

CHALLENGE



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From Syria to Ferguson Imperialist Crisis, Communist Opportunity

Three trends in the Middle East are accelerating toward a broader global conflict:

- A sharpening imperialist rivalry that is driving Barack Obama’s trillion-dollar revitalization of the U.S. nuclear war machine (New York Times, 9/22/14).
- A growing disagreement among U.S. rulers as to how to handle the threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) amid a two-front war in Syria, the potential overrunning of a fractured Iraq, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and China’s expanding ties with Iran.
- The pressing need by the U.S. ruling class for more intense fascism, including profit-driven wage cuts, heightened racism to protect super-profits, and a militarized response to crush working-class rebellions.

But the rulers have a problem. As recent polls on the question of U.S. ground troops in the Middle East have shown, workers have not signed on to the bosses’ war plans. This opens the door for an organized working class, led by the Progressive Labor Party, to wage class war and communist revolution for workers’ power and to destroy the imperialist profit system. Only a society run by and for workers — communism — can end the problems caused by capitalism: depressions and mass unemployment, racism, sexism, poverty, environmental degradation, and unending wars.

Obama’s extended air bombardment of Iraq and now Syria — a close ally of Iran, Russia and China — brings the prospect of global conflict ever nearer. As they blast ISIS from the air, some U.S. strategists are also seeking to arm rebels to overthrow Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, which may or may not prove feasible. Even were they to succeed, the response would be harsh from Tehran, Moscow and Beijing.

Meanwhile, the main, imperialist wing of U.S. capitalists is facing the sudden need to prevent ISIS from seizing major oilfields in Iraq and, even more important, Saudi Arabia. These fields are the linchpin of U.S. rulers’ status as the world’s leading imperialist power.



The U.S. uses 25 percent of the world’s oil (Politifact.com). Its military depends on it. Even as the bosses find alternative domestic energy sources, they still need to control the distribution and pricing of Middle East oil. They need to protect the profits of core ruling-class enterprises like ExxonMobil and Chevron. Equally important, they cannot afford to cede these strategic riches to their imperialist rivals.

Fierce Debate Among U.S. Imperialists

At the same time, the U.S. bosses have long recognized the need to prepare for an inevitable military confrontation with China and/or Russia. The difficulty

of managing these two necessities is fueling a fierce debate among U.S. imperialists over Syria-Iraq policy.

One camp calls shelling Syria a mistake that bolsters a U.S. enemy in Assad and does nothing to build public support for greater war goals. Another camp sees the shelling as a needed first step toward the march of U.S. troops into Damascus, the Syrian capital — a probability acknowledged on September 28 by House Speaker John Boehner.

On consecutive days, the New York Times, U.S. finance capital’s leading mouthpiece, published two

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JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

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

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

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Editorial

Imperialist Crisis, Communist Oppurtunity

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editorials: “Wrong Turn On Syria: Helping Assad?” (9/24/14) and “Wrong Turn On Syria: No Convincing Plan” (9/25/14). The first said, “In the short term, Mr. Assad stands to benefit most from America’s military incursion” and the suppression of ISIS. It also warned that ISIS leaders view American intervention “as a recruitment tool.”

The second editorial faults Obama’s failure to win the public or Congress to the new militarism that his capitalist handlers require: “In the absence of public understanding or discussion and a coherent plan, the strikes in Syria were a bad decision.”

But Kenneth Pollack, a national security official under President Bill Clinton who later pushed hard for President George W. Bush’s Iraq war, thinks that ISIS could be a useful pretext for Obama to mount a U.S.-backed civil war in Syria and rid itself of Assad. Writing in the journal of the ultra-imperialist Council on Foreign Relations, Pollack proposed that the U.S. could achieve its goals without U.S. ground forces “by building a new Syrian opposition army capable of defeating both President Bashar al-Assad and the more militant Islamists” (*Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2014).

Another *Foreign Affairs* article, “The Retrenchment War,” follows U.S. imperialists’ thinking that there are bigger fish to fry than ISIS — namely, the task of mobilizing the U.S. for a potential World War III.

On September 24, the Times countered that with a skeptical assessment that the build-up of an effective “moderate” Syrian rebel force “could take years, assuming the strategy works.” These differences reflect the disarray and indecision from the White House on down.

Bosses Need to Mobilize U.S. for Potential World War

The advance of ISIS is not altogether a negative development for U.S. rulers. They can point to the group as another “weapon of mass destruction” (a la Iraq), an excuse to bolster a failing NATO and their own war industries at the expense of decent wages and social services for U.S. workers.

Retrenchment was recently promoted by CFR chairman Richard Haass in his brief for militarization, “Foreign Policy Begins at Home.” This ruling-class manifesto spells out the need to rebuild infrastructure to world-war capacity, forge wartime political consensus within a fragmented U.S. capitalist class, and win working-class youth to kill their overseas brothers and sisters.

Forced to defer a highly unpopular military draft, the bosses are pushing patriotism through “national service.” This strategy would use immigrant Latin workers and youth

both to fill the gap in military recruitment and to supply the millions of low-paid laborers needed to rebuild domestic infrastructure. In sum, it is a plan to put the country on a war footing.

Rulers’ Dilemma, Communists’ Opportunity

Once again, however, the rulers face a dilemma. The jobless black and Latin youth the bosses need as cannon fodder are the same youth their racist cops are tormenting and killing on the streets of cities large and small, from Chicago and Los Angeles to Ferguson, Missouri. In New York, under liberal Mayor Bill De Blasio and recycled police chief Bill “Broken Windows” Bratton, the NYPD made more than 137,000 misdemeanor arrests in the first seven months of this year. According to an editor at the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School, “More than 86 percent of those arrested were minorities. Those numbers are nearly identical to arrest data from the same period last year” under the previous mayor, the more openly racist Michael Bloomberg (NYT, 9/26/14).

Oppression inevitably generates rebellion. While the bosses need racism to sustain capitalist profits, it also undermines their promotion of war fever and mass enlistment in the military.

Meanwhile, the U.S. capitalists have to be unnerved by a development involving its main imperialist rival and its leading regional threat. As the Times reports (9/21/14):

Two Chinese warships have docked at Iran’s principal naval port for the first time in history.... The visit to the port of Bandar Abbas is an example of the growing ties between China and Iran. China is already the principal buyer of Iranian oil.... Iran’s main competitor in the Persian Gulf is the United States Navy, which has a base in Bahrain and stations at least one aircraft carrier in the region. On several occasions, Iran has threatened to choke off the strategic Hormuz Strait, a narrow waterway between Iran and the United Arab Emirates that is a gateway for 40 percent of the world’s oil and gas shipments.

U.S. rulers suffer from a depressed economy, decaying industry and infrastructure, a divided capitalist class, and an alienated, war-weary working class. The bosses are expanding their stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weapons and a proven readiness to use them, at the risk of hundreds of millions of workers’ lives. All the more reason to build a revolutionary communist party and to destroy this barbarous system.✪



The only way to defeat imperialism is to organize a communist revolution.
That’s what PLP is doing. Join us.

Red Leadership Needed to End Cholera and Occupation

PORT-AU-PRINCE, September 15 — Several so-called progressive organizations held a sit-in at the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP) today to demand justice — reparations — for the victims of cholera. They also demanded the departure of MINUSTAH, the United Nations troops that have been occupying Haiti since 2004. It was these same troops that brought cholera to Haiti in 2010, 10 months after the devastating earthquake. Over 8,500 people have died, and 350,000 have suffered from the illness.

Dozens of cholera victims, the majority women and elderly, gathered at the entrance of MSPP. They travelled hours from the Central Plateau (epicenter of the cholera epidemic) and Carrefour, a suburb of the capital. They waited over an hour in the scorching sun for the “leaders” to arrive.

PLP members participated in this and other numerous anti-cholera, anti-MINUSTAH protests over the years to point out the racist nature of the UN and imperialist

onslaught in Haiti. Our position is to demand mass solutions: vaccinations, cholera treatment centers and a total modernization of sanitation and water systems, paid for by UN and the imperialists, rather than individual solutions.

As important as winning those would be, they will not end the struggle of workers in Haiti to build a real future for the working class. We fight to give revolutionary leadership to the struggle, not to rely on the “good will” of the courts or ruling-class imperialists and their local lackeys. We brought signs and led chants, asking the crowd to radicalize the movement by blocking MSPP’s gate and stopping vehicles.

That’s a strong contrast to the young bourgeois opportunist politicians who promised the people benefits and made them believe in the possibility of receiving money from the UN. They didn’t chant and tried to move away from those who did, showing that these participants were motivated not by class consciousness but by the opportunity to gain some personal

benefits.

These pseudo-leaders tried to behave like superstars, only talking to the press, and not allowing demonstrators to speak at all. They would never speak, as we did, to the workers of the world, calling for a united fight against the health problems and lack of care faced by oppressed workers worldwide. Despite their claims to be on the left, they have no revolutionary ideas. Cholera is a disease of poverty; bosses like these are seldom among the victims.

This kind of experience shows that only revolutionary communists can lead the fight against capitalism and imperialism. We will continue this fight against not only against the bosses but also against the corrupt opportunists who serve the bosses’ interests. In doing so we will sharpen the class consciousness of workers and students here in Haiti and throughout the world. We have an egalitarian, anti-racist, anti-sexist world to win. ☺

2,000 Fastfood Workers Protest \$15 Won’t Solve Workers’ Problems



A few days ago, as an active member of a community organization, I was part of a large protest in front of two fast food restaurants, one of which belonged to the giant multinational corporation, McDonalds.

The protest was part of a national campaign conducted by many community organizations and trade unions demanding a \$15-an-hour minimum wage for fast food workers and their right to a union, since their current miserable wage barely covers expenses to support their families. These workers, as all workers under capitalism, are exploited.

This protest started very early in the morning, before dawn, because this was a national action where many workers were going on strike and others would participate in civil disobedience.

I was part of the protest in New York that was quite militant and in which 2,000 people participated. Thirty

four people were arrested for civil disobedience and it’s possible that the police had a list of those who were to be arrested beforehand.

Slogans were militant, including “Strike, Strike, Strike!” and “Workers United Will Never Be Defeated!” among others.

One detail everyone noticed was the incredible number of cops surrounding the protest. I said loudly, “They thought they were in Ferguson, and were afraid of the power of the working class and of the truth.” That was why they pushed us from the center of the street and forced us to march on the sidewalk.

A woman claimed the cops were there to protect us, and some comrades, me included, argued that cops weren’t protecting us, that they were protecting the bosses’ interests; that the cops were there to repress and arrest workers, the way they did in Ferguson and

Stop Climate Change with Communist Revolution

NEW YORK CITY, September 21 — An estimated 310,000 came from all over the country to march in New York’s People’s Climate March. A contingent of PLP marched among them, distributing hundreds of CHALLENGEs and talking to marchers about the causes of climate change.

This massive march showed important developments in the environmentalist movement — it was more integrated and there were many people carrying signs attacking capitalism for climate change. These marchers want to see laws or reforms go into effect to protect the environment. Many were open to us as we explained that capitalism cannot be “cleaned up.” It is the nature of a profit-driven system notorious



for short-sighted decisions to grab onto and maintain its major source of profit — fossil fuels like oil and natural gas.

One day after the march, heirs to the Rockefeller fortune announced they will divest \$50 billion in holdings in fossil fuels. This is nothing more than a crucial ploy to co-opt support from the working class. This sum of money is a drop in an ocean of profits this ruling class family squeezes from the working class. It is also a distraction because these are the same heirs that control ExxonMobil and drive U.S. imperialism.

The integration at this march is key, as racism is the ruling class’ strongest weapon against the working class. To work to end climate change, capitalism must be smashed. Smashing racism is key to that fight.

This march was held days before the UN Climate Summit, but considering the competition that is inherent in capitalism, climate change conferences will always disappoint the world’s working class. Capitalism is by its nature a dangerous system — dangerous to workers and dangerous to the environment. Only when workers everywhere take state power under the banner of communism will we eventually be able to stop global warming. Only with workers running the world can we make the decisions that best protect us. That means a PLP-led revolution for communism. ☺

around the world.

I had the chance to distribute 200 CHALLENGEs during the march, which were well received, although some were thrown down the street, but I picked them up and gave them to other workers who took them and put them away to read later.

I was very moved when I saw workers so early in the morning, chanting our slogans. That’s why I believe it’s good to continue working in community organizations, trade unions, churches, etc. I believe that’s the way to expand our Party to become a massive international party, and to be consciously ready for the time of the revolution, take power for the working class, and build a communist society.

Red Fighter

Students, Parents, Teachers Blast Racism

BROOKLYN, September 30 — School starting back in New York this year has meant much more than in recent years. Besides catching up on Math and English, students and staff have needed to address the multiple racist murders committed by kkkops across the country. The liberal politicians and the media have tried to convince workers that all they need is to vote and look to the courts for justice. This line did not resonate with the working class of Ferguson though. They took the streets for two weeks in rebellion. Students, parents and staff in schools in New York are now trying to follow their lead.

On the first day of school, English and Social Studies teachers initiated with lessons discussing the murder of Mike Brown and the resulting uprising. This was not enough for students. They wanted to take the streets.

The Student Government Organization of one Brooklyn school led a study group of about 30 students and staff. Students who attended had been grappling with ideas like "Is it still racist murder when a black officer kills a black youth?" and "the role of police in general" since the first day of class discussions. The next day, they made posters and chant sheets. Throughout the week, they organized their friends, teachers and parents to attend a rally after school on a Friday.

The turnout was outstanding. About 50 students, teachers and parents chanted "The police are violent and we will not be silent" and "Mike Brown means we got to fight back!" The students led the rally from start to finish. Their vigorous chanting encouraged many in the liberal neighborhood to join in as they walked by. Then, the rally was closed with a speech by a stu-



dent who encouraged all in attendance to continue to organize and fight until there was "real justice". She explained that to her this meant an end to all police terror and racism.

When parents, students and teachers are united in the fight against racism, Progressive Labor Party has tremendous potential for growth. Every conversation that emphasizes the need for revolution over reform to end racism and police murder is potential for new comrades to join our fight. When our class is under sharp

attack by the bosses, we must be ready to fight back.

Events like the murder of Mike Brown, Shantel Davis, and children in Palestine lay capitalism bare for what it truly is: a system that can never serve the needs of the working class. These glaring examples draw a line in the sand and force everyone to choose sides. Workers in Ferguson and around the world have chosen the side to fight back. PLP will continue to push that fight towards communist revolution, the only system that will provide real justice for the working class.✊

PL'ers Help Build Campus Anti-Racism

BOSTON, September 25 — The Progressive Labor Party here hosted three student comrades from New York City who brought their youthful energy and insights about campus organizing to Roxbury Community College (RCC) and University of Massachusetts (UMass), where we are building a base for communism.

Pizza and Politics, a student club exposing members to a class analysis and communist ideas, hosted a panel about fighting back against U.S. imperialism on campus. The NYC students shared their experience or-

ganizing at the City University of New York (CUNY) in the Fall semester of 2013 against General Petraeus, a leading U.S. general from the Iraq war. The CUNY administration, behaving as true lackeys for the U.S. ruling class, had hired Petraeus to recruit the mostly black, Latin, and immigrant students to support U.S. imperialism, along with reinstating Reserve Officers' Training Corps and stepping up military recruitment. Fascism is creeping into campus, with the imposition of laws that aim to suppress organizing and enable college administrations to crack down on protests, like the CUNY administration did to the anti-Petraeus campaign. They spoke about how the struggle had transformed them into communist organizers.

Sharing fightback stories can strengthen and motivate others to organize. RCC students were inspired by the courage, clarity, and determination of the young comrades. One RCC student asked how they built the kind of organization that could sustain such a struggle and whether being PLP members helped that to happen. The young comrades responded that their membership in PLP established the trust and shared values that became the foundation of their unity. Another RCC student, who has recently begun reading CHALLENGE and meeting with PLP, spoke eloquently about how the media's job is to confuse us and win us to a capitalist outlook. He explained that he is educating himself about the murderous history of the U.S. from the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan during World War II to the U.S.'s intentional spreading of syphilis in Guatemala in the 1940s. He and other students are interested in attending PLP's annual College Conference on November 8 in New York City. Several signed up to meet with a CHALLENGE Reader's Group at RCC.

Long History in Fighting Fascism

The CUNY students met at UMass, which while a small group, was inspiring to all involved. One local black student was interested in fighting back and organizing his friends to come to the Conference. He expressed deep hatred against racism and sexism.

Boston has a long history of organizing students against war and fascism. In 1969, Harvard PLers in Students for a Democratic Society led an occupation of the campus against Harvard University which is a critical

nerve center for U.S. imperialism and was a key supporter of the Vietnam War. In the late 1970s, Boston PL students and workers built a worker-student alliance against racist terror. In the 1980s, PLP members on campuses throughout the area led demonstrations against U.S. imperialism in Central America. In the 1990s, PLP led demonstrations and actions against military research at Boston University. Today, PLP is rebuilding an antiracist, worker-student alliance in Boston to sharpen the fight against capitalism, war and fascism in the colleges. Last semester, students and workers at RCC fought off the implementation of armed cops on campus.

'Microcosm of Communist Society'

Boston PLers held a dinner discussion about Ferguson, Missouri, where rebellion erupted in August in response to the racist murder of black teen Michael Brown by cop Darren Wilson. One NYC student reported on her experience meeting with the youth group, Lost Voices, that formed out of the rebellion. Youth and workers in Ferguson refused to be co-opted by black politicians like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton and other celebrities brought in as a pacification tactic. Instead, the working class in Ferguson is open to PLP's communist solution. She described how Ferguson confirmed her confidence in the working class's ability to fight for communism, and that black workers are indeed a key revolutionary force. They were building the kind of caring collective that is a microcosm of a communist society. Those of us in the room felt confident in our Party's ability to organize in places like Ferguson, where unemployed and oppressed youth are wide open to our ideas.

PLP in Boston has many opportunities to take advantage of students' growing desire to fight back. The older comrades here were heartened by the visit, confident that the Party is in good hands. The local students were exposed to a positive view of communists and committed revolutionary youth for the first time in their lives. Some can now envision for themselves a life of revolutionary organizing and service to the working class.✊

Student Denounces Police Murders

On September 3, we had a speak out on the events in Ferguson at Hunter College, City University of New York. The event took place right outside the entrance of the school. Around 20-30 people participated, although we had larger exposure from people walking to and from class. This is the speech I gave at the event:

We were just talking about Michael Brown and Ferguson, Missouri. Whenever another racist murder happens, the media always tell you, "It's only a few bad cops." How is that possible? How can it always just be a few bad cops that killed Eric Garner, Kimani Gray, Shantel Davis, Amadou Diallo – how many more bad cops are lurking around?

And it's not a few bad cops that buy riot gear, that buy machine guns and armored vehicles. Every police station in this country is ready to shoot down protesters to protect profits. No one is willing to point a finger at the murderer Darren Wilson [the Ferguson cop who killed Michael Brown], but they point guns at protesters. What kind of a society is that? What we're saying is that if the police and the bosses in this country are ready for war, then we should be organized for war as well.

Red Student

Haiti: Students Block Racist Exam

These applicants became even angrier when pro-administration students threatened to call the SWAT police

PORT-AU-PRINCE, September 7 — It's 10:30 am and a fire is still burning in front of the gate of the Medical School of the State University of Haiti (UEH). Today is the day of the competitive entrance exam. As many as 11,000 students are set to take the test for 170 to 200 seats in the incoming class. But this test will not take place!

A PLP member at the medical school found out about a fraud corrupting the exam. Certain privileged students had been given advance copies to guarantee their success. The PLer alerted other students of this plan to keep the sons and daughters of the working class from gaining admission.

The Medical School has been in crisis since the turn of the new century due to conflicts between working-class students and the administration, which is closely tied to the bourgeois elite of Haiti. One administrator declared he was "ashamed" to see medical students take a "tap-tap" (public bus) to and from the Marché Salomon, a nearby market where students share transportation with the street vendors. He said he remembered when medical students came to class in their own private cars!

In Haiti, riding a tap-tap is a sign of belonging to the working class. Owning a car signals membership in the middle class or the bourgeoisie.

The UEH has a long history of struggle between the working masses, both urban and rural, and the light-skinned bourgeoisie and their henchmen. For several decades now, the UEH has mostly enrolled children of workers, who are mainly black. The bourgeoisie and middle class send their children either to the few private universities in Haiti or to the Dominican Republic, the U.S., Canada and France. This is a consequence of a racial hierarchy and racist policies dating from the periods of slavery and post-independence.

Education to Advance, Not Escape, the Working Class

Students from different branches of the UEH, following the leadership of comrades in PLP, have stopped the entrance exam from taking place. They are also demanding that the dean throw out the disputed test and start over. Many times, the comrades recall, the college administration has tried to disadvantage workers' children in favor of more bourgeois children. This reflects the ruling class's effort to deny workers access to knowledge, in order to better dominate and exploit them. This racism and elitism will stop only when workers understand the class nature of capitalist society and rise as one to smash it. We must struggle for more children of the working class to gain access to higher education. Then we must use that education to advance the working class, rather than trying to escape it.

The applicants quickly adopted this position and began chanting their refusal to take the fraudulent exam. Meanwhile, applicants at other locations, unaware of what was happening at the Medical School site, were waiting for their exam to arrive. To their surprise, the students marched to tell them about the exposed fraud and that there wouldn't be any test that day. These applicants became even angrier when pro-administration students threatened that the SWAT police would be called in, just as they had in 2009, when the heavily armed cops brutally occupied the Medical School for several months. At that time the medical students were engaged in several struggles: against special treatment in training for those related or connected to the bourgeoisie; a demand for more seats for children of the working class; and a campaign to support an increase in the minimum wage.

With the support of communists and the solidarity with the applicants, the students have won this skirmish. The role of Progressive Labor Party is to give leadership to the class struggle on all fronts. We must win the masses to understand why this double-dealing exists, and how the bourgeoisie uses class and race to super-exploit the vast majority of the population. Most of all, we must tell people the only way this hell will end — with communist revolution, the destruction of capitalism, and the creation of a new system of equality.✊

Bella Ciao

I would like to congratulate PLP for the work that you are doing, some of which I read in CHALLENGE. I would also like to tell you about how I became a communist and why I joined PLP.

As I learned in the song Bella Ciao, which we sing here in a Creole translation, I will live and die a communist.

How did I become a communist? I was really a communist before I even knew about the concept of communism. Nevertheless, it was because of the reality of my life and my family's life, and the social and economic conditions of our class which made me choose sides and become a communist. My activities in organizing among students, my political positions and my class consciousness also helped pave the way for me to become a communist. There was really no option more humane than communism in a society where the bosses suck the blood of thousands and millions of workers around the world.

I am proud to call myself a communist.

I came to the PLP through struggles in our town. I helped organize a student reading group, named for one of the founders of the first communist parties in Haiti, Jacques Roumain. It was started by a comrade in order to recruit young communists to the Party and to work with rural workers in our town. We read and discussed the ideas of the Party and the history of the communist movement. I was very interested and talked often with our comrade after our study group and one day he asked me to join our international communist party, PLP.

While our lives in Haiti may differ a little with workers in other countries, with differences in the degree of racist exploitation, I know that we have the same enemy, CAPITALISM. In short, I find that there is an obligation to be in a communist party.

I am not satisfied with the growth of the PLP in Haiti because I expect more from the Party. I will do my best however to work with and struggle with our comrades and friends to build PLP into a mass fighting revolutionary communist party.

Again, I take this occasion to say a big thank you to the members of PLP around the world for being committed to the class struggle. Let us fight for another world, a just world, a communist world!

Comrade S

Health Workers, Patients Build Fightback vs. Killer KKKops

I recently started working in a county clinic with predominantly black and Latin patients and workers. The rebel-

lions in Ferguson, as well as the local fightback against the murder of 25-year-old black worker Ezell Ford here in Los Angeles, provided an opportunity to meet my new co-workers on a political footing.

I wasn't sure what to do or how to do it but I knew workers were outraged about what was happening in Ferguson. I also wasn't sure if they heard about Ezell Ford, murdered only two days after Michael Brown. So I printed out a picture of a demonstration I went to. I wrote a few sentences beneath it about sending our condolences to the Ford family and standing in solidarity with their fight back against racist police murders.

I showed it to one of my co-workers, Denise, and she literally took it and ran with it. Her first comments were that we need to make this into a card and print it out in color. She then passed it to another co-worker to change the wording. For obvious reasons, the administration wouldn't support it: they removed the name of the clinic and simply said it was from me and my co-workers. Denise definitely improved the message while

maintaining the politics of "stand in solidarity with fightback against racist police murders."

Denise then took it to all our co-workers in the clinic and in the hospital nearby. She got about 25 signatures. She then typed them up in a nice font and asked for money. We raised over \$200 just in a couple of days for the family. While she did most of the leg work, she mentioned me. Folks came up to thank us for what we were doing.

I discovered one of the nurses had her 25-year-old son murdered about 10 years ago. At the time, she was a nurse at the now non-existent trauma center her son was brought to and where he later died! The county hospital, along with its emergency rooms and trauma center, has been closed for the last seven years. This means more deaths as ambulances have to travel longer distances to hospitals already overwhelmed.

When the county hospital does open sometime next year, it will still be a skeleton of its former self with one-fifth the number of hospital beds available. And with Obamacare, this "safety net" hospital will require some form of health insurance. Given that LA County is expect-

ed to have one million uninsured in spite of government subsidies and expanded MediCal (the California Medical Assistance Program), this will mean more illness and death largely on the backs of black, Latin and immigrant workers we serve.

The Ford family was very appreciative of our efforts. Since the funeral last week, the fightback has died down some. Nonetheless, we have some contact with the family and its opened doors for more struggle on the job.

Denise and I have had a couple more conversations about Ferguson and the likely war in the Middle East. Denise talked about the fascist response in Ferguson and compared it to the response the bosses took in Boston after the marathon bombing last April. I showed her the latest CHALLENGE editorial as well as articles from our comrades who were in Ferguson. From the racist cops to this racist "healthcare" system, I hope to continue this struggle in our clinic and build a base for communism among these black and Latin women workers.

Red Health



LETTERS

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

NYPD, KKK, How Many Workers Did You Kill Today?

"F—k your assimilation! We want our liberation!" On August 23 in New York, 4,000 people crowded into the Staten Island area where the cops of the One-Two-O Precinct strangled Eric Garner to death. The multiracial crowd slammed the cops, the in-justice system, and racism. The chants were exactly the opposite of liberal Sharpton's/De Blasio's/Obama's absurd message of peace, calm, and surrender to racist killer cops. PLP was there with a flyer with a one-word heading: "Rebellion." Some PLers marched with their mass organizations and some took the opportunity to introduce chants in the more militant sections of the march such as "NYPD KKK, How many kids did you kill today?" "How do you spell racist? NYPD." "How do you spell terrorist? NYPD."

These chants come out of PLP's immersion in recent years with the families of Ramarley Graham, Shantel Davis, Kimani Gray, and Kyam Livingston, victims of the NYPD's reign of terror.

Eric Garner's murder site was a quiet neighborhood of working-class homes and mom and pop stores, a place where you understood people were poor enough to need to buy cigarettes by the ones and twos, as Garner occasionally sold them. (Calling this illegal when the tobacco industry legally makes billions by killing people with lung cancer tells you much of what you need to know about the justice system.)

"We have our little economy here," a resident marching with us explained, and the cops' "broken windows" policy of attacking minor "crimes" is just a plain invasion, a provocative aggression to keep people in terror of the armed force of the state. That violence is a need of the capitalist state to prevent rebellion — but when they use murderous violence as in Staten Island or Ferguson, they also expose their racist intent and produce the very rebellion they hope to contain.

The job of communists is to lead this mood towards revolutionary insight into how capitalism oppresses us and how to free ourselves. The popular cry for "justice," for example, comes straight from the heart of our grief and rage and seems natural and right; but it misses the fact that it is those who hold power who commit these racist crimes and they will not punish themselves for what they deliberately do: kill us indiscriminately especially if we are black and brown.

As communist thinking takes hold on this new generation of rebel workers, the true name of the class that oppresses and kills us will ring out loud and clear and the last thing we will want to do is make peace with it.

The fact of people's desire for justice, a justice worthy of the name; the fact of their hatred of racism and their warmth as we marched, black and brown and white strangers, together; and the fact of their just rage, I — once again — have no doubt whatsoever that we in PLP and communists like us anywhere in the world always have the potential of organizing revolution. Esta lucha va llegar/A la guerra popular. This struggle will lead to a workers' war. The seed of communist revolution is in these marchers' hearts. It correctly reflects their reality and their urge to change it. We must nurture that.

A Comrade

CORRECTION

Our October 1 editorial article "U.S. Rulers' Strategy: Workers' Blood for Bosses' Oil" Carter's enunciation of the Carter Doctrine in January 1980 was in a State of the Union speech, not an "inaugural address."



CALLING ALL COLLEGE STUDENTS AND WORKERS! Come to Progressive Labor Party's annual College Conference in New York City. Get a taste of communist internationalism. Attend workshops on Fascism. Participate in the panel *Fight Like Ferguson*. Meet PLP's campus organizers from all over the country. To find out more, contact your local PLer. Or email desafio.challenge@gmail.com

Change Will Come

The Howard University student government, through its Political and External Affairs Committee, organized a busload of 50 students to go to Ferguson during the Labor Day weekend. Participating with militant young demonstrators in the midst of a wrenching racist attack that still continues today led many of the Howard students to step up and continue the struggle. Several of the students received copies of CHALLENGE during the Labor Day march in Ferguson, learning for the first time about the need to fight for communism.

One of these students spoke at the annual PLP crabfeast, with dozens of transit workers and others present. A few excerpts from her speech indicate the power that participating in sharp struggle can have.

"When I first saw the image of Mike Brown shot down on the ground, chills...ran through my body. 'Here, we go again!'...the sad truth is in America what more can we expect. I never thought that I would end up in Ferguson, Missouri protesting...The magnitude of my efforts didn't fully hit me until after I walked by the burnt-down QuikTrip gas station. In that moment, snapshots of the community in anger and rage clouded my head as if I was back in elementary school flipping through the pages of a Civil Rights history book in the library. It's crazy to think that all the things I've read in books, saw in photos, movies, and television about protests for peace and justice was actually unfolding right in front of my big, brown eyes of fury.

As I walked into the massive crowd of protesters holding signs, posters, and protest-inspired t-shirts, I felt overwhelmed with satisfaction that a change was going to come, a change is going to come, and our efforts today are only bridging the gap of justice and racial equality... Looking back on my experience in Ferguson, Missouri, I can honestly say that it has been a humbling, life-changing, and monumental experience. I always knew I had a voice, but after this trip it has given me a purpose to no longer hold myself back and be a catalyst of change for the greater good..."

A Fighter

Barbarism = U.S. Imperialism

Barbarism by definition is something others do but not the accusers

The beheadings by ISIS on video of two U.S. journalists have been called "barbaric" by U.S. officials. While these vicious and murderous actions certainly were barbaric (savagely cruel, exceedingly brutal), one of the most difficult lessons for us to learn is not to take sides

in situations where both sides are our enemies.

The charge of "barbarism" usually refers, first, to something someone else does and, second, to something rare enough that it isn't accepted as normal practice. Beheadings haven't been all that popular since the French Revolution of the late 1700s. At that time they were not widely regarded as barbaric. Today, grisly murders by many means, committed by capitalist ruling classes and their minions, have become so commonplace that we are often blinded to the fact that their essence, if not their appearance, is barbarism.

To take just a few modern examples, what must we call the recent murder of black teenager Mike Brown, who had his hands up, in Ferguson, Missouri, by the cop Darren Wilson? What about the more than 400 similar murders of young men, almost entirely black or Latin, by U.S. cops every year — more than one a day?

What about the ratio of Palestinian civilian to Israeli civilian shelling deaths of several hundred to one? And again, refusing to take sides between two groups who are both our enemies, Hamas is just as guilty as the Israeli government and its U.S. backers.

What about the massive bulldozing of tons of dirt by juggernaut U.S. military machines to bury hundreds of fleeing Iraqi soldiers during Gulf War I in 1991? Or the simultaneous shootings by U.S. troops of soldiers trying to flee or surrender, gleefully called a "turkey shoot" by one racist soldier? Was this not barbaric as well?

What about the sanctions against Iraq by George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton that prevented medicines and foods from reaching the Iraqi working class for years, and that reportedly killed a million and a half civilians, half a million of whom were children? And what about Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's terming these deaths "a price we're willing to pay"? Is the wanton murder of a million and a half people somehow less barbaric than the beheadings of two, based on the racist premise that Iraqi lives are worth less than U.S. lives?

When the Nazis freely practiced collective punishment during World War II, murdering entire villages as a reprisal for the assassination of a Nazi officer, it was called "barbaric" by U.S. media. But the same collective punishment is called "justified" when practiced by the U.S. military.

For a few centuries, barbarism characterized the entire exploitative, profit-making, colonial relationship between the U.S. and European countries and various conquered peoples. Barbarism at the hands of

Continued on page 7

Letters Continued

the world's capitalists is the condition of the world today. It will remain so until the world's working class turn to their communist leadership in PLP and throw the barbaric capitalists and their entire barbaric system into the sea with triumphant finality.

Saguaro Rojo

U.S. Humanitarian Hypocrisy

The CHALLENGE issue of 09/17/14 was particularly good; most interesting were the articles on police killings of citizens and the article of the SWAT team breaking and entry. The United States for some time as been a police state; a place of violence and terror, and unfortunately is forced on the whole world. Life for so many people around the world is one of misery, exploitation and depravation because of U.S. policies.

I have come to think that the U.S. has been and is involved in any internal conflict wherever it happens. They foment and arm, sometimes, all sides to create a very unstable and unsafe environment. As I read the United Nations reasons for why ISIS must be controlled, my thought was the reasons completely described the actions of the U.S. in so many countries. I believe U.S. imperialist policies of violence and military force around the world results in groups fighting back to survive and more violence. And now the military is being sent to Africa to combat Ebola; is this different than the military sent to occupy Haiti after the hurricane?

A Friend

UN and Celebrities Blowing Hot Air

That was the consensus of a group of seniors, some over 80, who had walked the entire route of the New York City People's Climate March of over 400,000. The seniors were voicing their opinion of the September 24 United Nations summit on the environment which was addressed by Presidents, Prime Ministers, national delegates and even movie stars who, collectively, once again claimed progress in preventing climate disasters that have continued to wreck havoc on the world's people.

"All those speeches are just blowing hot air into global warming" they said. Instead of announcing if anything was being done to stop the massive corporate exploration for fossil fuels and government subsidies to the fracking and pipeline industries, which is like bringing cigarettes into a cancer ward, the UN gives us a movie star like Leonardo DiCaprio. He told the UN, "I pretend for a living, but you do not," implying that delegates could really act to reverse climate change. What a sellout! It's as if the UN delegates are not the biggest actors for capitalist oil and gas interests whose profit priorities are destroying the earth.

I noticed many signs at the March saying the system must change and signs that said capitalism was that system. I added that only worldwide revolution can eliminate capitalist bosses and their pollution, wars, unemployment and poverty. Only this will save the earth and the people who depend on it.

Senior Comrade

Straight Line to Fascism

continued from page 8

ish work environment. The only alternatives presented to total surrender to exploitation by the company are very individualistic.

One lone shadowy character at Circle, Kalden, has a plan for sabotage. Outside the corporate campus confines, Mae's former boyfriend, Mercer, and her parents, made miserable by the intrusiveness of the Circle into their lives, try to escape by living off the grid. But the notion that the general population — not to mention the slaving Newbies on campus — might rebel is never considered. The notion of collective action as a route to freedom from oppression, rather than as a mechanism of enslavement, is not even hinted at.

The feeling of hopelessness *The Circle* leaves us with is useful for today's ruling classes. Without a vision of a new world worth working toward, we become passive in the face of injustice and exploitation. As communists, we need to find ways to help our friends and co-workers see the liberating power of collective action. More revolutionary culture to communicate this basically optimistic vision is sorely needed, but we shouldn't expect those novels to end up on the New York Times best-seller list. Not until workers take over the New York Times! In the meantime, engaging our friends in speculation about the future, even using a dystopian novel as a jumping off place, can be a useful way to lay out the historical basis of our profound optimism about the future. ☺



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Slave labor in Chilean mines fueled 'the first city of capitalism'

NYT, 9/17 — POTOSI, Bolivia — The silver in this mountain [Cerro Rico] helped finance the Spanish empire. It created vast fortunes for some and misery for many more. It fueled the early growth of European capitalism, setting the stage for the modern era.

...Now, after centuries of hauling out its riches...it is caving in from the top down....A giant sinkhole has opened....

...UNESCO warned that the mountain...faced...collapse at its summit....[It] is severely weakened due to continuous exploitation....[and] "there is significant risk that the miners could die from collapses inside the tunnels....

About 1,500 miners work in conditions that can range from rudimentary to brutal....

A doctor told [Gregorio Alave, 46] that he had advanced silicosis, an incurable lung disease common to miners who breathe in rock dust, and that he should stop working underground. But he said...he must keep working to support his family, despite the bad cough he has developed....

According to the historian, Jack Weatherford, "Potosi was the first city of capitalism, for it supplied the primary ingredient of capitalism: money...."

For all the wealth the mountain generated, the misery outpaced it a hundredfold. The Spanish used Indians, or slaves imported from Africa, to work in the mines in brutal conditions. The death toll was high....

The workers often included children,...in their mid to late teens....

René Vacaflares, 66, a mining engineer...said...basic safety measures were crude or absent....In some mines, workers were lowered on ropes down vertical shafts

"It is hell," Mr. Vacaflares said....

He said that accidents were frequent and often fatal...."When there is a bigger collapse, more than 1,000 could die."

Ferguson residents indict Council of racism, police terror

NYT, 9/10 — The first Ferguson City Council meeting since the police killing of Michael Brown...erupted...into an outpouring of grievances — accusations of racism [and] police harassment....

Ten minutes into the meeting...the audience turned emotional, chanting Mr. Brown's name and shouting at the Council members and mayor....

Residents pelted the stone-faced officials with angry questions: Why had Darren Wilson, a white Ferguson officer, who shot the unarmed black teenager...not been arrested? Why were young African-American men so frequently arrested by the police?...

Some people told the Council of...routine mistreatment by the police....Deborah Young of Ferguson said that when she called the police...to report her car was stolen, "they came and locked me up."

"...how did you feel when you saw that young man laying in the street?" one man said, facing the Council. "To know that somebody who's supposed to be protecting and serving me can kill me — I'm afraid."

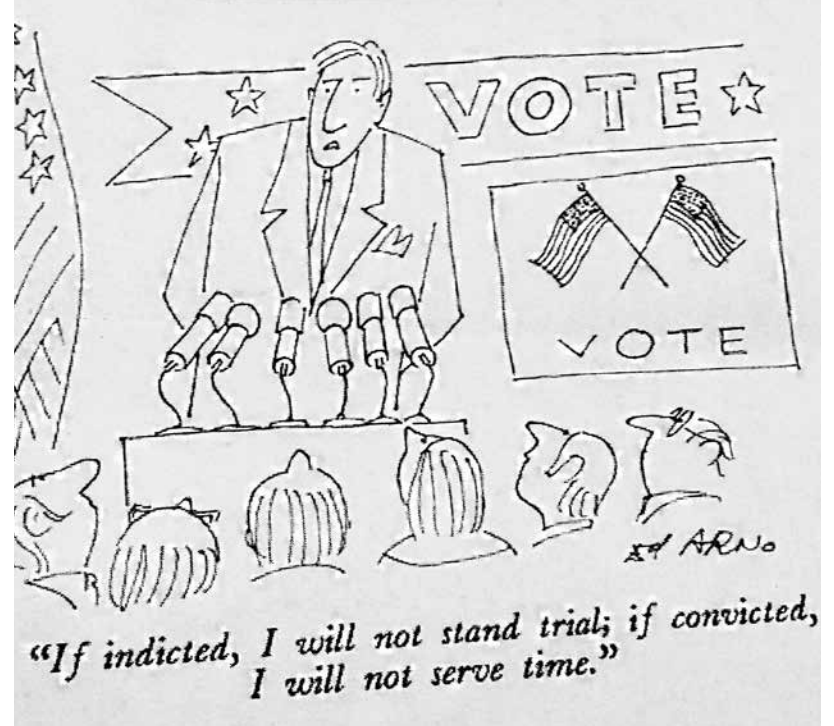
Imprisoned victim of racist frame-up proves innocence after 23 years

NYT, 9/18 — Everton Wagstaffe...prevailed in a struggle that he began from behind bars nearly 23 years ago....Brooklyn [NY] prosecutors in 1992 and 1993 were responsible for "burying" documents that might have shown that detectives and the prime witness had lied....

Mr. Wagstaffe, 45,... [a black man] has been in custody since his arrest at age 23 in January 1992....He has refused to accept release on any terms — such as parole or probation — that would imply he had something to do with the kidnapping and death of Jennifer Negron, a 16-year-old girl....

It [is]...the final chapter of an epic guerrilla battle waged by Mr. Wagstaffe. He entered prison with minimal literacy and taught himself to read....For much of the time, he had no legal counsel. He drafted his own legal papers....

[His]...relentless campaign won support from a team of lawyers...includ[ing]...Myron Beldock....now 85...[who] represented George Whitmore, who gave a lengthy confession to two notorious murders in the 1960s. With help from journalists [see CHALLENGE,



11/25/1964] Mr. Beldock proved the confession was false and that Mr. Whitmore could not have been responsible....In the 75th Police Precinct where the [Negron] murder occurred....Detectives...had few qualms about taking shortcuts, according to the squad's former sergeant, Michel Race....

Mr. Race said that of 750 murder cases that he had handled, only one had been "done the correct way..."

Coal barons profit from 76,000 miners' black-lung deaths

NYT, 9/9 — To the Editor:

Re "Miners Battle Black Lung..."

...Why do 'we' keep sending coal miners to their death in pursuit of this dirty 18th-century fuel?...Cleaner and safer energy sources...could provide a viable alternative to...dangerous dependence on coal.

The death toll of more than 76,000 miners since 1968 is just the beginning of coal's unacceptable consequences. Add to that the thousands of citizens who die each year from heart and lung ailments caused by coal's toxic emissions.

And then add the ultimate risk: the carbon-caused climate disruption that...threatens life on earth. Clearly the cost of this so-called cheap energy is way too high....

The Circle Straight Line to Fascism

Eggers's anti-communism is subtle. It pushes the idea that human nature precludes the existence of any truly collective, non-exploitative society.

Can we make a better society, a more humane and fair world? Dave Eggers in his 2013 dystopian novel *The Circle* sees us headed in another direction. His book is a major best-seller and is hard to put down. Reading it with our friends could open some useful discussions with them. Maybe imagining with them how society might change, they would better understand why we disagree with that book's take-away message. Why, as Nadine Gortimer said, "Communists are the last optimists."

The plot of *The Circle* centers on a woman in her early 20s, but the main philosophical perspectives are provided by the three "Wise Men," billionaire founders of the company where she works. The Circle is a cutting-edge and rapidly expanding corporation that is the center of a fascist digital empire. It's basically what you would get if Google, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft melded into one company and controlled over 95 percent of everything on the Web.

Mae Holland lands a job there and thinks she's in heaven. What's not to like about a great salary and benefits, beautiful corporate campus, free cultural events and a steady stream of gifts and special perks? Well, a few things. We watch Mae as she's molded and shaped, working faster and harder, striving mightily to fit in and excel in an environment where her every keystroke is monitored and her efficiency — and by inference her attitude — is constantly evaluated by her superiors.

Behind the iPhone-like glossy image of the company we discover three outlooks represented by the three business partners. Ty Gospodinov, the enigmatic and brilliant generator of an endless stream of ideas and solutions to problems, would probably consider himself apolitical, perhaps with anarchistic leanings.

Eamon Bailey, the main public face of the Circle, is a father figure to the thousands of 20-somethings that make up the workforce. He is the one who lays out the philosophy of the Circle in speeches to thousands of employees in the Great Hall each month on Dream Friday. Bailey presents utopian visions that all hinge on information management breakthroughs brought to you by the Circle.

The third partner is Tom Stenton, the venture capitalist. He is best likened to a creature he brings back from the Marinas Trench, a shark that devours everything placed in its tank with astonishing efficiency. What he lacks in creativity and salesmanship, he makes up for by his uncanny (and merciless) business sense.

Slave Away Cheerfully

The contrast between the unlimited freedom and community that form the Circle philosophy presented by Eamon Bailey and the social reality of this 21st century digital sweatshop is hard to miss. There is a steep hierarchy ranging from the Wise Men on top, through the Gang of 40, who get to decide which lucky start-ups ("plankton") will get the honor of being swallowed by the whale that is the Circle.

These 40 managers are, in turn, revered and feared by the next level of bosses.

At the bottom of the ladder are the Newbies who slave away cheerfully (a less than exuberant tone of voice could result in a costly loss of points, or their job) as more and more computer screens are added to their work stations and they learn of the latest metric the Circle has devised to monitor their output. They never consider risking their dream job by complaining. Jobs outside the Circle, even those landed by graduates of elite colleges like Mae, are scarce and un-cool. It's awesome to be a Circler, even at the bottom of the food chain.

The Circle philosophy, as presented by Bailey, is more fully revealed when Mae's career hits a crisis. Mae gets in trouble when she's caught borrowing a kayak without permission (and not wearing a life vest!), an indiscretion that could cost her her job. Eamon Bailey uses this situation and Mae's desperation about keeping her post to get her to agree that she should always tell "the community" — in effect, her employer — everything. To be a good Circler she should believe that "Secrets are Lies," "Privacy is Theft" and that "Sharing is Caring." She is to become the poster child for transparency and will be elevated into the upper ranks of the corporation.

Then Bailey lays out his vision of "closing the Circle." When the Circle is closed there will be complete access for all people to all knowledge and information. This transparency will create perfect democracy, security and happiness. Of course this transparency does not include the plans being hatched by the Circle elite and other important "intellectual property," but Mae, like most Circlers, is so caught up in the intoxicating dream woven by Bailey (not to mention all the free stuff) that this doesn't occur to her.

The emotional climax of the novel is a series of events that result from Mae's ever deeper surrender to the Circle's vision and its untoward effects on her parents and old boyfriend, probably the main loves of her pre-Circle life. (You will have to read the book to see how those come out!)

The Anticommunist Kernel

The prevailing outlook in the world today, sadly, is that things are a mess and solutions are hard to imagine. When the nightmare nature of the utopia painted on Dream Fridays becomes clear, that pessimism is reinforced. Eggers's dystopia is different, and is published in a vastly different political context, from the two most famous 20th century novels about scary futures, *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley, 1932) and *1984* (George Orwell, 1949). Those cautionary tales were written at a time when socialism was a rising force in the world.

The most explicitly anti-communist of the two, *1984*, was published when the Soviet Union was widely admired for having defeated Nazi Germany in World War II and when the Chinese Communist Party had just made a successful revolution and taken control of the most populous country in the world. Clearly, from the bosses' perspective, an anti-communist cultural antidote to the popular image of socialism was needed. They didn't want workers in the West to start getting ideas.

Eggers's anti-communism is more subtle. It pushes the idea that human nature precludes the existence of any truly collective, non-exploitative society. To the extent that the evil turn of the Circle is seen as the work of Stenton, it could even be read as anti-capitalist. But its pessimistic outlook is more profound than fear of aggressive venture capitalists. The anti-communist kernel of *The Circle* is the idea that any situation where everyone's efforts are aligned for the same purpose will inevitably have someone behind the scenes pulling strings for their own purposes. In *The Circle* it's Stenton, the main investor who sets priorities. But he is enabled by Eamon Bailey, who preaches, and maybe even believes, a humanistic vision of enlightened corporate control of human society, i.e., fascism.

Revolutionary Optimism Based on History

Communists today still believe that a society based on collective effort to achieve common goals is both possible and good. This is not blind faith but an assessment of advances that revolutionaries actually achieved in the past. History is the basis of our optimism. Recent issues of CHALLENGE carried a four-part series of articles describing the growth of a factory with over a hundred workers from what had been a four-worker scrap metal shop on a rural commune over a few years at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China.

The descriptions of life and work in that simple factory included dramatic increases in production and solving of difficult technical problems, but the hard work, long hours and creative energy was motivated by a shared desire to see the communal farm, the village and the society advance. No one got higher pay for their work, including those managing and leading the work. No one was in danger of losing their job if they didn't meet production quotas, but somehow, everyone pitched in and got things done ahead of schedule. Although the farmers-turned-metalworkers in that Chinese village worked as frenetically as the Newbies in Eggers's novel, their village and all its residents owned the factory which they had built by their collective effort. At least they did until the defeat of the Cultural Revolution.

Unfortunately, that little factory and the social relations that held it together were destroyed by the capitalist "reforms" introduced after 1976, a microcosm of China's return to capitalism. The factory, built by farmers in a spirit of unselfish cooperation during the Cultural Revolution was handed over to one person as the new capitalist-style owner. Soon the social relationships changed to reflect the new ownership and a handful got rich while others struggled to survive. The sense of community was destroyed. This outcome was not inevitable, but it is what really happened.

A general awareness of the reversal of communist developments like that little factory, but on a massive scale, underlies much of today's pessimism about the future. The Circle shows us a vision of capitalist social relations masquerading as "community" and creating a hell-

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