

# THE COMMUNIST SUMMER 2001 ISSUE

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## Comments and Struggle

### Political Economy

The following is some criticism of the "Political Economy" article that appeared in the November 1999 Communist (originally published as a pamphlet).

On page 46 it reads, "The job facing PLP is to establish that an international working class can take and hold state power and organize production directly-that is, without wage labor, material incentives or profits." This clearly implies that the working class of the USSR did not organize production with a motive force having nothing to do with profits. But the whole world knew that the Bolsheviks did precisely that in all of the industries which they nationalized in the name of the Soviet working class.

Writing in 1952 in the pamphlet Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, page 86, Joseph Stalin commented on this question: "Hence the aim of capitalist production is profit making.... Man and his needs disappear from its field of vision.

"The aim of socialist production is not profit, but man and his needs, that is, the satisfaction of his material and cultural requirements." As is stated in Comrade Stalin's "Remarks," the aim of socialist production is "the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society.

"...Consequently, maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society is the aim of socialist production; continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques is the means for the achievement of the aim.

"Such is the basic law of socialism." (Italics are mine.)

Comrade Stalin also said that in the planned production of the USSR the stress was on the production of the means of production, not on consumer goods, because the means of production were much more essential to the needs of the nation's working class. This stress was maintained despite the fact that the production of consumer goods would have been much more profitable, and therefore would have been predominant in any country in which production for profit ruled the roost.

If this had not been true, the USSR could never have escaped the effects of the worldwide capitalist

crisis beginning in 1929 which, in fact, it did. The socialist USSR was the only major country in the world not to suffer from massive unemployment during that crisis.

Furthermore, had this not been true the world's capitalists would have had nothing to fear from the USSR. But they were in fact terrified enough to launch the most massive invasion of another country in world history to try to smash the Soviets militarily.

Unquestionably we must uncover and criticize the errors made by the old communist movement, especially in the USSR, so a new movement, avoiding repetition of their mistakes, can be built. But in doing this we must be sure to single out real mistakes. Let's not "throw out the baby with the bath-water."

A second question: the article labels almost every form of capitalist rapaciousness as another example of "primitive accumulation." This includes the massive theft of socialist workers' and peasants' property instituted by the capitalists of the entire formerly socialist world as well as the theft of considerable native capitalists' property in all the European countries invaded by the fascist powers.

There are two problems here. Firstly, the term "primitive accumulation" coined by Marx (see *Capital*, Volume I, Part VIII, pages 794-end) has a precise meaning which the article's misuse totally clouds. Marx said in part:

"We have seen how money is changed into capital; how through capital surplus-value is made, and from surplus-value more capital. But the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus value; surplus value presupposes capitalistic production; capitalistic production presupposes the pre-existence of considerable masses of capital and of labor power in the hands of producers of commodities. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn in a vicious circle, out of which we can only get by supposing primitive accumulation (previous accumulation of Adam Smith) preceding capitalistic accumulation: an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production, but its starting point....It appears as primitive, because it forms the pre-historic stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it."

Thus primitive accumulation had two aspects. The first involved the accumulation of the money which would be turned into capital. The would-be capitalists often achieved this through outright theft. Thus the Spanish and Portuguese stole gold from the Native American peoples in South and Central America and the British in turn stole it from them via open piracy on the high seas. The second aspect involved the creation of the needed working class out of the feudal peasantry. This involved forcing the peasants off the land and into the newly emergent factories. In both aspects of this process Marx points out that "it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part." And further: "As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic."

The second problem is the error of labeling everything primitive accumulation makes it impossible to understand what this process really was, and masks the fact that the deepening general crisis of capitalism has resulted in the emergence of totally new methods of thievery engineered by the capitalists.

*A Comrade*

## Cult of Personality

To the Editor:

The question of the "cult of personality" around Joseph Stalin is often raised. Stalin had an equivocal response to the cult. There are many examples in Stalin's collected works criticizing the cult around him, and even telling an interviewer it could be fostered by self-seeking individuals to fool others. Some anti-communist sources, such as Medvedev's *Let History Judge*, have lists of these quotations.

The earliest clear example of when this cult of Stalin began seems to be in the December 1929 issue of *Pravda* on the occasion of Stalin's 50th birthday in an article by Karl Radek. Radek was one of those in and around the Bolshevik leadership who was politically opposed to Stalin! (This, at least, is Stephen Cohen's conclusion in his very anti-communist and hostile book on Bukharin.)

However, the cult, as we know it, became institutionalized and Stalin - when asked about it or sometimes when confronted by it - did not struggle against it politically, only personally. Why did it come about? A few thoughts:

(1) The cult of Lenin. After Lenin's death the Bolshevik leadership allowed a cult to grow up around him. Nothing Lenin wrote was ever called "incorrect." He had, apparently, made no mistakes. True, there are a few examples of Bolshevik leaders criticizing Lenin's last works-works in which he takes a very right-wing line-as products of his illness. But these were private remarks, never made public.

The cult around Lenin included the famous Mausoleum with Lenin's mummy (still there), along with all the idealized busts, statues, paintings, buttons and pins, and general religious-type paraphernalia. Clearly this all had a bad effect. The poem, *The Carpet Weavers Of Kuyan-Bulak Honor Lenin* by the great communist poet Bertholt Brecht on Lenin's memorial is a counter all this stuff (see poem ).

(2) The cult of Marx. Lenin fought against revisionist Marxists who wished to water down Marx's revolutionary content (we are still fighting this battle today, and in addition there are revisionists of Lenin's and Stalin's legacy too). But Lenin never criticized Marx! To Lenin, in these polemical debates-which, themselves, were absolutely crucial to the development of Marxism-Leninism and the communist movement-Marx never did or said anything wrong. Like the followers of the "cult of Lenin," Lenin in effect promoted a "cult of Marx."

Of course, Lenin stressed the revolutionary aspect of Marx's writings. Later promoters of the cult of Lenin, like Khrushchev and Brezhnev, stressed the NON-revolutionary, NON-communist aspects of Lenin's work. All the two- and three-volume editions of Lenin's works published under Khrushchev, Brezhnev & Co. contained Lenin's "Last Works," in which he attacked the idea of promoting "socialist ideas in the countryside," and argued for allowing capitalist relations and culture to develop in a way worthy of the right-wing Mensheviks.

Not incidentally, these same "Last Works" include the attack on Stalin as "too rude." Whether Stalin was "rude" or not - and after Lenin's death he read this letter aloud at a Party Conference and admitted he was rude - Lenin wrote this and other works under the influence of his terminal illness, when he had been bedridden and away from political work for months. These writings do not represent Lenin's revolutionary legacy. (It's important to note that Lenin criticized not only Stalin but also every single member of the Bolshevik leadership, including Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky).

So the non-critical attitude towards Marx (and Engels) promoted a non-critical attitude generally. Marx/Engels never did work out "how to get there from here," how to create a communist society

once the working class had conquered State power. Some of the things they DID write, like Critique of the Gotha Program, led towards developing capitalist relations, towards the two-stage theory of communism, which we in PLP have rejected.

The non-critical attitude towards Marx led to the one towards Lenin. And that led to the one towards Stalin and Mao - and from there to similar cults around Kim Il Sung, Ceausescu, Enver Hoxha, Gus Hall, and Bob Avakian, to name just a few of the phony "communist" leaders! - not to mention Trotsky, of course, around whom his followers have an absolute cult, greater in fact than that around any other figure (see below).

Last year at the Marxist Literary Group a Trotskyist was criticizing a presentation by a PL'er by quoting Lenin's State and Revolution. That comrade pointed out that State and Revolution contains a serious anarchist error, in that it never mentions the role of the party at all, much less gives it the emphasis it deserves.

The Trotskyist retorted, "What? Lenin never mentions the role of the Party? How about What Is To Be Done?" Our comrade replied: "Yes, but not in State and Revolution. Lenin had inconsistencies. It is an error not to recognize them." The Trotskyist was speechless. After all, the "cult of Lenin" sustains the "cult of Trotsky."

## **The Carpet Weavers Of Kuyan-Bulak Honor Lenin**

**By Berthold Brecht**

1

Often and copiously honor has been done to

Comrade Lenin. There are busts and statues.

Cities are called after him, and children.

Speeches are made in many languages

There are meetings and demonstrations

From Shanghai to Chicago in Lenin's honor.

But this is how he was honored by

The carpet weavers of Kuyan-Bulak

A little township in southern Turkestan.

Every evening there twenty carpet weavers

Shaking with fever rise from their primitive looms.

Fever is rife: the railway station

Is full of the hum of mosquitoes, a thick cloud

That rises from the swamp behind the old camels' graveyard.  
But the railway train which  
Every two weeks brings water and smoke, brings  
The news also one day  
That the day approaches for honoring  
Comrade Lenin.  
And the people of Kuyan-Bulak  
Carpet weavers, poor people  
Decide that in their township too  
Comrade Lenin's Plaster bust shall be put up.  
Then, as the collection is made for the bust  
They all stand  
Shaking with fever and offer  
Their hard-earned kopeks with trembling hands.  
And the Red Army man Stepa Gamalev, who  
Carefully counts and minutely watches  
Sees how ready they are to honor Lenin,  
And he is glad  
But he also sees their unsteady hands  
And he suddenly proposes  
That the money for the bust be used to buy petroleum  
To be poured on the swamp behind the camels' graveyard  
Where the mosquitoes breed that carry  
The fever germ.  
And so to fight the fever at Kuyan-Bulak, thus  
Honoring the dead but

Never to be forgotten

Comrade Lenin.

They resolved to do this.

On the day of the ceremony they carried

Their dented buckets filled with black petroleum

One after the other

And poured it over the swamp.

So they helped themselves by honoring Lenin, and

Honored him by helping themselves, and thus

Had understood him well.

2

We have heard how the people of Kuyan-Bulak

Honored Lenin. When in the evening

The petroleum had been bought and poured on the swamp

A man rose at the meeting, demanding

That a plaque be affixed on the railway station

Recording these events and containing

Precise details too of their altered plan, the exchange of

The bust for Lenin for a barrel of fever-destroying oil.

And all this in honor of Lenin.

And they did this as well

And put up the plaque.

## **Days Of Rebellion: A Cincinnati Journal**

(Following are impressions of a member of a multi-racial PLP group who went to Cincinnati during the recent rebellion there.)

The first woman I met downtown told me how the police had killed her son 10 years ago. He was a drug dealer, which, she readily volunteered, was wrong. They arrested him. He swallowed the drugs.

They watched him for eight hours as he got sicker and sicker. Finally they released him, with no charges, after it was too late to get any medical help. He died immediately. This was not recorded as a police murder.

This same woman told me about her other son, 17. He makes A's and B's in school, but does no homework. He's not learning anything — yet another way they destroy our youth. They pass them on in school, but allow education to pass our children by. The average 12th-grade black or Latin student reads and does math at the same level as the average 8th-grade white student. It used to be illegal for slaves to learn to read. Nowadays, they accomplish a similar objective by other means. They've even convinced young people they're doing them a favor when they demand little of them in school. While not as dramatic as racist police murder, the racist school system also destroys youth.

Next I spoke to a 20-something dread-locked man who was quite interested in what I had to say. At first he looked skeptical. I told him we'd come from Chicago to get a first-hand look at what had happened. I said in the '60s there were lots of rebellions and as a result the ruling class developed policies to prevent them. At first they pumped lots of money into the neighborhoods, but that ended a few years later. They also pumped lots of drugs; that's still going on. Recently, they've stepped up police terror, especially in neighborhoods they want to yuppify. I paused. "Go on," he urged, "you're making a lot of sense."

He told me he himself was not involved in the rebellion but knew many others who were. He wanted to know all about the May Day march: what would happen there, how would people from Cincinnati get there, how much would it cost. He took a stack of fliers for his friends and we exchanged phone numbers. He thanked us for coming.

The rebellion in Cincinnati was the opposite of what the bosses expected from police terror. They wanted people to be too afraid to fight back. But people were more angry than afraid.

The next woman I spoke with had her baby with her. She told me the night before she'd gone to buy pampers and ended up outside at 8:15, just past curfew. She said a bunch of squad cars swarmed around her and cops flew out with guns drawn. She raised her hands with the pampers in one hand. They let her go, but she said she'd never been so scared in her whole life. This is what it means to live in a police state.

The next person told me, "They trashed my neighborhood. I don't know why they had to do that." On the other hand, she understood the anger the cops provoked. She's a nurse who often must work in white neighborhoods where the police always stop her. She was one of many people who pointed out that Cincinnati is number seven on the list of most segregated cities. She mentioned that on Tuesdays people put their trash cans out front for pick-up. When she said the block was "trashed," she really meant it! Although she didn't condone violence, we had an interesting discussion about the violence of capitalism. As a nurse, she saw people murdered every day because they don't have access to health care. But no one calls it murder and no one is held accountable for it. It's one of many ways the capitalists kill with impunity.

We stopped for lunch at a chili place with bad food. Most restaurants were closed. While waiting, we overheard a white woman talking to a black man about what had been going on. She described how two men had approached her in a threatening way, "white bitch," this and that. When talking to them failed, she ran, and sat in her car shaking for a while. She told the story in a matter-of-fact, non-racist way. She didn't rant and rave or go off on a racist tangent. When we started talking to her about communism and May Day, she politely but firmly disagreed. Nevertheless, she told the waitress our lunch was "on her." Class struggle has a profound effect on people, even those involved only



peripherally.

Then we went to the "Over the Rhine" neighborhood, site of the earlier rebellions. Although it was only 5:00 PM, people were already hurrying to take care of all their business before the 8 p.m. curfew. The previous night, 100 had been arrested for breaking curfew. "I'm a grown woman, why do I have to have a curfew? I didn't do anything wrong" was a common sentiment.

I met an older man who had not participated in the rebellions, but was glad they happened. He was one of the people who said that until then, no one had paid any attention to the racist police violence. He had been an eyewitness to Timothy Thomas' murder. "They had him cornered," he said, "all they had to do was wait, or shoot up in the air."

Lots of people wanted to go to May Day. Before we left Cincinnati, 40 people had given us their phone numbers and 150 had bought CHALLENGE and taken extra fliers. We encountered no anti-communism and only a smidgen of nationalism. The overwhelming sentiment was against the system. No one thought the solution was just to "get rid of this one bad cop," although there was righteous anger over the fact that this particular murderer was currently on paid leave.

Many were aggressively critical of the few incidents of anger aimed at white people. A young Arab couple who own a beeper store which had its windows broken were unhappy they'd been a target, but reported that their customers were very supportive and critical of those who'd attacked the store. I felt completely safe and welcomed in "Over the Rhine," even though I was a total stranger and white.

The only mildly unpleasant encounter was with a totally drunk/high man who kept getting in my face and asking me for money. He was really disgusting and to prove it, he took his teeth out! The next day, there he was on the front page of the paper being arrested for curfew violation. No one should have been arrested, of course, but I had to laugh when I saw his face.

Saturday was the funeral. The police said they would stay away. As we drove into town, we saw tons of cops in riot gear, equipped with rifles and rubber bullets, ready for action. Initially the scene outside the church was one of quiet anger. One more young black man deprived of his life at the hands of the racist police. The tip of the iceberg of all the men and women destroyed by capitalism through prison, drugs, unemployment, hospitals, wars, poverty, schools — almost every aspect of life.

But there was the other side to it. A portion of the Cincinnati working class had said "enough!" They'd marched on City Hall. They'd fought the police. They'd started thinking about what it would take to bring about permanent change. A man told me he'd been part of a group of ministers and other middle class people who tried to protect the rebels from the police by encouraging them to stop. He said he realized he was wrong when a youth told him, "We die for drugs, we die for clothes, now we'll die for freedom." They didn't need protection. They knew what they were doing. They needed support.

A woman brought a bunch of poster boards and encouraged everyone to make signs. "We're tired of crooked cops killing blacks. Fuck the police." "Shoot back." "Listen to the Youth." "Time for Our Curfew to end, Time for the Pigs' Curfew to start." "Bush is part of this too, he belongs with the cops."

At the end of the block, some drummers attracted a big crowd. Then a Chicago PLP member started chanting on the bullhorn, to the beat of the drums: "Racist cops have got to go!" Before we knew it, more and more people gathered around her. She passed the bullhorn around. A woman spoke in favor of breaking the curfew. She called on everyone to gather in Washington Park at 8 p.m. Another woman spoke eloquently about the need to stop the police from killing our sons. We chanted, "we

ready, we ready, we ready, " and "Racist cops you can't hide, we charge you with genocide."

Our member gave an impassioned speech about the need to end the whole racist capitalist system and march on May Day. Applause, more chanting, more speeches. Not a "black leader" in sight (they were all in the church and in front of the TV cameras). Just lots of black people giving leadership to the struggle.

Someone suggested we march. A guy from the NAACP said a march would be too provocative. He was soundly booed. Some people started off. Patricia, who'd begun the rally off, wasn't sure about marching, wasn't sure about her leadership. Someone else stepped forward and spoke on the bullhorn and we were marching. Everyone on the street followed. As we marched, we picked up more people. Cars honked in support. We had a taste of power. For a short time, the streets belonged to us. Then we hit upon reality in the form of dozens of cops, rifles pointed at us, blocking us from going further.

We retreated to Washington Park, where the rallying continued. Many people said what they had to say. There were disagreements. There was passion. Some favored violence, others didn't. Some saw white people as the enemy, others saw them as allies. Some wanted to try to make the police more "civilized," others said that would never happen under capitalism. Eventually, the crowd thinned. This was a day none of us would ever forget. Sometimes changes happen slowly, and sometimes quickly. This week in Cincinnati was one of the fast ones.

## **1892 Homestead Steel Strike: By Land and By Sea, Armed Workers Run the Show**

"Pennsylvania can hardly appreciate the actual communism of these people," declared militia commander General Snowden. "They believe the mills are theirs quite as much as Carnegie's."

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In 1892 one of the bloodiest struggles in U.S. labor history erupted when 3,800 steel workers shut down the Carnegie Works at Homestead, Pennsylvania, and fought a land and sea battle against thousands of company guards, Pinkerton agents, deputy sheriffs and State militia, all serving the most powerful steel boss on the continent.

The heart of the strike was conducted by the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, one of the strongest unions the country had seen up to that point. Of 3,800 workers, only about 900 were in the union. These were the highly-skilled in the rolling mills and the puddling furnaces. They were working under a three-year contract, signed in 1889 after a victorious strike defeated Carnegie's attempts to smash the union.

The contract provided that union committees in each department apportion the work, regulate the turns, alter the machinery, limit the product per worker, fix the portion of scrap used in running a furnace, prohibit the use of brick and fire clay by the puddlers, and set a wage minimum of \$25 per ton of steel billets. Having failed to break this contract in '89, Carnegie grew even more determined to break the union altogether when the contract expired June 30, 1892. Said a Carnegie partner, "The Amalgamated placed a tax on improvements, therefore the Amalgamated had to go."1

Carnegie wrote to his notorious anti-union manager Henry Clay Frick that, "As the vast majority of our employees are Non-Union, the Firm has decided that the minority must give place to the majority.

These works, therefore, will be necessarily non-union after the expiration of the present agreement."<sup>2</sup>

Frick presented the union with a new scale which cut wages an average of 22%. A heater's helper's tonnage rate would go down from \$3 to \$2.13 a hundred tons; others who earned \$179.55 a month would now receive \$84.04.3 He gave them until June 24 to accept. Meanwhile, he stepped up preparations to crush an anticipated strike by force.

First, he stocked up by increasing production to record levels. Then he surrounded the mill with a great fence, 12 feet high and three miles long, topped with three strands of barbed wire and 3-inch holes bored at shoulder height every 25 feet. The plant had become an armed fortress and was dubbed "Fort Frick." A popular ditty entitled, "The Fort That Frick Built," put it this way:

There stands today with great pretense

Enclosed within a whitewashed fence

A wondrous change of great import

The mills transformed into a fort.

Then Frick hired the Pinkerton Agency, strike-breaking specialists, to supply 300 guards to protect the plant. The Agency, with a force of 2,000 active agents and 30,000 reservists, surpassed the total standing army of the U.S.! The 300 agents were to be whisked secretly on a special train to Davis Island Dam, five miles below Pittsburgh, and then transferred to two barges to proceed silently up the Monongahela River, landing "within the enclosure of our premises at Homestead."<sup>4</sup> While on the barges, the Pinkertons would don their blue uniforms and be armed with Winchester rifles. On the evening of June 29, before the strike deadline, Carnegie shut the plant and locked out the workers. However, in terms of preparations, the workers were not to be found wanting.

Anticipating the necessity for a strike, the Amalgamated had set up an Advisory Committee of 50 from the eight union lodges to run the walkout. At a June 30 mass meeting of 3,000 mechanics, transportation and non-union unskilled workers, the vote was overwhelming to support the Amalgamated. Although excluded from the skilled workers' union, they knew that if the union was smashed they, too, would receive no mercy.

## **How To Run A Strike**

The Advisory Committee circulated the following statement: "The Committee has...decided to organize their forces on a truly military basis. The force of 4,000 men has been divided into three divisions or watches; each...to devote eight hours of the 24 to...watching the plant. The Commanders of these divisions are to have as assistants eight captains composed of one trusted man from each of the eight local lodges. These Captains will report to the Division Commanders, who, in turn, will receive the orders of the Advisory Committee. During their...duty, these Captains will have personal charge of the most important posts, i.e., the river front, the water gates and pumps, the railway stations and the main gates of the plant. The girdle of pickets will file reports to the main headquarters every half hour, and so...in ten minutes time the Committee can communicate with the men at any given point within a radius of five miles."<sup>5</sup>

The Advisory Committee exercised complete control, even running the city of Homestead operating gas, electric and water stations. It shut the saloons, kept the peace and issued ad hoc laws. When eleven deputy sheriffs tried to occupy the mill, they were surrounded by 1,000 pickets and warned,

"No deputy will ever go in there alive!" The Committee had chartered a paddle steamer, the Edna, fitted with steam whistles to sound an alarm. They then ferried the deputies back to Pittsburgh on the Edna.

"Day and night [the Edna] cruised the Monongahela supported by an armada of fifty two-man skiffs. Every road leading to Homestead was blockaded. Armed guards surrounded the railroad depots. Sentries patrolled the waterfront and watched from the peaks of surrounding hills. A communications system was created, using flags, skyrocketes and a steam whistle, with the telegraph at strike headquarters. The picket line grew steadily, until 1,000 men were patrolling ten miles of the river on both sides."<sup>7</sup>

So complete was the strikers' organization that when they took the Sheriff of Allegheny County on a tour of the plant, and even offered to allow him inside with 50 deputies, he was unable to raise a posse; nobody wanted to fight the Homestead workers. The few he managed to sign up refused to go armed, to interfere with picketing or to escort scabs inside. "The Sheriff was powerless."

### **'The Pinkertons Are Coming!'**

Strike supporters in Chicago and New York alerted the Homestead workers that Pinkerton agents were on the way. When they boarded two barges five miles down river from Pittsburgh on the night of July 5th, the union was immediately informed. As the barges passed the city just after 3:00 a.m., a union lookout wired headquarters, "Watch the river. Steamer with barges left Pittsburgh."<sup>8</sup>

Shortly before 4:00 a.m., the Advisory Committee pulled the steam whistle to signal a river landing. A sentry on horseback rode through Homestead with the cry, "The Pinkertons are coming! The Pinkertons are coming!"<sup>9</sup> Workers and their families fairly flew from their beds. By the time the barges approached the landing at the Carnegie Works, a crowd of 10,000 was on hand to "greet" them. Several hundred carried carbines, rifles, shotguns, pistols and revolvers, and many others had nailed clubs, sticks and rocks. The Edna paddled down the river to meet the enemy, trailed by the smaller craft of the strikers' navy.

The crowd on shore kept pace with the boats but were stopped momentarily by Frick's 12-foot high barbed wire fence around the mill and extending down to the shore to cut off all access by land. But the imminent Pinkerton landing provoked the crowd to break down the fence and they swarmed through the mill yard to the landing.

They warned the Pinkertons to go back, but Captain Heinde, in charge of the Pinkerton army, stepped out of the barges and declared that they were there to take over the mill, telling the crowd to leave. Defiant shouts came raining down from the strikers massed several deep on top of the embankment.

When a gangplank was laid down and the Winchester-armed Pinkertons began to land, a yell arose from the jeering crowd, "Don't step off that boat!" A striker lay down on the gangplank, but when a Pinkerton tried to shove him aside, he pulled a revolver and shot the agent through the thigh, knocking him over backwards.

Gunfire instantly raked the Pinkertons, killing one and wounding five. The Pinkertons began firing steadily into the crowd of men, women and children, hitting over 30 and killing three. The strikers and their supporters returned fire and quickly drove the Pinkertons back below deck. The steamboat that had towed the two barges had left to take back the wounded agents to Braddock, so the invaders were left without means of escape. When they tried to land a few hours later, four more were shot down and the attempt was abandoned.

While the strikers and the Pinkertons below deck exchanged continuous rifle fire—the Pinkertons shot through holes cut in the sides of the barges and the strikers shot from behind barricades they had built of steel and pig iron—other strikers and supporters from nearby towns set about to try to drive the agents from the barges. Two-man skiffs swarmed around the barges, firing from point-blank range. Half-pound sticks of dynamite were hurled onto the barges, blowing holes in the sides, but failing to sink them. Two cannons were wheeled out and trained on the barges. A flaming raft was floated towards them, but was carried past by the current. The strikers loaded a flat car with oil-soaked boxes and barrels, set them on fire and pushed them down a siding towards the barges. And when that effort failed, a tank of oil was pumped into the river but attempts to set the slick on fire were foiled by a contrary wind. So the day progressed with just exchanges of rifle fire.

Meanwhile, inside the barges many of the Pinkertons, who were not "regulars" but had been hired under false pretenses, rebelled. Many were wounded; the July heat inside was unbearable and there was no chance of escape. They then voted nearly unanimously to surrender. They were marched out, disarmed and ran a gauntlet to the town skating rink where they were kept. The workers, enraged by the deaths they had suffered (at least nine workers were killed), initially demanded that, "Not one must escape alive!"<sup>10</sup> The Advisory Committee, fearing a massacre would be used to turn public opinion against them, persuaded the strikers to let them go, although virtually every Pinkerton was injured running the gauntlet.

The struggle had lasted 13 hours, the surrender coming at five o'clock in the afternoon. All told, nine workers were killed and forty shot. Seven Pinkertons died and twenty were shot.

### **‘Victory for you means victory for all....’**

The battle electrified the nation. While the bosses' press denounced the strikers as "savage beasts who deserve no pity,"<sup>11</sup> the workers shed no tears for the hated Pinkertons. Wrote an AFL organizer in New Orleans, the Homestead strikers "have the sympathy of all laboring men down here, and the only fault I have heard expressed is that they left a living Pinkerton man get away."<sup>12</sup>

A popular song, "Father Was Killed by the Pinkerton Men," became an overnight hit. Mass protest meetings were organized across the U.S. by AFL central labor bodies and by local unions, bringing to a boiling point labor's long-seething hatred of the Pinkertons. Resolutions denounced the "outrages committed by the 'Pinkerton detectives,' the hired thugs of the millionaire Carnegie."<sup>13</sup> The meetings raised funds for the "Homestead widows and orphans deprived of their supporters by the bullets of the hired assassins"; "Your fight is our fight and victory for you means victory for us all," declared the telegrams sent to the striking steel workers.<sup>14</sup>

Victory in the first great battle of the historic Homestead strike had gone to the workers.

## **The Bosses Counter-attack**

For several days after routing the Pinkertons, the workers held the mill unchallenged. Then Governor Pattison ordered the State militia to Homestead; they arrived on July 12. After the great national railroad strikes and seizure of Pittsburgh in 1877, the Pennsylvania militia had been reorganized. It now comprised well over 8,000 officers and men, well-armed with Springfield .45's and Gatling guns.

The rank and file wanted to oppose the militia, but the Advisory Committee decided to welcome them instead, saying, "After suffering an attack of illegal authority [the Pinkertons], we are glad to have the legal authority of the State here."<sup>15</sup>

How wrong they were quickly became apparent. The militia commander General Snowden told the welcoming strikers, "I do not recognize your association....We have come here to restore law and order." Since the general's description of the situation was "revolution, treason, and anarchy,"<sup>16</sup> it became clear immediately that his intention was to escort and protect scabs entering the plant, despite the continuing encirclement by the strikers.

The company began ferrying in small groups of scabs, protected by the militia from strikers' retaliation. Snowden quickly put an end to militiamen fraternizing with the workers. He was pursuing a larger purpose, to smash the union's complete control over the running of Homestead's civil affairs, since this posed a great danger for all other industrial cities in similar struggles.

"Pennsylvania can hardly appreciate the actual communism of these people," declared the general. "They believe the works are theirs quite as much as Carnegie's."<sup>17</sup>

Assured of this military protection, the company built bunk houses, dining halls and kitchens in the mill yard to house and feed large numbers of strikebreakers. But it had a hard time recruiting scarce, highly-skilled steelworkers and had to virtually shanghai them into the plant. One group of 56 hired in Cincinnati were promised easy work and good pay "at another Carnegie steelworks." After the doors and windows on their train were locked, the armed guards told them they were headed for Homestead. A battle broke out, the doors were forced open, and only 21 of the 56 remained by the time the train reached Homestead. One of the former reported:

"We were made prisoners in the works and guarded like convicts. The more ignorant were told by the foremen that if they ventured outside, the union men would shoot them like dogs....At least half of them are sick from heat, bad water and poor food."<sup>18</sup>

Strikers threw leaflets into the plant promising good treatment and free train fare home, causing a mad rush for the exit by a large number which the company was powerless to stop. Still, by September nearly every department was running, although poorly.

However, the union was not content to merely "un-recruit" scabs. The Pinkerton attack and the militia's presence helped them to spread the strike to the rest of the Pittsburgh area. Soon the Union Iron Mills and those at Beaver Falls and Duquesne all voted to join the strike. Carnegie countered by filling those mills with scabs as well and production resumed.

### **The Bosses' Courts Administer the Crushing Blow**

The company coupled this strategy with another, which may have affected the final outcome even more decisively: it began legal actions which led to the arrest and jailing of hundreds of the strike's leaders. There were 185 separate indictments against them, everything from murder to "aggravated riot" to conspiracy. While none ever led to a single conviction, they so tied up the union in the courts, in bail costs and in jailings of strike leaders "awaiting trial," that it drastically demoralized the strikers, depleting their funds and denying them their leadership. (Many of the latter went into hiding rather than surrender.)

In the middle of this legal battle, on July 23 a young New York anarchist, Alexander Berkman, entered company manager Frick's office and shot and stabbed him. Berkman surrendered and was jailed, and Carnegie quickly linked him to the strikers' cause. This led to a huge "red scare" with the rounding up of "anarchists" in many cities.

No sooner would one group of strikers be acquitted, they would be re-arrested "for treason against the

State of Pennsylvania." Still, no jury ever found any of them guilty. But the shifting of the battle from the streets to the courts had its desired effect; the resolve of the workers waned. The drain on their funds led to difficulties in feeding and clothing themselves. Over 1,600 on relief rolls were costing the union \$10,000 a week.

The Gompers AFL leadership refused to authorize a national boycott of Carnegie products. While it did support a national "Homestead Day" on December 13, with tens of thousands of workers throughout the country (40,000 in Chicago alone) contributing part of that day's wages to the strikers, it was too little and too late. By mid-October, with the lockout in its fourth month, the strikers had begun realizing their cause was doomed. With the help of the armed militia, Carnegie had been able to resume production in all of his mills.

On Nov. 18, the Amalgamated union agreed to release the mechanics and day laborers from their pledge to support the strike, and the latter groups voted unanimously to return to work. Two days later the Amalgamated Association held its weekly meeting, with only one-third of its 800 members present. A number of strike leaders were still in jail. Others had left Homestead seeking jobs elsewhere. A resolution to end the strike carried by 101 to 91.<sup>19</sup> The workers returned as individuals, but the leaders were blacklisted forever.

Out of this defeat, the Amalgamated union was virtually destroyed. Its 1891 membership of 24,000 sank to 10,000 in three years, and to 6,300 some years later. Part of the reason was also new technology which enabled Carnegie to reduce its work-force by 25% and produce even more steel with fewer workers. During the 1893 depression, wages fell 25%. The established 8-hour day was increased to 12 hours. Unionization of the entire industry was smashed.

One lesson the workers learned was that only a movement involving all steelworkers, skilled and unskilled, supported by workers in allied industries, stood any chance against such a powerful corporation as Carnegie's. It took 27 years for the next big battle—in 1919 when 350,000 steelworkers, led by communist organizer William Z. Foster, struck the entire industry. But even that momentous battle only laid the basis for future unionization, in the great CIO organizing drive of the 1930's, 45 years after Homestead.

## **The Real Power Is Workers' State Power**

Perhaps the most important lesson of this battle against Carnegie—although not emphasized at the time—was the fact that the real power of the working class lies in organizing in an all-round way, in actually taking over and running the cities, in militarily smashing the forces of the ruling class State arrayed against it. That result awaits the organization of a communist-led revolution.<sup>u</sup>

### **Footnotes:**

1. David Brody: *Steelworkers in America, The Nonunion Era*; p. 53.
2. James Bridge: *The Inside Story of the Carnegie Steel Co.*; pp. 203-204.
3. Philip Foner: *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, Vol. 2; p. 207.
4. Leon Wolff: *Lockout, The Story of the Homestead Strike of 1892*; p. 86.
5. *ibid.*, p. 90.

6. *ibid.*, p. 96
7. Jeremy Brecher: *Strike!*; p. 56
8. Wolff, p. 105.
9. *ibid.*, p. 106.
10. *ibid.*, p. 122.
11. *New York Tribune*, July 8, 1892.
12. Foner, p. 211.
13. *ibid.*, p. 211
14. *ibid.*, p. 211
15. Jeremy Brecher: *Strike!*; p. 58.
16. Report of Major General Snowden, *Pennsylvania Official Documents*; Vol. V, pp. 75-76.
17. Leon Wolff: *Lockout, The Story of the Homestead Strike of 1892*; p. 164.
18. *ibid.*, p. 206
19. Philip Foner: *History of the Labor Movement in the U. S.*; Vol. 2, p. 217.

(Much of the description of these events was drawn from the Brecher and Foner books cited above.)

Pictures were taken from the Rivers of Steel Heritage Area: [www.riversofsteel.com](http://www.riversofsteel.com)

## Lessons Learned in Meatpackers' Struggle

Organizing in the meatpacking industry demonstrates two main lessons: (1) no working class organization can defend our class interests unless it fights against racism and for multi-racial unity, and (2) in the long run, no union, no matter how militant and principled, can overcome the laws of capitalism; therefore, its struggles must be used to build a revolutionary communist party to overthrow capitalism.

As war industries mobilized for World War II, Karl Lindberg moved from his meatpacking job on the killing floor at Swift to Ford, making armored trucks. He compared his experience in the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC, later the United Packinghouse Workers of America, UPWA) with his experience at Ford under the United Auto Workers (UAW): "In the packinghouse, if you had a problem with the boss, it got taken care of right then and there. Over at Ford, well you filled out a piece of paper and you waited. Sometimes you waited days, sometimes weeks, sometimes you never heard anything more."

Lundberg was lauding the shop floor militancy of the PWOC, which stopped production if management ignored grievances. And PWOC and UPWA did not worship the contract. When Lundberg protested the firing of a Ford co-worker, his UAW steward "began to quote the contract. I



knew he wasn't going to do anything and I got so damn disgusted. [At Swift] the whole place would have been shut down tighter than a drum, and this guy's quoting the contract. What the hell good's a union that won't stand and fight?"

The PWOC and the UPWA were among the largest multi-racial, anti-racist working class organizations in U.S. history. At its peak in the early 1950s the UPWA had over 100,000 members. Led by communists, it fought racism in the plants and in the neighborhoods of Chicago, integrating store lunch counters and fighting racist attacks on black residents who moved into previously all-white neighborhoods. Its history is a treasury of positive lessons for communists. Yet, there is much to learn from its failures as well: because communists in the old movement buried their politics in the struggle for reform, they left workers unprepared for the eventual destruction of this union and the restoration of the most brutal slavery in the meatpacking industry.

Two recent books detail this material: "*Negro and White, Unite and Fight!*" by Roger Horowitz, a general history of the PWOC and UPWA from the 1930s through 1990; and *Down on the Killing Floor* by Rick Halpern, about Chicago's stockyards, where there was the most communist leadership and the greatest advances in fighting racism. Both report the role of communists in building these unions. A third book, *Meatpackers*, edited by the same two, is an oral history of black meatpackers, which slighted black communists.

Communists spearheaded the Chicago organizing drive. Some were quite young: Herb March was only 19 when he married Jacinta Grbac and got a job at Armour, already a veteran of three years' full-time organizing for the Young Communist League in Kansas City. These reds built a base in the neighborhoods through their work in unemployment councils, in the anti-eviction struggles that defied sheriff's deputies, and in the Back of the Yards neighborhood organizations.

The racism and racial division in the Chicago stockyards were major obstacles for the communists. Black workers had been used to break strikes in 1894 and 1904; in the 1921 strike most black workers stayed at work, allying with the company rather than with co-workers who were often perceived as racist in the aftermath of the 1919 race riot. As a result, black workers were stereotyped as a "scab race," giving the meatpackers the upper hand in any struggle with labor.

From the beginning the reds' cardinal principle was "black and white unite," insisting on respect for black workers within the PWOC and inside the Communist Party (CP). This profoundly affected many black workers. Lowell Washington recalled, "I'd never really even talked to a white man before, and I certainly hadn't said more than two words to a white lady, and here I was being treated with respect and speakin' my mind and not having to worry about saying something that might rile 'em up.... Let me tell you it changed the way I thought about things." This insistence on multi-racial unity and respect for black workers made it possible to build the PWOC and UPWA, despite past racial divisions.

White workers also responded to this anti-racism. When black workers at the 1946 UPWA Omaha convention were refused housing at the convention hotel, it was moved to the union hall despite the 102 degree heat. Omaha unionists housed the workers. District Director A. T. Stephens apologized to the convention, admitting he had been unaware of Omaha's Jim Crow.

In 1946, when black veterans moving into the Airport Homes complex were attacked by racist mobs, the anti-racist communist-led unity of black and white workers sparked the UPWA to send teams of workers into the project to guard the vets' homes. Again, in 1955, the racist riots against black residents in Chicago's Trumbull Park brought a similar response, although unfortunately they demanded the mayor provide police protection. A 1949 race riot on Chicago's Peoria Street directed

against an inter-racial union meeting led to the formation of a Committee to End Racial Violence, which pressured the mayor and other politicians to stop racist violence.

At Swift the union alternately sent in black job applicants and white job applicants; when Swift hired the whites after refusing to hire the blacks, the UPWA organized a series of demonstrations and filed a grievance, ending this racism. In 1949 Sam Parks, a Wilson union leader, and three others integrated the lunch counter at Goldblatt's. The UPWA was a large, fighting anti-racist working-class union, led largely by communists, particularly in Chicago.

The union showed tremendous rank-and-file militancy on the shop floor. Gertie Kamarczyk said that she "felt like a human being with real rights, a real whole person for the first time in my life." This was because the union's power on the shop floor to halt production could somewhat limit the bosses' dictatorship over the workers. The union reduced the break-neck speed-up in the late '40s and '50s, and raised living standards for many workers, particularly black workers, to a level previously unattainable.

The CP recruited black workers and developed black leadership in the union. But this work was still infected with racism. The CP promoted Henry Johnson, a communist, as a black leader within the union. Why? A college graduate, Johnson's "smooth, polished manner and educated speech pattern reassured many whites who held stereotypical notions about blacks' abilities" (quoting Halpern). Jane March (Jacinta Grbac) said, "This was terribly important because at this time everybody was questioning all these black guys coming into the leadership." Les Orear (another communist) observed that Johnson's appeal to whites as well as blacks "did a great deal to cement and make real the sense of trust and unity" in the union.

This elevation of black leaders who talked "educated" was implicitly very racist (and did not work in the long run—in 1941 Johnson defected from the party and unsuccessfully tried to persuade black workers to leave the PWOC and join the United Mine Workers). It is a racist insult to black workers from the South (and ghettoized northern black workers). If black and white workers had different speech styles, this was a result of segregation, which communists should (and did) fight. A principled anti-racist struggle would develop the leadership particularly of workers stigmatized as "uneducated."

Communists in the UPWA did not fight for the leadership of the hundreds of black men and women with little "formal" education who were drawn to the CP. Instead they built leaders with college backgrounds who wanted to be "the leader." Because of this and of the black nationalism in the CP, Herb March was attacked by black CP members in 1952 for insisting that slates for district offices be inter-racial (they said that because the activists were black the leadership should be black). Threatened with being tried within the party for "white chauvinism," March resigned from the party and the union.

The greatest weakness of this effort to organize workers into a class-conscious communist-led union was the failure to put forward communist politics. Building the union became the party work of many party organizers. What was a communist? These books indicate it meant being a good union person who fought racism and fought the bosses hard. Yet today meatpacking workers in western Kansas and elsewhere work so fast that they "don't have time to wipe the sweat from their faces." With starting pay at \$6/hour, whole families—to survive—must work six-day weeks with mandatory overtime and sudden layoffs. They live in trailer parks with inadequate sewage, where a sudden rain turns the area into a foul swamp. The work-pace destroys their health and their lives. Was this unforeseeable? The job of communists is to warn about these realities of capitalism and use that understanding to build a revolutionary movement.

In the 1950s the traditional meatpackers—Swift, Armour and Wilson—who dominated the Chicago stockyards were undercut by new, non-union firms such as Iowa Beef Packers. IBP instituted a breakneck pace of work and produced boxed beef that was shipped directly to supermarkets, eliminating retail butchers. In the end the old meatpacking plants with the strong union tradition were shuttered, and production was moved where it was cheaper and more brutal for the workers.

To exist as capitalists, bosses must seek maximum profits. By showing workers that competition forces bosses to shut plants and move elsewhere, the communists in meatpacking could have built a stronger revolutionary movement—not a better capitalism, but a stronger movement to destroy capitalism. We cannot win a better life for workers by reforming this system; it must be smashed. This is what communists in Chicago should have been saying to meatpacking workers 50 and 60 years ago while still fighting to limit the bosses' racism and exploitation.

The U.S. CP as well as other communist parties world-wide, were filled with brave, determined, committed people following bad ideas. For this building of capitalist reform instead of revolutionary struggle, we now pay a terrible price. Yet we can see farther and clearer because we stand on their shoulders.

## **The Battle of Morristown: Anti-Racists Silence Fascists!**

MORRISTOWN, NJ, July 4 — Hundreds of militant workers and students prevented Richard Barrett and his fascist Nationalist Movement from being heard here today. With shouts, chants, banging on signs and the action of two brave anti-racists who wrecked Barrett's sound equipment, the multi-racial crowd followed the lead of communists in PLP to silence the fascists. Today's action was a victory for the working class and for PLP. Many comrades, particularly younger ones, took leadership.

There was a sharper struggle about fascism and the current period within the Party and among our friends this past year. Many agree fascism is increasing. But many still ask: what can the Party do about it?

Our first planning meeting revealed many disagreements. Some felt the Party should retreat because our numbers were "too small" to accomplish much; we should not risk more arrests.

But others thought that staying away and not vigorously organizing against the fascists would be a big mistake. Many recalled the Party's history in fighting fascism. The 1975 Boston Summer Project was a militant struggle led by young comrades, showing it's possible to mobilize thousands to fight the bosses' attacks. We ended the organizing meeting with a collective decision to participate on the 4th and guarantee certain plans.

We corrected last year's mistake by going every weekend, along with our friends, to different parts of the community with leaflets and CHALLENGE. Many people there had no idea Barrett was returning. Some said they wouldn't come on the Fourth but would be attending the candlelight vigil called by politicians and church misleaders. We struggled with them about the importance of being militant and vocal the day of the demonstration.

Other workers from the community agreed immediately that the only way to stop Barrett from spreading his racist lies was to fight back. They promised to join us and said they were happy we were there. This made many of our comrades confident about what we could do, that our strength and power does come from the working class. The more time we spent in the community, the less fearful we became. They were impressed with the youth and with the active roles they took. They led many

chants and speeches on the bullhorn.

On the morning of July 4, we held a march and rally with about 30 people at a local housing complex. We marched through the complex leafleting and chanting, "The workers, united, will never be defeated," and "Las luchas obreras no tienen fronteras" ("Workers' struggles have no borders"). We were very well received. Many residents took leaflets and supported us. Some came and joined us at the front of the demonstration across from the fascists.

Despite massive police protection, the open fascists were unable to bring out anyone. Steve Ucci, the "Grand Marshal" for their rally, who had promised to bring out hundreds only three weeks before, didn't even show up. PLP's activities before July 4, including leafleting and postering his neighborhood, certainly helped to "discourage" him.

When we reached the police barricades, we led chants. Another group of anti-racists nearby led chants and gave speeches on their bullhorns. It was then that two young anti-racists, who had appeared to be with Barrett, began throwing down his flags, kicking over and disabling his sound system, before being arrested by the cops. These and all the previous actions invigorated the crowd, who began shouting, "Death, death, death to the fascists!" and then tore up the Confederate flag.

Scores of immigrant workers from Morristown joined us in chanting loudly and preventing Barrett from being heard. When Barrett and the one lone fascist with him brought out their pro-cop "Profiling Saves Lives" banner, the crowd began chanting, "Killing fascists saves lives!"

Many of our goals were achieved. The 350 cops ordered out to protect a grand total of two fascists didn't stop us. We prevented Barrett from being heard. Our confidence that the working class, if given the chance, would join us proved to be correct.

## **The Dialectics of Biology: There's More to Life Than Genes**

Richard Lewontin's recent book, *The Triple Helix: Gene, Organism and Environment*, discusses evolution and genetics from the perspective of dialectical materialism. It's a good weapon against the biologic determinism being pushed at college campuses and medical centers. According to Lewontin, the idea that the development of living beings (organisms) is just a matter of genes is bad biology. Even if we had a complete genetic sequence and unlimited computing power, we couldn't begin to explain what an organism is and how it came to be because the organism does not compute itself from its genes.

### **Proteins—Not from DNA Alone**

For example, the idea that DNA sequence determines protein structure is overly simplistic and mechanical (as opposed to dialectical). [DNA is deoxyribonucleic acid—the large molecule that makes up our genetic material.] Proteins are very complex folded structures. Knowing the sequence of amino acids (the building blocks of proteins) does not predict how the protein will fold. The final protein structure depends on formation of the right folding characteristics, which in turn is influenced by external conditions.

As one example of the dialectical complexity of protein formation, Lewontin discusses the production of artificial insulin. (Insulin controls blood sugar and is a critical medicine for people with severe diabetes.) Scientists learned to transfer the insulin gene to bacteria. When they first tried to use these bacteria to create insulin in vats, they had the right protein amino acid sequence, but the "insulin"

didn't work right. Turns out that bacteria in the vats had folded the protein incorrectly. The scientists had to change the environmental conditions in the vat to get the bacteria to fold the protein correctly.

## **Genes and Environment**

This gives a flavor to one of the major themes in this book: the dialectical interaction (or, contradiction) of genes and environment. Lewontin explains how knowing the genotype (the pattern of genes) of an organism isn't enough to understand the organism's phenotype (its physical properties). One must know about the environment in which the organism develops.

Lewontin gives several examples of this fundamental contradiction. (He calls this contradiction "norms of reaction.") One example: Flowering plant A is genetically different from Flowering plant B. Plant A is taller than plant B, but only at sea level. In the mountains, B is taller than A.

A second example: Fruitfly type A lives longer than type B at one temperature; at another temperature, fly B lives longer than fly A. The characteristics of living beings reflect the dialectical contradiction between genes and the environment (elevation or temperature.)

Fruitfly experiments are at the heart of much of genetics. Lewontin notes that geneticists have tended to focus only on certain fruitfly traits like stunted wings or white eyes. For these traits, a genetic mutation shows up as a physical characteristic of the organism regardless of the environmental conditions (acidity, humidity, or temperature). In other words, geneticists have often tended to ignore all the "messy" dialectical contradictions of gene and environment (like the two examples in the preceding paragraph). Instead these geneticists (with a mechanical outlook) have worked with simpler situations in which genes alone determine physical characteristics within a broad range of environmental conditions.

## **Chance is a Part of Life**

Lewontin also points out the importance of what he calls "developmental noise." This is an example of the more general dialectical category of contingency (chance) and necessity. Take the fruitflies again. There are a number of hairs, used in sensation, beneath the wings. In a given fruitfly, the number on the left is not equal to the number on the right. This can't be due to genes (it's the same genes in the one fly). Moreover, the microenvironment is virtually the same on the left and right side of the little fly (only 1 millimeter wide). What's going on are random (chance) events among the molecules within the fly's cells.

Three cells give rise to the fly's sensory hairs. These three hair-forming cells come from one "starter" cell. To produce an adult hair, the three hair-forming cells must migrate to the surface of the developing fly. If division of the original "starter" cell into the three hair-forming cells takes a little too long (cell division being the product of many molecular events that take some time), the cluster of three cells may not arrive at the hardening surface of the fly in time to be included as a functioning sensory hair.

Such random processes underlie a great deal of the differences observed between organisms. Either genes or environment cannot explain these differences.

## **Organisms Change Their Environment**

Another big theme in this book is that organisms change their environment all the time.

"Environment" is not something fixed and unchanging to which organisms "adapt." For example, waste products from food consumption for one species are food for another species. All organisms alter not only their own environments but the environments of other species as well. As comedian Mort Sahl said: "Remember that no matter how selfish, how cruel, how unfeeling you have been today, every time you take a breath, you make a flower happy." (We breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide; the flower takes in carbon dioxide and gives off oxygen.)

Lewontin says that "cause and effect" have to be understood in light of the dialectical interrelation of genes, organisms and environments. All three elements are both causes and effects. Genes and environment are both causes of organisms. Organisms in turn are causes of environments. So genes, working through organisms, become causes of environments!

## **Organisms Function Within Limits**

Lewontin talks at length about how the machine model for organisms (the basis of non-dialectical, mechanical thinking) is inadequate. For example, organisms are built on the complex interaction of many relatively weak forces that keep the organism's overall functioning fairly stable. (In biology, terms like "homeostasis" and "cellular feedback" reflect this concept.) For example, many different biochemical and physiologic processes keep our body temperature at around 98.6 degrees F., no matter what the temperature is outside or how hard we're working. Only when the organism is subject to major stresses that push it beyond certain limits do these regulatory devices break down. If you sit out in 120-degree weather for a few hours without water and shade, you'll end up with hyperthermia (elevated body temperature, or heat stroke).

Mechanically-minded geneticists often ignore the many genetic, and nongenetic, influences on development of a trait or on biologic functioning. They then introduce a major gene mutation (a big external stress). When these non-dialectical scientists see a response in the trait or function, they conclude (wrongly) that the mutated gene alone is completely responsible for that trait or function.

Mechanically-thinking geneticists also tend to focus only on the minority of gene mutations in which all organisms with the mutation show the abnormal trait. Most mutations, however, are sensitive to environmental conditions and other genes—the abnormal trait appears only in a fraction of individuals carrying the mutated gene.

## **History Matters**

Still another example of dialectical vs. mechanical approaches to change is what's been called the sensitive dependence of initial conditions. (This is an aspect of the 2nd law of dialectics, the transformation of quantity into quality.)

The essence of this idea is that history matters. Very small differences in starting conditions can result in extreme differences in the final adaptive outcome. One doesn't need to know the workings of an auto assembly plant or the history of the internal combustion engine to know what a fuel pump does. In contrast, all species are the result of a unique historical process that might have taken many paths other than the one it actually took.

Not every difference between species must be the consequence of selective forces operating on them. There are two kinds of rhinoceros. The one in Africa has two horns; the one in India is one-horned. The best explanation for this difference is two alternative outcomes of the same selective process (the horns probably serve a protective function) beginning with somewhat different initial genetic

conditions.

## **The Big Picture: Levels of Causation**

Finally, Lewontin shows that one must view "causes" at many levels. In Europe during the 19th century, the death rate among the working class declined dramatically. The "cause" was the decline in infectious disease. The bigger "cause," though, was the rise in wages and nutrition, which reduced death from overwork and undernourishment. And this increase in wages and nutrition could, in turn, be traced to, (a) the struggles of the working class, and (b) reforms made by capitalists who needed the workforce healthy enough to produce profits. Or, consider the pollution due to deforested mountainsides, non-degradable waste dumps, and the like. The "greater" cause of pollution is the unplanned capitalist production based on maximizing profits.

There are still other examples of dialectics in this short book (136 pages). Although it's not easy reading, *The Triple Helix* will reward you with a deeper understanding of the dialectical interplay of genes and environment in the development of all living beings, including people. And this book will help in the battle against the bosses' biological determinism.

## **The Demise of the Soviet Union, The Return of Capitalism to China Means that We Will Have to Continue the . . . Fight For Communism In the 21st Century**

*The following article appears in the latest issue of THE COMMUNIST, Progressive Labor's Theoretical magazine. Although the magazine went to press before the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, it is very relevant to what happened that Tuesday and to the events following.. The article deals with the question of a racist police state (the Hart-Rudman report now put into practice by the Bush administration under the name of Homeland defence). It also deals with the inter-imperialist contradictions and the growing threat of an imperialist war over the oil wealth of the Middle East.*

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## **International Situation:**

### **Inter-Imperialist Rivalry**

The bosses' 2000 presidential dogfight seemed to push domestic events to the forefront, and perhaps for a time this internal fight within the US ruling class took precedence over other contradictions. Events continue to show ongoing struggle within the US ruling class, even within the Bush White House itself. However, the main contradiction that moves and shapes world events today remains inter-imperialist rivalry.

The U.S. remains the dominant imperialist power. However, it has entered a period of slow but steady

decline. It faces immediate and long-range challenges from the European Union, China and Russia, as well as from a number of second-rank capitalist forces. The US victory over Soviet state capitalism in the Cold War allowed US imperialists to enjoy great worldwide maneuverability during the 1990s. However, the "New World Order" of which the first President Bush boasted after massacring 500,000 Iraqis in the 1991 Gulf War for oil has not brought "an end to history." Instead, events over the past several years confirm Lenin's thesis about imperialism. The moment US rulers appeared to triumph, all the other imperialists and would-be imperialists started ganging up to chip away at the empire controlled by the "one remaining super-power." We are in the midst of this process today.

We don't have a monopoly on the analysis that US imperialism is facing a slow decline. Much of the information in this report was taken from a commission put in place by the ruling class, the Hart-Rudman Commission on National Security and the 21st Century<sup>1</sup> (HR). This 25-year plan is a monstrosity, a horror for the international working class. We must not underestimate the damage US imperialism can and will inflict on the world's workers.

The decline of US imperialism is not yet absolute, in the sense that the rulers face no mortal class enemy. The other imperialists do not yet have the strength to challenge the US head-on. More significantly, our Party has a long, hard road to travel before it wins the mass base among workers that can pose a threat to capitalist state power.

Nonetheless, the signs of US imperialism's relative decline are unmistakable. One could say that it had already begun with US failure in the Korean War. It accelerated with the resounding defeat of US imperialism by the Vietnamese people and remnants of international socialism. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the death of the old international communist movement gave US rulers a shot in the arm. It retarded the process of decline. But the process can not stop altogether. Numerous developments over the most recent period suggest that US rulers now face problems in increasing number and magnitude:

- Ten years after the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein still holds power in Iraq. The US sanctions policy is a fiasco. Ironically, the biggest customer for Iraqi oil is now Exxon Mobil, which faces the humiliation of buying it through Russian middlemen. Both local powers (Egypt, Syria, et al) and major imperialists (Russia, France) are literally flying in the face of US-inspired UN sanctions by landing regularly at Baghdad's newly-repaired airport. When the US eventually launches its next ground war for oil in the Middle East, it will have to act alone, with Great Britain as its only ally, and even the British are no longer totally reliable. "The US will increasingly find itself wishing to form coalitions but increasingly unable to find partners willing and able to carry out combined military operations." (HR I, p. 6). It appears that Gulf War I may be the last hurrah for US imperialism's ability to mount major war coalitions.
- The western flank of US power in the Middle East remains a tinderbox, because the US is unable to stabilize the conflict between Israeli bosses and Palestinian nationalists. Faced with mounting internal challenges by forces hostile to US imperialism, Saudi Arabian oil princes are forced to back the Palestinians.
- The US also seeks to "erect a new financial architecture, the capability to impose financial sanctions [being] built into this system." (HR II, p. 11) The main wing of the US ruling class recognizes the ineptness of its present sanctions structures, and seeks to rally its "allies" around to turn sanctions into the modern-day equivalent of the medieval siege where an entire nation can be starved into submission. The fact that the US does not have such control of international finance and trade today points to a serious weakness, as the rulers see it. The Euro may have faced a difficult launch, but it potentially constitutes a serious long-range threat to the dollar's supremacy as the world's main reserve currency.



When Clinton and NATO launched their 1999 Balkan air war, the PLP predicted that this adventure would boomerang. This estimate proved correct, in several ways.

- First, the war settled nothing in the Balkans. Just the opposite: it sharpened existing rivalries among the various nationalist factions. At this writing (April 2001), the Albanian Kosovar racketeers are attacking targets in Macedonia and Serbia. More armed struggle is brewing. The Bush White House appears anxious to avoid increasing the U.S. ground commitment in the Balkans. However, it can't tolerate a power vacuum there. So, ironically, it may be forced to support Serbian rulers in that role—and even without U.S. nemesis Milosevic, the Serbian bosses aren't reliable allies. They have profit interests of their own. Milosevic had wanted to horn in on the energy pipeline business. As we pointed out at the time, this was the main reason for Clinton's air war of terror for "human rights." Milosevic's successors, Kostunica & Co., want the same thing.
- Second, the 1999 air war further fragmented an already divided NATO. The main lesson European bosses drew from Clinton's arm-twisting was that they must develop their own independent military as a way of protecting economic interests that increasingly conflict with those of U.S. imperialism. They are taking steps to do so. This development has significant long-range implications for the future of inter-imperialist rivalry.
- Third, the 1999 air war sharpened the strategic conflict between the U.S. and both Russia and China. The U.S. wanted to rub their noses in its ability to intervene without worrying about their response. Clinton was right—but only in the immediate sense. Ultimately, he needed the Russians to help end the war. And the first Russian act when the bombing stopped was the bold seizure of Pristina airport, a symbolic gesture to show that the Russians don't intend to remain U.S. doormats indefinitely. Nor do the Chinese. Clinton "accidentally" bombed their Belgrade embassy. Since then U.S.-China antagonisms have increased. The April spy-plane incident in the South China Sea shows that China's rulers are preparing for the day when they have the strength to face the U.S. head-on.

After bombing massacre of the former Yugoslavia, U.S. imperialism is left with competing Balkan thugs whom it can't control and the slow but steady increase in challenges to its world domination by the two main strategic rivals it must fear most. Balkan wars continue; the U.S. won nothing there. The Balkans remain the potential "graveyard of empires." Once again, in the words of Mao Zedong, U.S. rulers have picked up a rock, only to drop it on their own feet.

- The US pipe-dream of treating post-Soviet Russian imperialism as a non-entity is coming to an end. The "spy vs. spy" scandal that rocked the FBI this past winter can't hide the deeper truth that Russian imperialism will eventually mount a serious strategic offensive against US profit interests around the world. Every US move to limit Russian power will boomerang sooner or later. The expansion of NATO to Russia's borders will lead eventually to sharp conflict. The Russians are already re-establishing toe-holds in several strategically vital areas, including the Balkans, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Korea and even Cuba. Despite many historical reasons for mutual distrust, Russian and German rulers continue to solidify economic and political ties.
- The same can be said of US-China relations. Like the Russians, the Chinese can't yet go toe to toe with the US on the battlefield or the high seas. Chinese capitalism still needs US technology and investment. US businesses continue to hold major investments in China, just as the US remains China's biggest export market. But the April 2001 spy plane crisis shows that the Chinese rulers are not a US punching bag. The US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the NATO air war was a signal that the US viewed China as a third-rate power. This was a very near-sighted estimate. The Chinese couldn't respond globally to that incident, and they couldn't do much more than saber-rattle over the spy plane occurrence. But the

perspective over the next two decades reveals China as a formidable threat to US imperialist dominance.

- The longest economic boom in US history is over, at least for now. The speculative bubble in the NASDAQ technology market burst in the spring of 2000. The New York Stock Exchange has lost significant ground. Many large companies find themselves in a profit squeeze. Regardless of what the bosses end up calling the present down-turn—a "correction," a "slow-down," a "recession," or a "depression" — the basic economic laws of capitalism, exposed by Karl Marx 150 years ago, still apply. The race for superprofits leads to overproduction. Overproduction leads to its opposite. Speculative booms sooner or later collapse. Workers pay the heaviest price for capitalism's roller-coaster rides. Today is no exception. The "Clinton boom" was already based to a large extent on the fascistic disciplining of the working class, in the form of slashed social services and slave labor "Workfare." The current slow-down has brought with it hundreds of thousands of layoffs. Most workers who have lost jobs recently are ineligible for unemployment insurance or welfare. US rulers' maneuverability is still such that many millions are not yet in desperate straits. We continue to avoid the one-sided error of apocalyptic predictions. But the number whose needs the system can't meet is growing. The long-range prognosis for workers under US capitalism is far from rosy.
- The Hart-Rudman strategic focus on war and fascism requires a united, disciplined ruling class. This goal is easier to define than to achieve. US bosses have a long history of "laissez-faire" individualism. Many aren't used to sacrificing short-term profit margins for long-term strategic goals. In fact, the economic interests of different camps among the rulers are such that they don't all agree on the definition of their strategic goals. The current squabbling over investment in China is a good example. As the 2000 election and the prior Clinton impeachment dogfights showed, sharp partisan differences still divide the political establishment. Furthermore, the Hart-Rudman plan calls for streamlining and centralizing many federal bureaucracies and police agencies. Not all of them will easily agree to be consolidated: careers and influence are at stake here. The subjective element remains important in politics. The ruling class is unlikely to achieve the unity it needs without a period of much sharper, perhaps violent, internal struggle.
- The rulers can make all the long-range plans they want for war. The wars they intend to fight require a military based on a large, politically committed infantry. More than a generation after their debacle in southeast Asia, the "Vietnam Syndrome" continues to haunt them. The elder Bush didn't dare push to Baghdad in 1991 for several reasons, including lack of confidence in the willingness of US working-class soldiers to sustain heavy casualties for the greater glory of Exxon. At the beginning of the 1999 war for Balkan pipelines, Clinton announced for a similar reason that no ground troops would enter the theater. The Bush White House's continued dithering over Iraq policy is based to some extent on the same fear. Hart-Rudman explicitly states that the bosses need a "Pearl Harbor" incident to mobilize the US for the necessary sacrifices "in blood and treasure." Again, easier said than done. This is the rulers' Achilles heel. They face the eventual necessity of going to war against their main rivals with a politically unreliable army. This contradiction won't prevent war. It can, however, give our Party enormous strategic advantage in the struggle for the "hearts and minds" of young workers in the bosses' armed forces.
- The very need for a Hart-Rudman commission to be put in place reflects a certain weakness, a certain consciousness on the part of the rulers with a long-range outlook, that maintaining the present relative US dominance will become more and more difficult in the coming period.

Of course, there are "wheels within wheels" and reality is complex. Although we can clearly see that the US is in a period of relative decline, every day we also see evidence of the dominance of US capitalism in the world. The US is in the position of the bully who, today, could probably still whip any single kid on the block, but sees his victims building up strength and plotting his demise, and is powerless to stop that process. However, US imperialism still enjoys relative dominance:

- US military technology remains pre-eminent in the world. By some estimates the US is ten years ahead of any other world power. This includes operations/potential in space.
- Despite the current downturn, the strength of the

US economy in the 1990s has been unique among capitalist nations. This "success" has further enabled US culture to invade other countries, often to the frustration of local ruling classes. The Internet is a US invention. American English has become the world's main second language.

- The US is looking to expand NAFTA to encompass "every democracy in the Western hemisphere" (HR II, p. 12) and is still in a better position than Europe to dominate Latin America/and the Caribbean.
- Despite the development of an independent European "defense entity," the US has been able to keep NATO afloat and respected, although NATO no longer represents a real alliance.
- The US still maintains far more troops and warships in forward positions than any other nation on earth, and is committed to maintaining those positions (100,000 in Europe, Korea, Japan, Sixth Fleet in Persian Gulf).

Summarizing the international situation, then, we must return to our watchword for the present period—complexity. We will find sweeping statements on the immediate trends and contradictions of the moment tricky to make. We may face a period of relative stability as US imperialism continues to rule the roost. At present, both the Asian and European blocks of imperialists can still profit tremendously from engagement with US imperialism in a "constructive" manner.

That being said, we can stick to our guns on several important positions regarding the world situation: trade wars eventually lead to shooting wars, the irreversible tendency of imperialism is toward war, and capitalism continues to be a failure for the workers of the world.

## **Domestic Situation:**

### **Growth of Fascism/Preparations for War**

Our Party's main line has been that the domestic situation for US capitalism remains one of growing fascism and war preparation. On the domestic front, the main recent event reflecting these trends was the dogfight of Election 2000.

Much has been made of George W. Bush's "right-wing" politics and agenda, but whose interests does he really represent? Bush is the son of former president George BUSH, who, despite ties to the domestic Oil Patch, remains essentially a mainstream Eastern Establishment politician. W.'s grandfather, Prescott Bush, founded the old Wall Street investment house Brown Harriman. His main supporters are Dick Cheney and Condoleeza Rice, who represent Halliburton and Chevron oil respectively. Halliburton's board of directors is a kind of meeting place for the heads of most major oil companies in the US. Members are directly linked to such companies as Hunt Oil, Phillips Oil (both of which worked with the Trilateral Committee), Unical, and Exxon. Some members are on the Hart-Rudman Committee, the American Petroleum Institute (an Eastern Establishment oil think tank), the Urban League and one was in the Energy office under Nixon. Chevron was one of the initial "seven sisters" in the break-up of Standard oil along with Exxon. It is directly connected to such companies as Citigroup, AT&T, PacBell, Airtouch, 1st Interstate Bank, Boise Cascade, and Boeing. Some members of Chevron's Board of Directors are on the BUSINESS Council and the Business Roundtable and even in the Brookings Institute. Another company connected to Bush is Enron. This company has been thought to be only Texan, but it has holdings across Latin America, Africa, Europe

and Asia, including in Abu Dabi and Oman (in the Middle East).

Enron and Halliburton's tactical interests often conflict tactically with those of Exxon Mobil. PLP's newspaper CHALLENGE has frequently described some of the internal fighting among the rulers that results from this friction. However, it shouldn't be overestimated. These are fights within a family.

Both Gore and Bush represent often over-lapping wings of one capitalist class, which disagrees on both tactics and on the best way to control the working class. In addition to partisan ambitions, the electoral split also reflected serioUS cultural and ideological differences over abortion, affirmative action, racism, and religion, for example. These two ideological pushes have led to a split working class. As we suggested above, the election has proven that the ruling class can't find a politician that can reconcile this split and deliver a working class united in support of US imperialism.

In response to presidential elections our Party correctly presented a revolutionary class-conscious perspective giving the working class an alternative to the bourgeois press. Both Democrats and Republican represent the same ruling class, whose survival depends on the oppression of the working class. Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate, did not represent a real alternative. In fact, his role was simply to involve a section of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie which has become cynical about the Republicans and Democrats and sees Nader as a true representative of working-class interests. As a result, more of the public became politicized but only within the limits of electoral politics.

Practically speaking, our Party most effectively played its revolutionary role by putting forth our line on the presidential elections within some of the mass organizations we're involved in. Some examples worth noting come from the college Party work at UC Berkeley and Santa Monica College. At Berkeley, Party members involved in a student organization campaigning in support of Nader, distributed literature not only exposing Nader but also explaining the limits of electoral politics. In addition, they organized some of these student activists to support a teach-in on prison labor. At the teach-in, the Party was then able to discuss the exploitative nature of capitalism and point out that none of the presidential candidates were discussing any of these issues in their campaigns. Similarly, at Santa Monica College, Party members organized a teach-in on sweatshops in downtown LA, where garment workers spoke about the hypocrisy of Gore and Bush who ignored the racist exploitation of workers so fundamental to capitalism. Our members also put forth our general ideas in the schools, the unions and the military.

Bush's victory, based on blatant racist fraud in the counting of the Florida ballot, made many angry. Many workers who voted still cling to the mistaken belief that Democrats represent minorities and the working class, while Bush and the Republicans represent the opposite. Embracing this anger, which is really the result of capitalism's racist and exploitative nature, liberals are winning workers to blame Bush and not capitalism. The most obvious example of this was the mobilization to protest the presidential inauguration of Bush. This reliance on the liberals is a deadly danger. Our Party continues to advance the strategic idea that they remain the main threat to the working class's development as a revolutionary force. We must begin by exposing the Democrats as equally racist and fascist. Eight years of a liberal Clinton presidency have given us a record two million in prison, racist Workfare, fascist police terror and further preparations for war.

In four years a Democrat may be elected president, and our base mUSt be in a position to respond to the fascist attacks of the bosses, no matter who occupies the White House.

If the Hart-Rudman report is any indication, workers have much to worry about. First of all, the report envisions a future where "Americans will likely die on American soil, possibly in large numbers,"

presumably at the hands of enemies of US imperialism. (HR I, p. 4) Scenarios such as biological attacks on major cities or a computer attack on air-traffic control during holiday travel are matters of concern for the bosses. This is the world the bosses foresee. Their need to mobilize popular support for their foreign wars is such that they may even concoct an incident themselves. It wouldn't be the first time.

To respond to these threats, the main wing of the ruling class is proposing major changes in the structure of government in the US, mainly centralization of power. We can see that in every area, from education (national standards) to law enforcement: "...the US government needs new organizational mechanisms to manage the increased blurring of lines among military, police and legal jurisdictions, and among new forms of warfare." We estimate that such "blurring" took place at the July 4, 2000 Nazi rally in Morristown, NJ, where some comrades and friends were arrested. The second tier of the US ruling class is down but not out, and they will resist this centralization. Party members should watch developments along these lines closely, as they will mirror the relative strength of various factions in the US ruling class.

"The National Guard...must be trained and equipped to assume, among its other responsibilities, a significant role in defending the homeland in the 21st century." (HR II, p. 16) In the coming period, the main wing of the ruling class will attempt a revitalization and rehabilitation of the National Guard from its present status as the dumping ground of the US Armed Forces into a more highly organized and fascist force.

Education, or the failure of it, is also a serious matter of ruling class concern. Our general line that education will exist to reproduce capitalist class relations will remain correct and ought to be the central aspect of our analysis of capitalism as we struggle to win teachers, parents and youth. However, we will witness concerted efforts on the part of the rulers to provide better training (especially in math and science) for most youngsters in an attempt to create and win a working class capable of mounting a serious imperialist offensive.

"Anti-terrorist" laws passed in the 1990s are far-reaching and dangerous. They will be expanded and strengthened in the coming period. As our Party grows in strength, we will encounter a repressive superstructure well-positioned to oppose our efforts. Make no mistake about it, the rulers judge "the preservation of America's Constitutional order" a survival interest, while "security of those key international systems—energy, communications, transportation, and public health (including food and water supplies)" are deemed to be only critical US national interests. This is the way the rulers recognize the key law of revolution, that ruling classes don't fall by themselves, but must be overthrown. A mass PLP leading an armed working class is more of a threat to the US ruling class than the loss of oil, food and water.

We have said that discipline and unity within the ruling class is a key element of fascism, and the struggle over the portion of Bush's cabinet that will handle domestic concerns (Labor, Attorney General, Environment, Interior) reflects an attempt to achieve that unity. However, the main wing of the ruling class is making some progress. Despite persistent differences, the very existence of a bi-partisan Hart-Rudman commission is evidence of a stab at unity on the part of the rulers.

To conclude the domestic situation for US capitalism, a few words on the bosses' tanking economy are in order. It is a widely agreed-upon fact among the bosses' economists that the present economic boom is ending. The New York Times even had the audacity to print an editorial in early January called "The Recession We Need." For the bourgeoisie, sustained economic growth is an impossibility. Evidence of a slowdown is rife: retail and car sales are down, as are manufacturing, stock markets and personal savings. Meanwhile, the current account deficit (money owed to foreign capitalists due to

trade deficits and interest payments), inventories and unemployment are all rising.

These are all elements of the crisis of overproduction, another capitalist inevitability. Since the bosses produce for maximum profit, and not for need, they are always seeking to cut corners, usually by bleeding workers in one way or another. As this process unfolds, fewer workers are in a position to buy, squeezing the capitalist more, leading to more wage cuts/layoffs, etc. Hence we get the situation where millions of shoes sit in "inventory" while millions of workers go shoeless.

The ruling classes can respond to economic downturns in two ways. First privately, as owners of the means of production, they can order layoffs, speed-up, wage-cuts and plant closures. Second, the wing of the ruling class that dominates government can order public responses: tax law, executive orders, money supply and interest rates are all part of federal law.

Much is made of Alan Greenspan and his Federal Reserve. The Fed is an important element of the rulers' relative ability to contain the crisis of overproduction. When interest rates are dropped, cheaper borrowing costs can increase business activity. However, recent rate cuts, in response to falling stocks, set up a dangerous house of cards. Stock markets reflect an agreement among investors on what a company or companies are worth. If the Fed rushes to rescue the stock market at every downturn by cutting rates, in the long run the crash will be all the more painful.

Despite all the talk among the bosses' economists of engineering a "soft landing" for the US economy, there is no soft landing for the working class. When the bosses talk of "cutting supply," they mean cutting jobs. A controlled economic slowdown may be just what the doctor ordered for the big bourgeoisie. A mild recession would lead to a decrease in foreign investment in US firms, boost private savings, cut imports and make the US more self-sufficient all-around. Capital would be consolidated into fewer hands as the big bourgeoisie buys out the small fry when markets bottom out. In short, the US will be made more ready for war.

## **The Bitter Pill**

Awareness of this state of affairs is indeed a bitter pill for the international working class to swallow. We are reaping a harvest of death sown by the right-opportunist mistakes of the old communist movement. Life is being destroyed so fast that we, especially comrades/friends in the US, can become de-sensitized to this ongoing atrocity. Nearly a billion and a quarter workers live in dire poverty. By latest estimates, 830 million workers live on fewer than 1,800 calories a day. International capitalism has organized mass spiritual/mental suffering as well. For example, the crisis of AIDS in Africa is caused primarily by capitalist-induced poverty and the rulers' total disregard for the basic health education of the workers of a continent. There is every indication that the rulers have only increased carnage in store for the international working class: "The US needs a new calculUS for developing future strategic nuclear arms control...It must take account of new Chinese and Russian nuclear weapon capabilities. It mUSt also take into account...the potential US need to respond to chemical and biological threats with nuclear weapons..." (HR II, p. 10).

This is what capitalism has to offer a world of over six billion people. The rulers' "prosperity" will always be for the few, their peace the "peace" of the graveyard.

## **Role and Morale of the Party**

While awareness of the present state of affairs for the international working class is indeed a bitter pill to swallow, this awareness also contains seeds of a cure.

Because of the old communist movement's demise, the working class no longer has a center to emulate and defend. This loss has also temporarily defeated communist culture, which, despite the old movement's limitations, attempted to counter the capitalist filth that today more than ever inundates and corrupts our youth. This situation has led to cynicism among workers in general and even, to some extent, within our own ranks. Racism, sexism and individualism thrive today. These are the objective obstacles we now face. We face a long, extremely hard uphill climb that will include many surprises and temporary defeats. However, we can win. The future will be communist.

No matter how bleak the moment may seem, nothing changes the job we must do as communists. Our primary task remains the development of a fighting Party. And we can't do that in a sustainable manner unless we take the bitter pill, accept that we are in a period of unprecedented retreat for the working class, and proceed from there. In that light, every job action, walk-out, Challenge readers' group, club meeting, May Day, becomes an important positive act to reverse present trends and eventually transform this period into its opposite. Great days, as Lenin wrote long ago, are made of little moments. Everything we do to build the Party is a step in the right direction.

Inter-imperialist rivalry will continue to sharpen as the main contradiction in the world. Attacks on the international working class, by US rulers and others, will intensify. We will not be able to mount a significant revolutionary counter-offensive soon. We are still in a slow growth period right now. For this very reason, we must constantly strive to sharpen our daily battles with the bosses. The system's sharpening contradictions are giving US opportunities to chip away at the illusions of capitalism. By bringing to our base our understanding of the period and by engaging in even modest class struggle, we can slowly win workers to see the need for communism as the only solution to capitalism's contradictions. We must also develop our line on "serving the working class" wherever we are. Whether it be fighting to teach our students the importance of understanding the world they live in, or developing free clinics to give patients better health care, we must give our base confidence in the working class. We aren't do-gooders or missionaries; we are revolutionaries who must prove ourselves worthy of the working class's confidence. These activities will help fight the individualism and cynicism that hurts us all.

We must try to keep a careful balance between urgency and patience. Workers are not flocking to join the Party or even to go to a demonstration. We aren't yet in a period of mass rebellion or militancy. It is easy to become frustrated and subjective with our base and our comrades. Capitalist ideology affects us all. But we cannot forget that we are living in a period of growing fascism. Our ability to move mountains in the future depends on the seeds we plant today. We must feel the urgency to go out and lay the groundwork for the future. What does this mean practically?

- A struggle should be made in all the clubs for every member to take responsibility for understanding the world situation and helping to develop the Party's line by reading the bosses' papers, and reading, writing for and distributing Challenge/Desafio.
- We must carry out all mass activity and struggles with Challenge/Desafio at the forefront. This is the only working class paper in the world today, and it is our biggest weapon.
- PLP should organize militant mass struggles at our workplaces, in our schools, on our campuses and in our communities. This is the main way we will bring out the contradictions of capitalism and win the confidence of the working class.
- We should work within mass organizations to develop our "serve-the-working-class" line. We should always fight to improve the conditions we work and live under but the main way we will serve the needs of our class is by training communist fighters. We must make plans wherever we are to increase recruitment to our party.
- Fight individualism. Alongside racism, anti-communism and the degradation of women, individualism constitutes the main obstacle to revolutionary class consciousness. It is more

deadly than any bullet or nuclear bomb. The struggle to overcome it is essentially a fight for objectivity, for seeing the needs of the working class as primary over our personal desires or interests. Most of us still think of ourselves as the center of the universe. It's not our fault: this is how the system has trained us since before we were born. But we must reject this training, and struggle with each other to think as communists. Above all, this means learning to see the Party as the most important thing in our lives. We have a long way to go on this score. Very few of us put the Party first. But we can make progress. In the coming period we should make an effort to give the Party an increasing priority in the organization of our lives and the fulfillment of our aspirations.

This outlook can help us to become leaders of the working class. It can increase our confidence in the Party and the respect with which workers view US. Let's face the future with a renewed resolve to build a fighting, communist PLP. We still have a world to win!

1. This complete report can be found on line at <http://www.nssg.gov/News/Hart-Rudman/hart-rudman.html>

## **So Far, So Good.... But We Must Go Further**

Our work in the unions has modestly increased over the past few years. Last year 120 striking janitors marched on May Day, we led significant numbers of workers in the Jefferson Hospital and MUNI transit contract fights, and organized support among Boeing production workers for striking engineers. We received over 400 votes in a Boeing union election (carrying our workplace), and were elected to executive board positions among NYC Postal workers, MUNI and Metro transit workers, and Detroit mental health workers.

During the LA transit strike, we successfully stopped the union leaders' attempt to get mechanics to cross drivers' picket lines and organized strike support among garment workers. We fought Teamster leaders over the racist firings of immigrant factory workers in NJ and are leading more industrial workers ideologically and in struggle in and around the Ford plant.

We've done better at raising the issues of racism, fascism, and imperialist war. At the Seattle and Washington, D.C. WTO demos we exposed the union leaders' hypocrisy on prison labor and took on the issue of nationalism. This was also true in the steel contract and the "Stand Up for Steel" campaign. In numerous unions we raised resolutions against wars in Iraq and Yugoslavia, police murders, prison labor and fascist terror. There are other examples. There has been plenty of unevenness, and many weaknesses. But this is a welcome change from where we were a few years ago.

The Party's growing influence reflects workers' willingness to try communist leadership, but on their terms. They feel threatened by the "boom" and will feel even more so by the bust. They may not be ready to join the Party, but they're willing to follow our leadership in the class struggle. We should seize the opportunity to lead, and not fear making mistakes.

## **Party Building**

All this activity bears out our estimate of this very complex and contradictory period. We must fight very hard to make very modest advances. Workers have joined the Party at Boeing, Ford, MUNI, LA transit and janitors, NJ factories, Jefferson and others, but not in large numbers. While leading sharper class struggle, CHALLENGE distribution has risen. In the Bavaria brewery strike in Colombia, 300 workers received the paper. In the MUNI and NYC PO, distribution peaked at about 200. After the



struggle, they tend to return to their previous level. But this too is an improvement over the days when CHALLENGE distribution would drop, because "we were too busy leading the struggle."

We are beginning to develop more leadership, especially among black and Latin workers. In basic industry and health care, black women are taking primary responsibility for CHALLENGE, the heart of our work. More workers are reading and writing for the paper. Regular readers have been involved in election committees and contract fights, and have helped to defeat anti-communist attacks.

Many more can be won to be CHALLENGE distributors. Network sellers can be the next wave of recruits. It requires concentration and a plan. If we don't win on this, we will not be able to significantly increase regular CHALLENGE distribution and recruitment.

Building the Party and a mass revolutionary communist movement is what the work is all about. To help guarantee this, the clubs, expanded clubs, and/or fraction-style formations must be the political center of the work. Union committees, stewards' councils, slates and caucuses can all be useful, but won't play the same role, even if we lead them. We want to do it all, but the Party club must be the political center of the work.

## **Lead Class Struggle**

We are emerging from a period where we had withdrawn from the class war. Self-critically, our work was reduced to mass agitation. Comrades held back for fear of being "reformist." We still suffer from this to some degree, but we're overcoming it.

This was the result of a one-sided attempt to break with the idea that the Party should have a reform program (shorter work-week), and it's own reform mass organizations (See RR4.5). For over twenty years we tried to build communist-led mass organizations like Workers Action Movement (WAM) and International Committee Against Racism (INCAR). We concluded that "Mohammed had to go to the mountain." We had to enter the bosses' unions to fight for the political leadership of the workers. (This could change under different circumstances. In a period of deeper economic and political crisis and imperialist war, and the Party leading a mass movement, we might march workers out of the enemy's camp as the best way to fight for political leadership.)

Our recent experiences raise some questions. Should we hold union office? Should we negotiate contracts? Should we vote to ratify contracts? In general, what's the relationship between reform and revolution and how do we carry out class struggle?

At Boeing we waged a political struggle to reject the contract. At MUNI, we ratified. In both cases, the Party was strengthened. That's an example of "hard line-flexible tactics."

The class war goes on forever. But every battle has it's own limits and tactics. Every fight has a beginning and an end. A workplace with a history of Party activity, a regular CHALLENGE readership and a history of political and class struggle has more potential than one with no base for the Party. A grievance hearing doesn't have the same potential as a strike. It's complicated. We have to fight mechanical thinking and one-sidedness. We have to be more objective and approach things more dialectically.

Being "in it to win it" means immersing ourselves in the mass movement. We want to advance our line and sharpen the class struggle from many vantage points, the main one being the shop floor. Yes, we want to confront the garment boss over reduction in piecework pay. Yes, we want to end wage progression and prison labor. Yes, we want striking janitors to win health insurance. Yes, we want to

stop layoffs, get fired workers rehired (including ourselves), and fire racist and sexist bosses. In short, we want to build a fighting Party.

But winning the demand will not stop imperialist war or racist police terror. We want to use the particular struggle to fight the union leaders and liberal politicians for the political leadership of the workers. The most important thing is to learn from these struggles how to build a mass PLP and the fight for communist revolution. Leading class struggle, around our line, opens up many possibilities for building the Party.

## **Prepare For The Inevitable**

During the MUNI contract fight, one of our comrades was attacked on the front page of the SF Chronicle for being on PLP's "Executive Board." During the Boeing engineers' strike, one of our comrades was told by his supervisor that he would be fired if production workers joined the walkout. At Metro, the union threatened to use an anti-communist law to stop us from winning the election.

Had we been able to lead illegal work stoppages at MUNI or Boeing, we probably would have been fired. There's something to be said for not getting too far out in front of the workers. Maybe we are more patient and have a better feel for the work. Maybe we're more focused on political development and less on waging reform fights. Or maybe we're too hesitant to cross the line (older, and closer to retirement). No doubt it's a combination of factors, not the least of which is workers not being willing at the moment.

We shouldn't draw the wrong conclusions. The rulers still hold state power and fighting for communist revolution is the ultimate crime. Building a serious revolutionary movement that can withstand and advance under any attack, and can continue to lead under any and all circumstances, means deepening and strengthening our personal/political ties among the workers on many levels. To not do so is to operate at the whim of the ruling class. It can only end in disaster.

## **Serve The Workers**

The current internal struggle around the schools highlights an important aspect of the work. Most of our work is among teachers, health care workers, transit and other city workers. In all the "service" industries, the main contradiction is between the bosses and working class at large who use the service. The contradictions between the bosses and the "service workers" are often secondary. We want to win these workers to unite with their students, patients, riders and clients. We refuse to accept fascist attacks on the youth, prison labor, Workfare, fare hikes and service cuts in exchange for a "decent" contract.

The same is true in basic industry. Auto, steel, and aerospace form the war industry. Boeing makes the missiles dropped on Yugoslavia and Iraq. We want to win industrial workers to overthrow the warmakers, not get a better deal from them.

"Serve the Workers" should be the central political point in our work. We must fight against the narrow trade union outlook of the labor leaders. Among "service" workers we should fight for demands that serve the masses. In basic industry, internationalism and anti-imperialism take center stage. In our concentrations, we can create a mass consciousness to put the needs of our class first.

## **Some Proposals**

Make the clubs, expanded clubs, or fractions the political center of the work.

Every club should set goals for increasing the C-D readership, mainly by winning new networks. Goals and plans should be written up for regular check-up.

Lead more class struggle. Build a fighting Party. Use every fight as a way to fight for the political leadership of the workers. Don't fear making mistakes.

Serve the Workers. Win workers to fight for our class.

## **Vietnam Syndrome: Still Haunting the U.S. Bosses**

For most of the Progressive Labor Party's existence, we have believed that working-class soldiers and sailors are among the key forces to be won to communist revolution. Rather than serving the interests of U.S. bosses in imperialist adventures, we have urged GI's—both from inside and outside the military—to "turn the guns around," and thereby fight for their class's interests. Some may think this is wishful thinking, that the control of U.S. rulers over the military is ironclad. However, history proves that nothing could be further from the truth.

For the last hundred years or more the weak link of modern capitalism has been the ruling class's inability to field a reliable army. From the Spanish-American war up to the current wars in the Middle East and Yugoslavia, the world's imperialists have faced rebellion from working class soldiers inside the ranks of capitalist armies.

At the end of the 19th century, the rising U.S. ruling class launched a war to take Cuba and the Philippines away from the then imperialist power Spain. A significant aspect of this war was the use of black soldiers in major battles. This war presented many contradictions to these soldiers who were now being used to kill workers in another land for a racist U.S.

A group of black soldiers deserted the U.S. Army and joined the Philippine guerilla army fighting against the U.S. One of them, David Fagin, became an important general in the Philippine Guerilla Army, leading many battles against U.S. troops.

In World War I, when millions were killed to protect various bosses' profits, there were massive soldier rebellions. During Christmas, 1914, British and German troops declared their own battlefield truce, cementing their comradeship with a soccer game. In the Polish Army, communists actively organized soldiers to desert on the Russian front. In the U.S., communists in the Merchant Marine refused to carry weapons to Europe.

The largest and most significant rebellion erupted among hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers and sailors who literally turned their guns on the bosses and helped bring the Russian working class to power in 1917, led by Lenin's Communist Party. The Bolsheviks had been organizing inside the Russian military since 1903. They had helped lead rebellions in the Navy during the 1905 war with Japan, including the famous insurrection on the battleship Potemkin. The sailors took over the ship to support workers in Odessa rebelling against the Czar.

By 1917 the years of work in the military had developed a pro-working class base in large sections of the army and navy. There were communists leaders in many, units. It was this red-led base that first demanded the seizure of power. Led by communists, virtually the entire Black Sea fleet, the largest section of the Russian Navy, went over to the side of the working class. Large units of the Russian

Army led the march on St. Petersburg that toppled the old ruling class.

Shortly afterwards, 22 capitalist countries, including the U.S., invaded the Soviet Union, aiming to—as Churchill declared, "strangle the baby in it's cradle." But, in a seven-year battle in which 4.5 million Russians died, the communist-led working class defeated the invading armies.

World War II witnessed a clash of very committed armies. While all the capitalist armies of Europe and Asia rolled over with barely a fight, the Nazis and Japanese fascists were perhaps the only capitalist military forces to be truly politically won. Only the Russian and Chinese Red Armies, committed to defending workers power, could smash them.

During WWII, the U.S. military did fight to some extent though not nearly as fiercely as the Red Armies. In fact the U.S. avoided large-scale battles until the tide of the war turned. Even D-Day pales in comparison to the massive battles in the East where the Red Army tied up 80% of Hitler's divisions along a 2,000-mile front. Casualties were in the millions. At the Battle of Stalingrad, which even Western military historians recognized at the turning point of WW II, the Soviets captured one-third of a million Nazi troops.

Ironically, among the most politically committed in the U.S. military were the tens of thousands of communists who volunteered. Rather than vowing to turn the guns around, they joined to fight for the U.S. as part of the united front against fascism. As soon as fascists were defeated, they were among those who organized large demonstrations of U.S. troops to "Bring the boys home," refusing to be used as tools of imperialism against other workers.

In Korea the U.S. army, under the cover of the UN, was barely able to hold onto the half of Korea they had seized at the end of WW II.

## **The Vietnam War saw the complete collapse of the U.S. military**

(Much of the following information on the Vietnam War was obtained from *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* by H. Bruce Franklin. All references from other publications were drawn from this book also.)

U.S. bosses, through their media, have spread the lie that the military was "not allowed" to win the Vietnam War, that it was "forced to fight with one hand tied behind its back." However, while the main reason the rulers were forced to withdraw from Vietnam was the heroism and fighting quality and commitment of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, and the anti-war movement inside the U.S. played an important role, a major factor in that withdrawal was the actions of U.S. soldiers and sailors who were in a virtual state of rebellion. U.S. bosses could not field a reliable army and navy.

This opposition did not start with the full-scale U.S. invasion of the late 1960s nor with the appearance of the Eisenhower-Kennedy "advisors" of the late '50s and early '60s, nor even with the U.S. betrayal of the 1954 Geneva Agreement which marked the surrender of French rulers' attempts to re-establish their colonial rule over Vietnam. It actually began at the end of World War II. In November 1945, when 8 to 12 U.S. troopships were diverted from their scheduled duty of returning WWII veterans back home and assigned to transport French troops and French Foreign Legionnaires to re-colonize Vietnam, the Merchant Marine crew of the "Winchester Victory" wired President Truman to "vigorously protest the use of this and other American vessels for carrying foreign combat troops to foreign soil...to further the imperialist policies of foreign governments when there are American troops waiting to come home."

On arriving in Vietnam, the French troops were saluted by former Japanese prisoners of war whom the British had rearmed to help the French suppress the Vietnamese! The entire crews of four of these U.S. troopships met in Saigon and drew up a resolution condemning the U.S. government for using these ships to transport troops "to subjugate the native population of Vietnam." But this relatively peaceful opposition was nothing compared to what was to come when the U.S. officially landed its own troops in the hundreds of thousands in Vietnam.

On April 14, 1967, at the U.S. base in Dau Tieng, units of the Third Brigade of the Fourth Infantry Division defied orders for a "search and destroy" mission. The Commanding Officer ordered others to fire on the rebels, who returned the fire. Dozens were killed, three helicopters were destroyed and the base was sealed for three days. (*Le Monde*, 4/27/67)

An underground of deserters spread to Sweden, Germany, Canada, Japan and the Soviet Union, establishing an anti-war infrastructure, RITA—Resistance Inside the Army. They organized a demonstration of 1,000 active duty servicemen in London. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 6/1/71) Refusal to enter combat and outright mutinies spread after the Vietnamese Tet offensive in 1968.

While much of this was kept from the U.S. public, on August 26, 1969, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on "The Fighting Men Who Had Enough," the unanimous refusal of an infantry company to go back into battle. Three months later, a unit at Pleiku fasted against the war and boycotted the Thanksgiving dinner. This "John Turkey Movement" spread throughout Vietnam. (*New York Times*, 11/28/69)

The movement that distinguished the Vietnam War from most previous wars involved "fraggings." It got its distinctive name from hurling fragmentation grenades at commissioned or non-commissioned officers. However, the term was applied to killing these officers by any means possible. GI's actually put out bounties on the heads of particularly hated ones. In one division, fraggings were running at the rate of one a week in 1971. (See box on "*The Collapse of the Armed Forces*.") By mid-1972, the Pentagon officially admitted to 551 fraggings. This didn't include killing officers by rifle fire in combat.

In the 1971 fiscal year, 98,324 servicemen deserted, 142 for every 1,000 on active duty. (SFC, 1/17/72) By 1974, the U.S. War Department was to report 503,926 "incidents of desertion" from July 1, 1966 to December 31, 1973. (*New York Times*, 8/20/74)

The "near mutinous" resistance was spreading and intensifying, so that by the end of 1971, U.S. commanders hardly had any reliable ground army to send into battle. Their alternative was massive air power to "bomb Vietnam back to the Stone Age." The main segment of this strategy was the flotilla of the Seventh Fleet's aircraft carriers massed in the Gulf of Tonkin. They were just off the coast of Vietnam, much closer than the B-52 bombers based in Thailand and Guam. However, the final straw that torpedoed this strategy was the massive protest, rebellions and sabotage by the sailors aboard these carriers.

The year before, the sailing of the destroyer *Richard B. Anderson* had been delayed eight weeks when the crew deliberately wrecked an engine. (SFC, 6/14/70) Three sailors were charged with sabotage. By the end of 1971, sailors had come together into the SOS movement—Stop Our Ships/Support Our Sailors.

In the Fall of '71, thousands on board three giant carriers—the *USS Constellation*, *Coral Sea* and *Kitty Hawk*—had signed anti-war petitions, were publishing anti-war newspapers on the ships and were supporting dozens of crew members who were refusing Vietnam duty. This was part of the

sailors' offensive that picked up steam throughout 1972, just as the U.S. was engaging in negotiations with the Vietnamese to end the war on terms most favorable to Washington. The rank-and-file sailors sabotaged that effort by the following:

- In March, the aircraft carrier USS Midway was ordered to leave San Francisco for Vietnam. Protests and sabotage swept the ship. The crewmen spilled 3,000 gallons of oil into San Francisco Bay. (*SFC*, 5/24/72)
- In June, the attack carrier USS Ranger was ordered to sail from San Diego. Twenty acts of sabotage culminating in the destruction of the main reduction gear of an engine forced a 4½-month delay in sailing. Sabotage and fires continued after the jailing of an accused sailor. (Palo Alto Times, 7/15/72 and *SFC*, 8/6/72)
- In July, the aircraft carrier USS Forrestal had a major fire set by the crew to the captain's and admiral's quarters, with millions in damages, and was also prevented from sailing.
- In September and October, the crew of the aircraft carrier USS Coral Sea (who had been publishing the anti-war newspaper "We Are Everywhere" on board), protested against the war, with over 1,000 signing petitions to "Stop Our Ship." It was forced to return to San Francisco where crew members organized support rallies. Nearly 100, including several officers, refused Vietnam service and jumped ship in Hawaii and California.
- In September, the crew of the aircraft carrier USS Ticonderoga organized a "Stop It Now" movement. Also in September, naval intelligence tried, unsuccessfully, to break up an SOS movement on the USS Enterprise, home of the anti-war paper "SOS Enterprise Ledger."
- Again in September, a bloody battle between groups of Marines erupted on the amphibious landing ship USS Sumter in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. (*SFC*, 1/10/73)
- In October, when the USS Kitty Hawk was ordered to return from Subic Bay (in the Philippines) to Vietnam, instead of going home, black sailors led a major rebellion, including hand-to-hand battle with Marines sent to break up a meeting on board the ship. The chaotic battle lasted several hours. This had followed an 8-month tour of duty off Vietnam amid anti-war activities, including publication of the anti-war newspaper "Kitty Litter." Four days later the fighting spread to the ship's oiler, the USS Hassayampa. The Kitty Hawk was forced to retire to San Diego and then to San Francisco for a "6-month re-fitting job," and was essentially removed from the war altogether. As it later turned out, a House Armed Services Committee investigation reported that the Kitty Hawk had been rescheduled to return to Vietnam "due to the incidents of sabotage aboard her sister ships, the USS Ranger and the USS Forrestal." ("Report on Disciplinary Problems," *House Armed Services Committee*)
- In October and November, sabotage and open revolt on the USS Constellation forced its return to San Diego. One hundred and thirty sailors prevented its departure for two months by refusing to re-board and staged militant demonstrations on shore, after which they were discharged. The media said it was a "racial outbreak," but a photo in the San Francisco Chronicle captioned, "The dissident sailors raised their fists in the black power salute," actually showed mainly white sailors with upraised arms and clenched fists. (*SFC*, 11-10-72) Curiously, an article in the *New York Times Magazine* (2/18/73) presented it as a purely "racial event," and never mentioned any anti-war movement on board, billing it as the "first mass mutiny in the history of the U.S. Navy." The ship was unable to sail until January 5, 1973, three weeks prior to the signing of the Paris Peace Accords.

By November 10, 1972, five giant aircraft carriers were tied up in San Diego, forced out of combat in

the Gulf of Tonkin by crews immersed in anti-war activities, including each with their own on-board newspapers. In December, the USS Ranger, now all repaired, made it to the Gulf of Tonkin, only to be disabled once again by a deliberately set fire. The Navy admitted it was the 6th major disaster on a Seventh Fleet carrier since October 1.

On December 18, 1972, the Nixon Administration launched a 12-day all-out bombardment of Hanoi, Haiphong harbor and much of north Vietnam to force Vietnamese acceptance of major changes in the "peace pact." Individual pilots refused to participate on moral grounds. The most serious opposition occurred in the supersecret 6990th Air Force Security Service in Okinawa. It was their task to warn B-52 bombers about Vietnamese air defense communications; therefore, they had first-hand knowledge of Vietnam's peace preparations. This unit staged a work stoppage bordering on open mutiny. According to author Seymour Hersh, who interviewed at least ten members of this unit in early 1973 for his book, "The Price of Power: Kissinger in the White House," during this work stoppage there were cheers whenever a B-52 was shot down. Some airmen were later court-martialed. (pp. 628-629) The Pentagon admitted 15 bombers were shot down, although Hanoi's figure of 34 was probably closer to the truth.

With the signing of a peace agreement, U.S. bosses were forced out of Vietnam, ironically only to be welcomed back in the form of Ford and Nike sweatshop factories and now finally cheering Clinton himself. But nothing can ever erase the contribution of rebellious U.S. soldiers and sailors to "the only war the U.S. ever lost."

For nearly 30 years now the "Vietnam Syndrome"—the bosses' fear of GI rebellion—has terrified the ruling class. For good reason, the bosses' military continues to be the Achilles heel of the capitalists. During the Gulf oil war against Iraq, many individual soldiers refused to go. Dozens of soldiers went to jail rather than fight, including many who took public stands against the war. An entire unit of reservists from Louisiana went AWOL while their unit was training at Ft. Hood Texas. Two soldiers organized the desertion and the chartered buses to take everyone back to Louisiana.

The Iraqi soldiers were an example of the lack of commitment in virtually all capitalist armies. During the actual fighting in Kuwait and Iraq, they offered no resistance and surrendered as soon as they had the chance. The one time the Iraqis did fight occurred early on when an Iraqi tank unit entered Saudi Arabia. U.S. troops broke ranks and ran. The Iraqis were driven back a day or so later, but not before exposing serious problems among U.S. troops. The question remains about what might happen when the U.S. sends a large ground army into Iraq in Exxon-Mobil's coming war for control of oil in the Mid-East.

The Bush Clinton military intervention in Somalia exposed political problems among the most elite and committed U.S. soldiers. In a battle well documented in the book "Black Hawk Down," Ranger and Delta force troops were caught completely unprepared for the Somali working class's hatred of the U.S. military. During a fierce battle U.S. troops became primarily concerned with staying alive, while the Somalis were fighting to the death. Although the U.S. interventionists killed over 1,000 Somalis and suffered only 75 casualties themselves, it was a stunning defeat for U.S. imperialism. The latter was driven out by the fear that it could not sustain even that casualty rate and continue to function and maintain support for the war among U.S. workers.

The recent war escalation in the Middle East has exposed contradictions within the Israeli Army, long considered one of the world's more committed armies. As an example, recently an Israeli soldier refused to go into battle against Palestinian demonstrators. He was supported by an organization of soldiers and their families opposed to the oppression of Palestinian workers, indicating this act may be the tip of the iceberg.

Soldiers and sailors will not spontaneously turn the guns around against the bosses and make a communist revolution, but history clearly shows that the ruling class is far from having complete control of their own military. Winning soldiers to the long, hard fight for communism is both possible and necessary for the future emancipation of their class, the working class.

## "The Collapse of the Armed Forces"

(By Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., in the *Armed Forces Journal*, June 1971. Heinl was a combat veteran with 27 years in the Marines, former director of the Marine Corps historical program and author of five books, including "The Marine Officer's Guide" and "Soldiers of the Sea," the definitive history of the Marine Corps. Excerpts follow.)

The morale, discipline and battleworthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are...lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.

By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and noncommissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not near-mutinous....

The Army seems to be in worst trouble. But the Navy has serious and unprecedented problems....

"They have setup separate companies," writes an American soldier from Cu Chi, quoted in the New York Times, "for men who refuse to go out in the field....If a man is ordered to go to such and such a place, he no longer goes through the hassle of refusing; he just packs his shirt and goes to visit some buddies at another base camp. Operations have become incredibly ragtag. Many guys don't even put on the uniforms any more....The American garrisons on the larger bases are virtually disarmed. The lifers have taken our weapons from us and put them under lock and key....There has also been quite a few frag incidents in the battalion."

...The Pentagon has now disclosed that fraggings in 1970 (209) have more than doubled those of the previous year (96).

Word of the deaths of officers will bring cheers at troop movies or in bivouacs of certain units.

In one such division—the morale-plagued Americal—fraggings during 1971...[are] running about one a week....

Bounties, raised by common subscription in amounts running anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000, have been widely reported put on the heads of leaders whom the privates and Sp4s want to rub out.

Shortly after the costly assault on Hamburger Hill in mid-1969, the GI underground newspaper in Vietnam, "GI Says," publicly offered a \$10,000 bounty on LtCol Weldon Honeycutt, the officer who ordered (and led) the attack....

"Another Hamburger Hill" (i.e., toughly contested assault), conceded a veteran major, "is definitely out...."

"Search and evade" (meaning tacit avoidance of combat by units in the field) is now virtually a principle of war, vividly expressed by the GI phrase, "CYA (cover your ass) and get home!"

...[These] widespread conditions among American forces in Vietnam...have only been exceeded in



this century by the French Army's Nivelle mutinies of 1917 and the collapse of the Tsarist armies in 1916 and 1917. [A most interesting point of reference! —Ed.]

....Sedition...infests the Armed Services:

....There appear to be some 144 underground newspapers published on or aimed at U.S. military bases in this country and overseas....

At least 14 GI dissent organizations (including two made up exclusively of officers) now operate more or less openly....

In 1970, the Army had 65,643 deserters, or roughly the equivalent of four infantry divisions. This desertion rate (52.3 soldiers per thousand) is well over twice the peak rate for Korea (22.3 per thousand). It is more than quadruple the 1966 desertion rate (14.7 per thousand) of the then well-trained, highly spirited professional Army....

Moreover—and this is the heart of the Army's dilemma—only 4% of the voluntary enlistees now choose service in combat arms (infantry, armor, artillery) and of those only 2.5% opt for the infantry. Today's [1971] soldiers, it seems, volunteer readily enough for the tail of the Army, but not for its teeth....

## **PLP GIs' Activity in the Military**

Progressive Labor Party cut its teeth among the rebellious GI's of the Vietnam War. We rejected the pacifist ideology, popular at the time, of draft dodging and resistance. Instead, we sent members into the armed forces as early as 1966, a mere year after our Party was constituted. One of these young Party members recalls the first of a series of rebellions in his unit during the spring of 1973:

"We had been distributing literature explaining the class nature of racism and the need for multi-racial unity against the brass for six months [including] 50 CHALLENGES per issue.

"My company had been out in the field for three days. The foxholes we had been ordered to lay down in had been turned into swimming pools by the incessant rain. We were all angry as hell.

"Some of us were trucked back to the barracks. Our Captain "All-swine" Alwine ordered us to get haircuts before returning to camp. Nobody wanted to. Many black soldiers complained that nobody on base knew how to cut their hair. Following their lead, white soldiers also refused.

"The lifers immediately split us into two groups, one black and one white. They ordered us into the trucks. A few of us organizers scurried between them.

"Then it happened. All the black soldiers got out of their truck and boarded the truck with their white buddies. Hugs and "power" handshakes were exchanged as well as heartfelt vows to fight the brass together. We commandeered the truck, kicked the lifers off and sped back to camp.

"It was night when we arrived. Our comrades had built small fires to dry themselves as they stood watch on the perimeter. We went from blaze to blaze, picking up more soldiers as we went. After circling the camp we headed for the captain's headquarters.

"He must have seen us because he sent the chaplain out to run interference. The chaplain told us we were violating God's word. We told him to go to a place where God is reputed not to be....He left in a

hurry!

"We caught the captain in his tent (he later would run out the back when he saw us coming). More than 50 of us, black, Latin and white, presented our list of anti-racist demands: no bad discharges, no job discrimination, no riot control, no article 15s, no racist slurs from lifers, no genocidal war and, of course, no haircuts! We retired to the heated officers' tent- no more wet foxholes for us!

"The commanding lieutenant of my platoon, a recent ROTC grad, ordered us out to the perimeter. One GI, recently returned from Vietnam, asked him where he hailed from. 'Idaho,' replied the "lieuy"

"The Vietnam vet shot back, 'Where I come from, we eat people from Idaho!' The "lieuy" left-for good.

"I will never forget the camaraderie of those days.. The grandeur of these rank-and-file soldiers uniting to fight the racist brass surpasses every Hollywood war epic."

While we cannot detail the entire experience our Party has had in the military in this article, we can sum it up by saying that, on balance, our small successes scared the brass. U.S. counter-intelligence officer Taylor testified (House Internal Securities Committee, Vol. II) that "other organizations were being overshadowed by . . . PLP in the 6th Army." These small numbers can today become big ones by elevating revolution over reform.

## **Why GI Joe/Jane Still Refuses to Fight to Defend Exxon/Mobil's Oil Empire**

The Vietnam Syndrome—the ruling class fear that U.S. workers won't support, and may rebel against, a racist foreign war understood as being fought for bosses' profits—is still influencing U.S. imperialist foreign policy more than a quarter century after the end of that war. This factor arose once more with the Bush selection of Colin Powell, the general in charge of the Gulf War, as Secretary of State.

Powell, the first black appointee to that highest cabinet position, has spent his career trying to answer the Vietnam Syndrome. On the one hand, he had absolutely no qualms about slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Iraqi workers and their families. On the other hand, he conducted a relatively "clean" war as far as U.S. casualties were concerned. While using saturation terror bombing and meeting little resistance from Iraqi soldiers not won to die for Saddam Hussein, he still opposed marching a ground army to Baghdad to topple Hussein, fearing the effect of possibly thousands of dead GI's returning to the U.S. in body bags.

Now Powell is appointed Secretary of State to run U.S. foreign policy. Number one on that agenda is Gulf War II, the necessity of the ruling class forces led by Rockefeller's Exxon Mobil to secure dominant control of Mid-East oil, especially the cheap crude produced in Iraq. Powell is still "promising" to oust Hussein, mainly with "stronger sanctions," so far a failed policy. He is still worried about U.S. working class reaction to body bags in a foreign war, especially if workers and GI's understand it's to protect the bosses' oil.

Therefore, to counteract the dangers in an army heavily populated by black soldiers—even more so in the infantry, the heart of a ground invasion—the ruling class figures a black war leader (plus the first black woman to lead the President's National Security Agency) might be better able to win over black and working class GI's generally to back an imperialist war.

Powell himself has been working hard to create an image of "concern" for workers. He made a vigorous defense of affirmative action at the Republican Convention and in his autobiography denounced a policy of allowing the children "of the powerful and well-placed" managing to wrangle slots in the Reserve and National Guard to avoid the front lines in Vietnam. He wrote that, "This raw class discrimination strikes me the most damaging to the ideal that all Americans are created equal and owe equal allegiance to their country."

The rulers still remember the mass opposition inside the armed forces to the Vietnam War and therefore are treading cautiously, appointing a black "hero" to head the effort to clean up the ugly image of U.S. imperialist invaders. They know the danger is still there. Although they probably will go ahead anyway, because they have to, this contradiction opens up massive opportunities for PLP and the working class to rebel against the ruling class's wars for profits. The Vietnam Syndrome still lives, even more so.

## **The Kerrey "Confession" Assassin For Hire**

The rulers are trying to use the "confession" by ex-Senator/Governor/war "hero" Bob Kerrey (and now college president, naturally) to prepare today's working-class youth for the "war-is-hell-but-we've-got-to-fight-and-die-for-'our'-country" syndrome. The massacre of unarmed civilians by Kerrey and his Navy Seals — and his current attempt to justify it with the crap about the "confusion" of war — once again highlights the fact that arch liberals like Kerrey are just as fascist as, and therefore even more dangerous than the open right-wingers.

The *New York Times* editorializes (April 26): "The nation...must stick with the ongoing task of remembering the horrible lesson of the physical and psychological damage to people on both sides when a great power undertakes a war without a rationale." (How neatly the Times equates "people on both sides": three million Vietnamese dead and 58,000 U.S. deaths.) Now, implies the Times, there must be careful justification of any future war by this "great [imperialist] power" so that what happened in Vietnam doesn't happen in Iraq. Of course, the Times conveniently forgets they did have a rationale in Vietnam — "saving Vietnam from communism." However, while U.S. rulers were driven from Vietnam militarily, U.S. imperialism won out because the Vietnamese leadership had a nationalist (essentially capitalist) outlook, not a communist one. So Ford, Nike & Co. are now in Vietnam paying workers \$2 a day and Vietnam is a capitalist country.

Kerrey told ROTC cadets at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) that his massacre of the Vietnamese "could be justified militarily": "the people we killed were probably enemy sympathizers." No kidding! The "enemy" was the entire population of Vietnam, fighting a people's war, defending themselves against a Nazi-like invasion by the world's most powerful imperialist power, bent on making Vietnam a source of U.S. corporate exploitation and low-wage labor. (Unfortunately, the latter is the current result.) Since they were (Kerrey's) "enemy," and in his mind "sub-human" anyway, it's O.K. to slaughter them. As you will read in the adjoining article, there were hundreds of thousands of GI's who were not "confused" and did not view the Vietnamese as the enemy. In fact, they saw the Kerrey's as their enemy, and killed hundreds of such officers.

In his VMI speech, Kerry quotes a career Army officer friend defending the drafting of 18 to 25-year-olds: "Give me power over when and how much a young man can eat and sleep and I believe I can get him to do anything I want. After 25, they start to ask questions. And...[then] they're no good to me anymore." Then the liberal Kerrey shows his true colors, saying, "My friend was right."

Not so fast. Opposed to Kerrey's (ruling class) "morality" were plenty of those 18 to 25-year-olds who

not only refused to fight the "enemy" — over half a million deserted — but turned the guns around. They put bounties out on their officers, fragged (killed) hundreds, rebelled against going into battle, put a huge dent in the carpet bombing of north Vietnam by disabling the Navy's seven largest aircraft carriers, while publishing 144 underground GI papers that detailed how GI's could oppose the war inside Vietnam. No wonder that Marine Colonel Heinl wrote about "The Collapse of the Armed Forces (see box). Their "morale, discipline and battle-worthiness" were "worse than at any time...possibly in the history of the United States."

This was a major factor — other than the biggest one, the heroism of the Vietnamese themselves — in forcing U.S. bosses out of Vietnam: increasingly, U.S. soldiers and sailors wouldn't fight.

U.S. rulers, now planning how to fight the wars that will secure their profits worldwide, want youth to follow the liberal Kerreys, not the rebellious GI's who turned the guns around. Without a reliable military, U.S. bosses would be hard put to carry out any of their imperialist wars. That's their biggest worry. It's up to us to win the youth to understand who the real enemy is — not our brother and sister workers abroad, but the ruling class on Wall Street who exploit all of us.