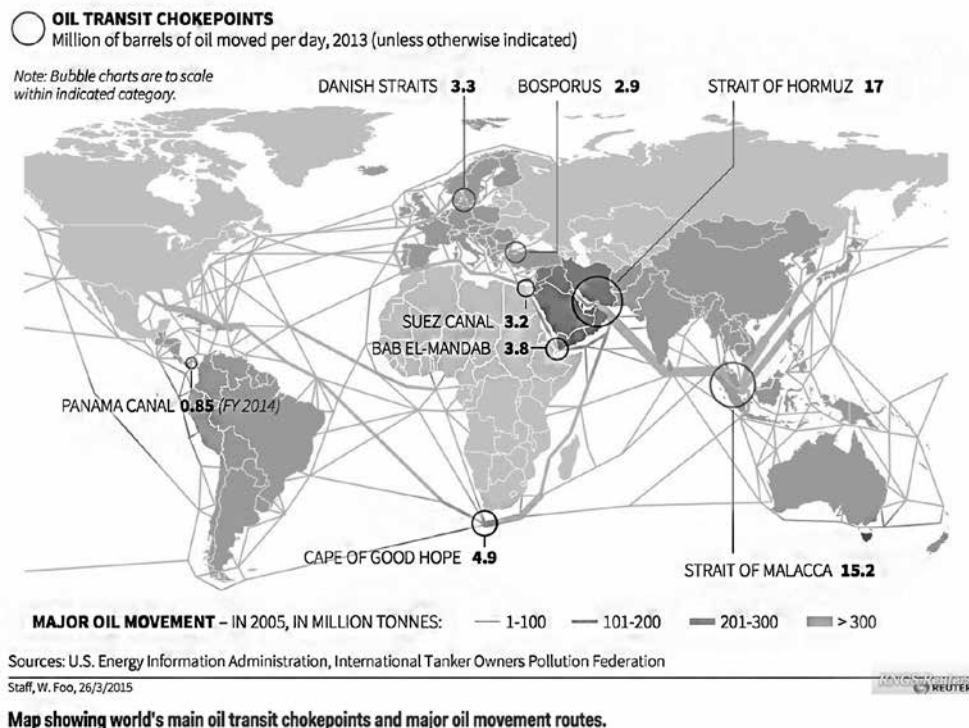
Although President Clinton made some cuts in military spending, in 2001 the U.S. still accounted for 37 percent of all worldwide military expenditures (with only 5 percent of the world's population). NATO, supposedly created to fight the USSR, continued to exist and expand eastward. It opened new markets for U.S. weapons and exports. "Free trade," which greatly advantages the rich, industrialized nations, was one of Clinton's major priorities. His administration created NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the WTO (World Trade Organization), as the IMF and WB continued to pressure countries to decrease government services to their working-class populations, divest publicly owned enterprises in favor of private ownership, and emphasize free markets, all for the benefit of imperialist investment profits.

9/11, THE CASUS BELLI FOR WIDER WARS

Even though the U.S. never got the majority of its oil from the Middle East, it had long sought to control the flow of oil to the world as a way to maintain global dominance. In 1992 the U.S. led an unsuccessful intervention in Somalia, which was, as usual, billed as a humanitarian venture to fight famine, but was in reality a push to gain a foothold in the Horn of Africa, which abuts the strait through which millions of gallons of oil pass each day. But fierce local re-

Oil transit chokepoints

About half of the world's oil production is moved by tankers on fixed maritime routes. The blockage of a chokepoint, even temporarily, can lead to substantial increases in total energy costs. Oil transit chokepoints are therefore a critical part of global energy security.



sistance forced the U.S. to withdraw.

Like the British before it, the U.S. imperialists had tried to keep Iraqi oil off the world market for their own use and profit, and sanctions after the Gulf War of 1991 had accomplished just that. However, by the late nineties, France, Russia, China, and others had made deals to develop Iraqi oil, and Saddam Hussein was threatening to demand payment in euros instead of dollars, which would have destabilized the price of oil to the U.S. This was on top of an already falling American economic position, the U.S. share of world manufacturing having fallen from 60 percent in 1950 to 25 percent in 1999.

Unable to garner public support to wage war for oil, the 9/11 attack in 2001 was a boon to the U.S. ruling class. As discussed in the bipartisan Hart-Rudman Commission Report of 1999, the government expected to be the target of some kind of terrorist action, which they predicted would mobilize patriotism in the manner of Pearl Harbor and overcome the post-Vietnam aversion to foreign wars once and for all.

"[The] United States should assume that it will be a target of terrorist attacks against its homeland....Americans will likely die on American soil, possibly in large numbers....If the stakes rise in such a fashion, one thing is likely to become vividly clear: The American people will be ready to sacrifice blood and treasure, and come together to do so, if they believe that fundamental interests are imperiled."

Now the Pentagon could invade Afghanistan, the site

of important pipelines, and Iraq, even though it had nothing to do with 9/11, to remove the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, and install friendly governments. Thinking that a massive bombing of Baghdad would do the trick and that Iraqis would rise up to welcome the U.S. military, President Bush Jr ludicrously declared victory after the initial assault. But U.S. rulers still did not feel confident that they could reinstitute a draft in order to garner a large enough army to stage a successful occupation. Unfortunately for them, more and more Iraqis rebelled against the murderous and incompetent limited American occupation, and, undeceived by Bush's "Operation Iraqi Freedom" public opposition to the war also grew at home. As of 2016, these two wars had cost \$4.7 trillion dollars, about 10,000 U.S. military casualties, and well over 500,000 deaths of Iraqis and Afghans, 70 percent of them civilian. 9/11 was also the perfect excuse for the U.S. ruling class to embark upon increasingly instituting fascism in the U.S., starting with the Patriot Act, which legalized massive government surveillance and curtailed civil liberties.

Once looked upon as a way to gain American dominance over the second biggest oil producer in the world, the Iraq war did not turn out that way. For many years oil production fell precipitously. It is now rebounding, but China is now importing more Iraqi oil than the U.S. Iraq is now China's 3rd biggest supplier, after Russia and Saudi Arabia. Even Iran is now importing Iraqi oil (<http://wognews.net>). Construction of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) natural gas pipeline, that was the real impe-

tus behind Bush's Afghanistan invasion, was finally begun in 2015 in Turkmenistan. But who will benefit remains in doubt as Afghanistan is still in a state of turmoil seventeen years later, U.S. relations with Pakistan are frayed, and India vacillates in its allegiances between the U.S. and China. As American troops in Afghanistan have been gradually withdrawn, China's capitalist rulers have increased their manpower and investments there. They are eager for its massive mineral deposits and access to Central Asian markets, all part of their One Belt, One Road expansion policy, designed to connect China to Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe through enormous infrastructure projects.

Meanwhile, the U.S. rulers imposed sanctions on Iran for the 1979 overthrow of their ally the Shah and for Iran's support of "terrorists," – i.e., forces opposing the U.S. and Israel in Lebanon and Syria. In 2006 the UN increased these sanctions due to the growth of Iranian nuclear capabilities, all of which restricted the sale of Iranian oil to Europe. Sanctions against Russia and the U.S. military assassination of Prime Minister Qaddafi and destruction of oil-rich Libya worsened this European oil deficit, while Russia began mainly selling energy resources to China. Pressure on President Obama to ease the European shortages led to the Iran deal, unpopular with many at home and with the allied Israeli and Saudi Arabian rulers and now derailed by President Trump.

For the last two years the role of the U.S. in the world oil market has drastically changed, with the US now producing enough natural gas and oil to become one of the world's largest exporters. OPEC is no longer the dominant energy producer and has lost its ability to control prices (NYT 1/29/18). However, there is uncertainty over how long shale supremacy will last, with some experts saying productivity has already been maximized. Trump is also trying to massively increase fracking, following in Obama's footsteps, and offshore oil drilling. Both these trends are sure to accelerate fossil-fuel-caused climate change by decreasing the economic urgency of increasing alternative energy use.

A WIDESPREAD MILITARY WITH LIMITED POWER

As Clinton's Secretary of State Madeline Albright said, "What's the point of having this wonderful military if you don't use it?" The U.S. military budget for 2017-8 is \$824.6 billion, larger than the next nine countries combined and accounting for 54 percent of discretionary federal spending. And Trump wants to increase it even more. All this for military exercises that are failing to guarantee the influence or economic dominance of the U.S. around the world.

Despite the fact that the U.S. now has over 1000 military installations, in over 100 countries, has deployed Special Forces to 149 countries and has over 4000 bases at home, armed might is not increasing American influence around the world. The most devastating looming defeat is in Syria. There the U.S. rulers supported uprisings against President Assad in 2011 because he failed to support their

favored Qatar-EU pipeline and instead supported one favored by the Russian oligarchs. For the last several years, Assad, backed by the rulers of Russia and Iran, has come closer to victory, at the expense of nearly half a million Syrian workers' lives, and Putin has succeeded in maintaining Russia's only Mediterranean port, on Syria's coast in Tartus.

Turkey, once a backbone of NATO and crucially located between Russia and Western Europe, is now buying a Russian weapons-missile defense system, allowing Al Qaeda and other US opponents to ship weapons to Syria, and threatening to oust U.S. planes from the military base at Incirlik. Under Trump, the U.S. is now making an increased commitment to The Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish-led group in northern Syria, that Turkey sees as a serious threat and that has already entered Syria to attack (NYT 1/22/18).

U.S.-dominated NATO has also been checkmated in its attempt to encroach upon Russia's sphere of influence in Ukraine. Although US money and influence manufactured the electoral overthrow of the Russia-friendly regime in 2014, the Russian rulers were able to recapture the region of Crimea militarily. Without it, Russia would have lost access to the Black Sea ports, a vital opening to sea trade, which was what the US government had hoped for. The new U.S.-friendly Ukrainian regime is led by the direct political descendants of the World War II Ukrainian fascists, who were allies of the Nazis and participated in their genocidal murder of Jewish workers and communists.

In Yemen, potentially a rich source of oil and strategically located across from Somalia in the Horn of Africa, the U.S.-allied President was overthrown in 2014. The U.S. and the U.K. are now supporting Saudi Arabia, which is bombing the country into a state of massive humanitarian disaster in a bid to control this nation on its southern border and prevent its coming under the wing of Iran. Nonetheless, the capital, Sanaa, remains in the hands of the Iran-friendly Shia Houthis, and the south is a stronghold of ISIS Islamic militants.

All Middle Eastern terrorist organizations, as murderous and anti-working class as they are, are responses to the inter-imperialist rivalries that have caused wanton destruction and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of workers. Thus such murderous thugs, with capitalist designs of their own, are able to attract impoverished workers and win them to carry out terrorist atrocities. It is important to recognize the similarity between imperialist war and terrorism. As one astute imperialist put it, "Terrorism is poor persons' war, while war is rich persons' terrorism."

In 2007, the U.S. military established AFRICOM, to coordinate military efforts in Africa. The first military venture was the disastrous coup in Libya in 2011. The U.S. rulers overthrew and assassinated Qaddafi, as he was threatening to sell oil to China and move away from the dollar, leaving a failed chaotic state in its wake, without any lasting advantage to the West. In order to garner popular support for ventures intended to benefit only the U.S. imperialist

rulers, the mostly hidden U.S. wars in Africa are fought in the name of “counter-terrorism.” Until recently, there were 46 military conducting 3,500 exercises and military engagements throughout Africa per year, an average of 10 per day, but the present administration is planning to draw down its Africa presence.

According to the Associated Press, “In the last few years, the U.S. has been ramping up its military operations throughout Latin America in the most expensive initiative there since the Cold War.” U.S. troops have been involved in the attempted coup against Chavez in 2002, the 2009 coup in Honduras, and in Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Columbia (<http://www.coha.org/u-s-military-presence-in-latin-america-increasing/>). Although advertised as counter-terrorism or interference with drug trafficking, all military ventures are located in areas of oil or water reserves or in countries with left-leaning governments.

THE MILITARY COMPETITION

The Chinese rulers’ military budget grew an average of 8.5 percent a year from 2007-2016 and shows no sign of declining, although it is only one fourth that of the US. China is not only now a major exporter of arms around the world, but is surpassing the US in defense technology, research, and education. China, with four times the US population, has 2.3 million active duty soldiers, compared to 1.4 million in the US. It has a navy and air force that are not only growing but are new and modern and equipped with missiles more advanced than the US’s (Business Insider, 3/30/2016). In 2017, China completed its first overseas military base, a naval installation in Djibouti, just four miles from the hub of AFRICOM. In the realm of cyber warfare, China has made staggering progress in the last two years. Its Strategic Support Force (SSF) is now overtaking the US in hacking, espionage, and the ability to disable the American military machine. In a more conventional military vein, China’s rulers are aggressively asserting dominance over the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of trade passes every year and under which lie oil and minerals. The capitalists of the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan all have rival claims, but China’s rulers did not flinch when the US sent two carrier groups to the region in 2014.

China’s rulers, for the time being, are gaining power not by militarily invading other countries, but rather by diplomacy and economic investment. The use of their military is for now held in reserve, until needed. Many might see the Chinese buildup as purely defensive, like North Korea’s nuclear arms, against a US global threat, which is blatantly obvious. But what is said to be defensive or mainly humanitarian today can be offensive tomorrow, and as the economic and political dominance of Chinese capitalists increases, we can expect their growing arsenal will be used for imperialist offense as much as defense.

For the last five years, Russia’s rulers have also been committed to a huge military buildup, with increases in

defense spending planned for each year through 2020. In addition to the 2009 war in Georgia, they have resumed bomber and naval patrols in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Like the US imperialists, those of Russia face the problem of recruiting a large enough army or keeping up with the technological prowess of the Chinese. The Soviet military is also rushing to build air and radar bases on remote Arctic islands as it pushes ahead with a claim to almost half a million square miles of the Arctic, now estimated to hold about 22 percent of the world’s undiscovered oil and gas (Zero Hedge, 1/30/2017). The Russian government is also engaging militarily with Africa, as well as economically, with large number of arms exports. Sudan’s President Omar al-Bashir recently visited Putin to request protection from US aggression. Most important for the US imperialists, Putin is supporting Assad in Syria, which appears to be leading towards a victory empowering them and their ally Iran. Again, Russian military might looks more like a defense against US and NATO imperialist aggression, but, as with China, defense can change to offense overnight. In addition, the Russian military is more than the Chinese already deeply engaged in foreign wars like Syria, where it risks encounters with the U.S. forces on the same terrain.

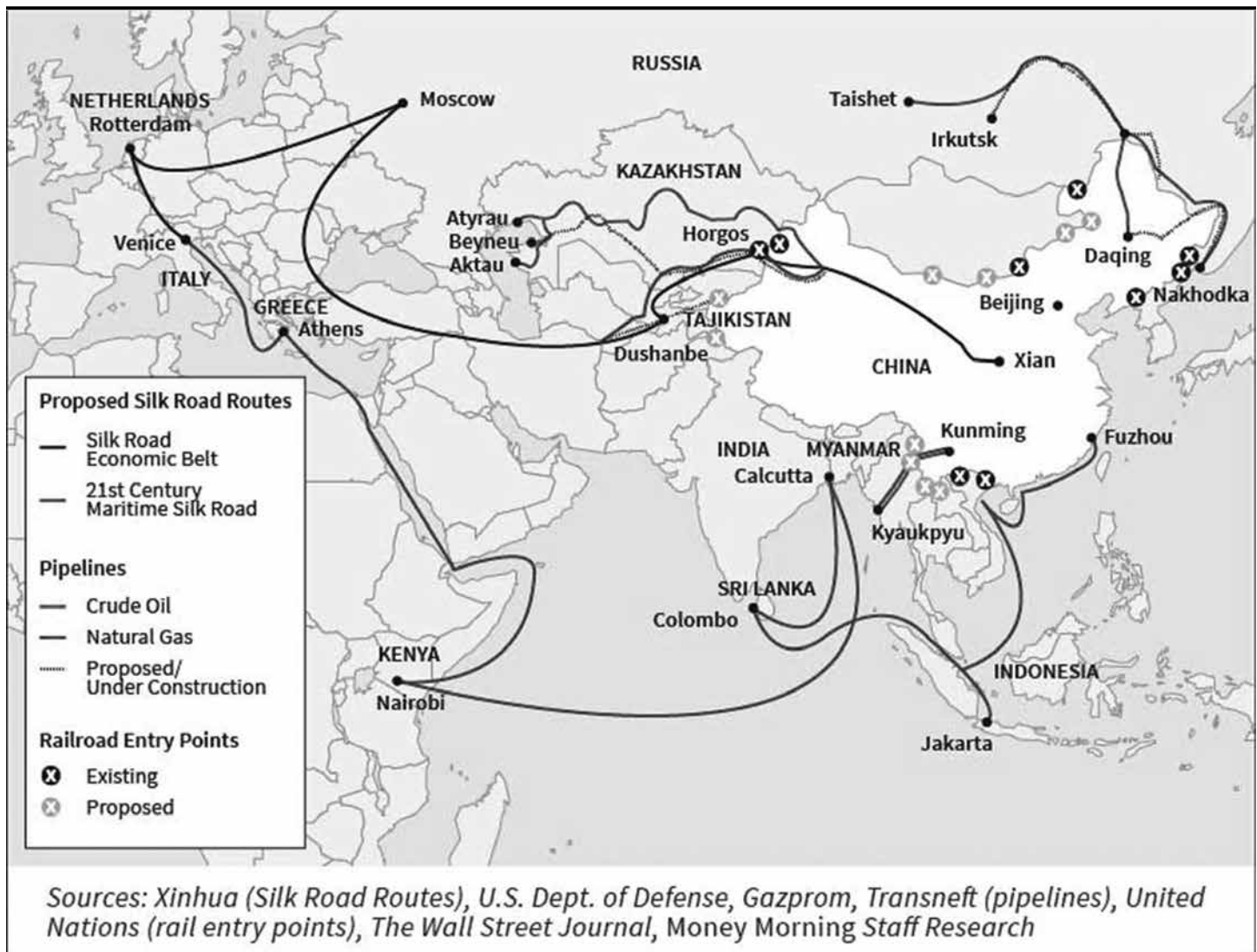
The growing military and economic might of Russia and China has led Defense Secretary Mattis to switch the emphasis of the U.S. military from fighting terrorism to preparing for conflict with Russia and/or China (NYT 1/19/18). Regardless of who is the aggressor and who the defender in such conflicts, we should be clear that all these imperialist armies serve only the profit motive of their capitalist ruling classes, and that the interests of ALL workers lie in banding together internationally to oppose all such wars in which we are made to put on a boss’s uniform and fight under a boss’s flag (it doesn’t matter which boss) to kill other workers or be killed by them.

THE U.S. IS IN ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE ECONOMIC DECLINE

By 2016, the U.S. share of world production had fallen to 16 percent, from 22 percent in 1991 and about 50 percent after World War II. China surpassed the U.S. in 2016 with 18 percent of world production. The IMF predicts that by 2021, the U.S. will fall to 15 percent and China rise to 20 percent. Nonetheless, the U.S. persists on a path of massive military spending, recently increased by President Trump, in a doomed attempt to maintain world hegemony and adding further downward pressure on economic production and government services.

In the 1990’s, the BRICS powers—Russia, Brazil, India, South Africa and China—began to assert their own interests and to challenge the U.S. and European capitalists for the right to set trade rules and to claim territorial sovereignty over parts of the world far from their own boundaries. But most importantly, China is in the process of building a whole new monetary system to replace the U.S. and the dollar as the arbiters of the world economy. The Asian





Infrastructure Investment Bank, joined by 57 countries, is taking on the U.S. in trade, investment, and industrial development, primarily in Asia, but even in Europe and South America. The Chinese renminbi was actually anointed as a global reserve currency in 2015, putting it in an elite category with the dollar, the euro, the pound and the yen. China's state-owned development bank has surpassed the World Bank in international lending (Counter Punch, 12/7/2015).

At the heart of China's \$8 trillion One Belt, One Road (OBOR) strategy lies the creation of an economic land corridor that includes countries on the original Silk Road through Central Asia, West Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as a maritime road that links China's port facilities with the African coast, extending up through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean. The project aims to redirect the country's domestic overcapacity and capital for regional infrastructure development to improve trade and relations within East Asian, Central Asian, and European countries. China's ultimate goal is to extend the initiative to Africa and Latin America.

Since 2000, China has emerged as Africa's largest trading partner and a major source of investment and infra-

structure finance as well, building strategic deep-water ports and railway networks. Their investment in such huge infrastructure projects is in exchange for access to raw materials. One example is the \$6 billion deal recently negotiated with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Chinese government will build new roads, railway lines, hospitals, and schools and in return have access to one of the world's largest deposits of copper and cobalt for the next 20 years. China's capitalists control 80 percent of Sudan's oil, and have invested billions of dollars in the country's infrastructure. This led the U.S. imperialists to foster rebellions in the south, resulting in widespread death and famine, but little advantage to themselves.

Another region China is entering is South America, where the U.S. has traditionally held exclusive sway. At one time they supported only the left-leaning governments in Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador, but now that Venezuela is nearly bankrupt and other leftist regimes removed, China is allying with business-friendly governments. There are free trade agreements with Chile, Peru, and Costa Rica, arms sales, satellite tracking stations, and exports of copper, iron, and oil (The Economist, 11/17/2016).

Lest there be any idea that China's rulers' motives are to improve the lives of the workers of the world, one need only examine their actions in Myanmar. This huge country contiguous to China is desired as a source of energy and access to the Indian Ocean. The giant Shwe oil and gas pipeline and a crude oil pipeline from the Middle East and Africa are open or under construction to bring energy to south-west China. Also planned were large hydroelectric dams in the north and a copper mine, which would have displaced thousands of people but were stopped due to massive protests (The Huffington Post, 6/14/2015). Not so fortunate are the Rohingya Muslim minority on the coast where the Chinese wish to build a port and a huge industrial park. The whipping up of anti-Muslim racism has allowed the cruel expulsion, rape or murder of most of the population in order to make way for these Chinese-funded projects (The Huffington Post, 9/15/2017).

The Russian economy had been doing poorly for the last few years due to sanctions and low oil prices, but rising oil prices and increased consumer demand have led to a predicted 3 percent growth this year. (NYT, 1/18/2018). The Russian government is also counterbalancing the NATO push for influence on its border by making large deals in Eastern Europe, such as a \$12.2 billion nuclear reactor in Hungary and heavy investments in Bulgaria². Ties with Iran are also increasing. In addition to the alliance with Syria's President Assad, the Russian government is currently helping build two new nuclear reactors on the Iranian gulf coast and is providing an anti-aircraft system. Thus both the U.S. and Iranian rulers may be losing some of their great influence in the Middle East to Russia's oligarchs, though the Soviets/Russians had not been active there for 50 years³.

The U.S., meanwhile, ranks fourth in the world among advanced industrial nations for economic inequality, with 1 percent of the population having as much wealth as the other 99 percent. Mass incarceration, rampant racism, the worst health and health care in the industrialized world, and high poverty and low wages led to the election of Trump. When his inept anti-working class administration fails to solve any of these problems (though no capitalist government could), worsening conditions will lead to mass discontent, if not rebellion.

HOW WILL THE LOSS OF AMERICAN DOMINANCE UNFOLD?

There is no shortage of scenarios put forward by a variety of pundits of how the U.S. decline relative to China will go down, and most see the axes of power and wealth crossing by 2030. Historian and journalist Alfred McCoy, in his book *In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of U.S. Global Power*, sees the strain of ties with military allies such as Turkey, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Arab regimes, and the loss of confidence from Germany and South Korea, as critical, along with the rise of China

and the growing educational gap between China and the U.S. Possible scenarios he discusses include

- Economic pressures forcing the U.S. to pull back from overseas military commitments and causing rising clashes at home;
- Iran and Russia coming to control half of the world's natural gas and China and others outpacing the U.S. in alternative energies;
- The U.S. navy being unable to control oil in the Persian Gulf after Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, and others form a new Persian Gulf Alliance and oil prices soar;
- China attains victory by disrupting the American military machine with cyberwarfare; or
- Actual large scale military conflict breaks out.

In All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the 21st Century and the Future of American Power, by Thomas J. Wright of the Brookings Institution, a more gradual relative decline of U.S. might is seen, with a retreat to becoming a regional power only in the Americas. According to economist Jeffrey Sachs from Columbia University, the U.S. will bankrupt itself if it continues over-investment in a bloated military and invites an arms race with China (Boston Globe, 10/30/16).

U.S. imperialism—militarily, economically, and technologically—is in a declining position versus that of China and faces increased threats from Russia's imperialists. We can be sure that the U.S. government will continue to use its military might in ongoing smaller wars, but it is certain to end up sooner or later in major direct conflict with China or Russia, or even possibly with smaller nations such as Iran. A major problem for the U.S. ruling class, and possibly for those of other nations, is that the millions of workers required by the military to carry out these wars may be unwilling to do so. There is also no way to know whether, when pushed to the wall, the U.S. government might resort to nuclear weapons, possibly on a first strike basis. All of this may occur before climate change has destroyed much of the planet.

For the working class of the world there is no side to root for in this battle between capitalist/imperialist empires. The challenge for communists is to build common cause among workers throughout the world, and to fight the ideas that allow workers to be fooled into supporting their local ruling classes. Paramount among these deceptive ideas is racism. In the U.S., Trump openly calls Africa and Haiti "shitholes" and supports white supremacists, while various East and West European leaders, in imitation of the world's most vicious and determined racists of the U.S. ruling class, build nationalist anti-immigrant racism. All capitalist nations, big and small, build nationalism (patriotism) to preach loyalty to their own ruling class. Internally, racism of various sorts is used to divide workers and diminish the class war against exploitation, deprivation, and oppression. Only by building a strong multiracial international movement will we be able to win millions and ➤

2 <http://www.newsweek.com/vladimir-putin-russia-white-house-eastern-europe-foreign-policy-bulgaria-509478>

3 <https://theconversation.com/russia-and-irans-growing-cooperation-hints-at-a-new-middle-east-75181>

millions to understand that capitalism makes inter-imperialist war – and the deaths of millions and/or destruction of the planet – inevitable.

THE GROWTH OF INTERNATIONAL ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE

Defiant workers in revolt all over the planet show us that such an international workers' movement against imperialist war, and for an internationalist revolution to build a new communist world in the ruins of the old, is not merely a dream but an outcome we can pursue tomorrow—if we can only construct a new international communist party—out of the struggles of today. Global labor studies like Beverly Silver's *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (2003) and Manny Ness's *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class* (2015) are full of examples of the upsurge in global labor protest against ALL the many old and new players in the imperialist 'Great Game,' especially the "wave" of global protest beginning around 2010. And it IS workers who are at the heart of most social protest, just as it was striking textile workers who set off the Arab Spring in Egypt.

In China itself, the capitalist state allows foreign multinationals to exploit low-wage labor in Special Economic Zones like Guangdong Province. Even as China is becoming imperialist itself, it is still allowing workers in China to be exploited by other imperialists: Yue Yuen, the huge Taiwanese shoe manufacturer, or Apple with its Taiwanese contractor, the manufacturer Foxconn. Foxconn underwent strikes and protests in 2010, as did a large Guangdong Honda parts factory in the same year; and in 2014 Yue Yuen (the world's largest manufacturer of athletic shoes) saw the largest strike ever at a private enterprise in China, which shut down the plants for eleven days and confronted massed police in street protests. Workers in China are using internet technology—the very tools of capitalist globalization—to organize. With a communist party (and there are signs of its emergence in China: (see <https://bit.ly/2T5nC6S>), these workers could quickly see that they were striking against not one boss or one government but against a whole world-system of imperialist corporations backed by state power, and thus that they should seek out international solidarity with workers elsewhere in that system.

Similar strikes against imperialist firms, like the South African platinum miners' wildcat strike against Lonmin's mines at Marikana in 2012, which led to the deadly police "Marikana Massacre" (in which the new South African president Cyril Ramaphosa was implicated as a Lonmin director), have the same potential for international solidarity and a global working-class understanding of imperialism. In this case the miners and their allies in other unions like NUMSA, the metalworkers' union which is the largest in Africa, and in universities like the University of Johannesburg, actively sought international solidarity and found it in several rallies in cities like London, New York and San

Francisco. Marikana also led to NUMSA and others breaking away from the ruling Tripartite Alliance that governs South Africa and forming a new labor federation, SAFTU. NUMSA and SAFTU have also begun the project of forming a new workers' party. The Marikana revolt and its aftermath are an example of our potential as a global working class to transform scattered revolts into experiments with new workers' organizations. Communist organizing on a global scale can take that potential one step further toward a new revolutionary movement.

In India, uprisings like the Maruti-Suzuki strike of 2017 also sought international solidarity both with other workers and with allies among students and intellectuals. And in Mexico, the long and still-enduring struggles of the teachers in Oaxaca hit a new high point of international support, as did international support for the 43 disappeared teacher-trainees in Ayotzinapa. Examples—like international solidarity with the Haitian struggle against the UN for compensation after the cholera epidemic—could be multiplied. The general picture that emerges from these global labor studies is that communists have every reason to expect a strong response by rebellious workers around the world to our call to take down not just individual or national capitalists but the whole imperialist system.

Our task is to unite in struggle for a worker-run world, a communist world, before the catastrophe of another global war happens. It will probably be the specter of war and economic chaos that builds mass rebellion beyond the level of isolated strikes and uprisings, and our job is to become ready to lead that movement towards eradicating this capitalist system, once and for all, around the world.✪









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