

“Dark Night Shall Have its End”

Report from the Central Committee of Progressive Labor Party, July 2015

The struggle for state power is inseparable from the struggle between correct and incorrect ideas about how to win, keep, and consolidate it. The ideological struggle against revisionism — the ideas and practice of the class enemy within the communist movement — has taken place since the beginning of the struggle for proletarian revolution. Revisionism attempts to distort the revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism. It assumes many forms; it seeks to ride the revolutionary tide of world history by appearing in increasingly militant disguise; but its counter-revolutionary essence remains the same.

—From *Road to Revolution III*

Capitalism is proving more each day that it can offer the world’s workers nothing but endless horrors. Its “triumph” brings imperialist war; mass racist and sexist poverty and unemployment; racist police terror and border control; fascist “homeland security”; hunger and malnutrition, even in the richest countries; ethnic and religious genocide; and mind-numbing cultural degradation. This is the intrinsic nature of the profit system; it cannot change. It will prevail until it is smashed by communist revolution. That is the main task for workers of the world: to destroy the old order and create something new. The challenge was never easy, but today it is harder than ever. Why? Because of the cynicism and passivity resulting from the collapse of the old communist movement.

Nonetheless, we have every reason for revolutionary optimism. Our Party’s experience in the mass movement shows that a growing number of workers, soldiers and students are looking for a way out of capitalism’s house of horrors—for a society based on something other than bottomless greed and self-interest. Their search for an alternative creates an opportunity to win them to our political ideas. Though there are no quick solutions, what we do now—or what we fail to do—is more important than ever. We must boldly face the fascist onslaught with a

vision of a communist future free from exploitation, racism, sexism, and imperialist war.

With the reversals in Russia and China to full-blown capitalism, we have lost the model and inspiration of a center for the world communist movement. The international working class is suffering unprecedented poverty, hunger, war, disease, and racist oppression. The current menu of political “options” consists of one set of billionaires or another, from Democratic Party liberals to Tea Party Republicans to Middle East capitalists who use religion to veil their greed for oil profits. Whether reformist, nationalist, or openly fascist, these bosses have no solutions for us. The only solution—the one way to stop imperialist bloodbaths for all time—remains international communist revolution.

Revisionism, the Movement’s Achilles’ Heel

Since our last convention in 2010, we have collectively intensified our Party’s internal struggle over reformism. This is a healthy, necessary development. From its origins in *The Communist Manifesto* through Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, the communist movement has always advanced through the fight against reformism. Known to communists as “revisionism,” reformism was the old movement’s Achilles’ heel. While we must fight

for reforms to participate in the class struggle and win workers to communist ideas, reformism is a deadly ideology. It makes reforms the end rather than a means to build the revolutionary movement.

The bosses love to gloat that communism was an illusion from the start—that it could never work. They have rewritten history to portray Stalin as worse than Hitler, and continue to slander one of the greatest leaders in working-class history. Even at a time when class struggle is at a low ebb, the capitalists are still haunted by the specter of communism.

The political seeds of the old movement's collapse were contained in many of its core documents and policies. Those errors eroded and ultimately reversed the achievements of courageous revolutionary organizations and unparalleled working-class heroism. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao all believed in socialism as a necessary halfway step on the road to communism. They all spoke on both sides of the question of nationalism. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin held to the incorrect notion that the state apparatus should remain separate from the Party.

All of these brave thinkers feared that communism was too advanced for most workers, who would need to be motivated by material incentives. Mao compounded this opportunism with his theory of "New Democracy," which twisted dialectics to justify alliances with "lesser evil" bosses. Moreover, all of these leaders, to one extent or another, allowed the cult of the personality, the glorification of an individual over politics or ideas. (To help ensure that we forge a different path, PLP has moved to a model of collective leadership.)

Our Party was born in the fight against these anti-communist tendencies, and has continuously fought to deepen the struggle. A number of PLP documents, including *Road to Revolution I-IV* and *Reform and Revolution*, were milestones in communist ideology. From its beginning, the Party defied the Communist Party USA's opportunism. By the late 1960s, in the heat of struggle against the Vietnam War and racism,

we came to understand that the Soviet Union had turned into its opposite, an imperialist power in competition with the U.S. Both practice and intensive ideological struggle led the Party to conclude that all nationalism was poison. We have witnessed this virulent phenomenon time and again, most recently in the Dominican Republic, where local bosses have built popular support for the racist expulsion of workers of Haitian descent by blaming them for economic problems rooted in capitalism.

In the early 1980s, with *Road to Revolution IV*, PLP concluded that seizing power—and then keeping it to build an international communist workers' dictatorship—hinged on bringing communist consciousness to hundreds of millions of workers organized into one revolutionary party. *RR IV* called for the elimination of money. The capitalist wage system would be replaced by communist distribution: from each according to commitment, to each according to need, with no special privileges for Party members. These theoretical advances were vital contributions to the arsenal of revolutionary communism.

On the other hand, we have a long way to go to replace the old movement as a beacon of hope for billions of workers. In the present period, we need to struggle very hard to make limited progress. Each advance, from the sale of one more CHALLENGE to the recruitment of one more worker, has political significance and value. Each helps us move toward a higher level of struggle. If we are to reach our goal, we must turn the capitalists' attacks into opportunities to fight back. Each murder by the bosses' police demands that we explain that racist terror is neither an accident nor an individual cop's mistake, but rather a necessity for capitalist dictatorship—a calculated tactic to intimidate and divide us. Each "natural" disaster, from earthquakes in Pakistan and Haiti to hurricanes in the U.S. and Mexico, exposes how little the capitalists care about workers.

Reviving Class Struggle in a Difficult Period

Serving the working class and leading it toward revolution is a great honor, and our Party must

take every opening to do so. All of us can improve, and the quality of our work falls far short of our potential. In particular, we need to push each other to be bolder in the face of repression.

It is imperative, however, that we approach this question dialectically. We need to acknowledge that the current relationship of class forces is not in our favor; at present, the balance of power tips toward the capitalists' side. A large part of our predicament is objective and outside our control. The old movement's collapse is the worst defeat ever suffered by the international working class. Stalin warned that a new Dark Age would follow the defeat of the Soviet Union; indeed, the recovery is taking generations. In many respects, the working class now labors under the heaviest economic, political, ideological, and cultural burdens in its history.

But communists must never use objective circumstances to avoid criticism and self-criticism. We must instead correct errors and advance the revolutionary process. Although PLP may remain small for some time, we must continue to sharpen the internal struggle against reformism/revisionism. Without this struggle, we can never hope to overcome the errors of the past. With it, we can begin to accelerate our growth, even in a difficult period; we can pass to our successors, and to their successors, a Party that will move mountains. As new revolutionary conditions inevitably emerge, a sharpened line and practice will enable us to make the most of them. Reversing the current class dynamic—and lifting our collective class consciousness—will take much time, commitment, persistence, sweat, and blood.

The biggest error our Party made after *Road to Revolution IV* was to underestimate the significance of the old movement's collapse. We correctly identified the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and China. We failed, however, to understand its devastating consequences for the revolutionary process worldwide, or how it would breathe new life into the most lethal force in the history of the world: U.S. imperialism. Nor did we see clearly the emergence of China and the re-emergence of

Russia as the U.S. imperialists' main rivals, and as their most likely foes in the next global war.

The end of socialism plunged the Soviet working class into a depression. By weakening Moscow as an imperialist counterforce and cooling the exorbitant arms race, it also enabled U.S. rulers to dodge some of the capitalist contradictions that wrecked markets in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa, in the former Soviet sphere. For more than a decade after the Soviet Union's breakup, U.S. rulers had a blank check to wreak murder and mayhem in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. To this day, U.S. military primacy gives the bosses more room to maneuver than they had during the Cold War—though their latitude is narrowing as tensions with capitalist Russia and China mount.

Even more critically, the implosion of the Soviet Union has devastated class struggle throughout the world. Where so-called activist movements still exist, they are utterly dominated by members or agents of the ruling class. Blatant class collaborators preside over labor unions' dwindling memberships. The U.S. bosses continue to push FBI informer Al Sharpton as the pacifying misleader of the movement against murders by cops. Billionaire imperialist George Soros marshals pro-capitalist reformers worldwide for "human rights." (His foundation trained the organizers of the Arab Spring and the current leadership of Black Lives Matter, which is leading the dead-end campaign to reform U.S. police departments.) It wasn't the working class that led a million-strong protest in Paris against Islamic terrorism; it was a group of racist state terrorists, represented by the capitalist presidents of a dozen nations. Barack Obama, who has droned to death more innocents than the number killed on 9/11, successfully posed as an anti-racist champion in his eulogies for murdered church members in Charleston, South Carolina.

For the mass movement to break from capitalism and advance toward communist revolution, it must first break from these misleaders and their oppressive ideology.

The Sixties: Workers Fight Back

The world was a very different place in the late 1960s, as our young Party entered a stage of rapid growth. In Vietnam, the Tet Offensive staggered U.S. imperialism. French-led pressure on world gold markets threatened to collapse the entire U.S. financial system. The rise of the Japanese and German economies led to overproduction that undermined the U.S. steel industry. Periodic embargos and price increases by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Companies induced shaky U.S. allies, including Japan, to reject U.S. policies to dominate the oil-producing region in the Middle East.

At the height of the Vietnam War, capitalists around the world faced massive insurgencies by workers, students, and soldiers. Broad, militant work stoppages were commonplace. Large sections of the U.S. military were in open mutiny. Dozens of major cities were struck by rebellions, an object lesson that Black workers were the key to revolution. The campuses were cauldrons of revolt. It seemed that the working class could become unbeatable if led by revolutionary communist politics.

Between 1968 and 1971, worker and student strikes rocked Europe, the United States and Latin America. In France, a student strike in May 1968 sparked a general strike involving 10 million workers (two-thirds of the French working class) and halting air, rail, and ship traffic. Workers and students marched through the streets of Paris singing the communist anthem, the "Internationale." This worker-student strike paralyzed a modern imperialist economy and indicated that the profit system's contradictions could and will explode into a revolutionary opportunity.

In June 1968, in Mexico, a protest by high school students spread to the universities and to the electrical, railroad, and petroleum industries, even threatening to shut down the Olympics. In November 1969, 143,000 General Electric workers went on strike as half a million anti-war demonstrators packed Washington, DC. PLP led thousands in a breakaway demonstration to the Labor Department to build an anti-imperialist, worker-student alliance. Thousands took up the chant: "War-Maker, Strikebreaker—Smash GE!"

In 1970, a wildcat strike by postal workers in New York City spread throughout the U.S. The entire mail system was crippled for a week. The strike was soon sold out, but it shook the bosses and gave the world another glimpse of workers' power.

These rebellions reflected 60 years of revolutionary practice, good and bad, inspired first by the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions and later by the Vietnamese resistance and the Cultural Revolution in China. Hundreds of millions of people were involved. If the Party is going to advance the historical struggle for

communism, we must make a balanced, objective evaluation of the old movement's strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths led the working class to monumental advances. The first proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union, the Soviet-led fight against fascism in World War II, the Chinese Revolution and the GPCR, along with the great anti-imperialist struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, gave hope to workers everywhere. The world saw that the oppressed could throw off their chains.

A failure to learn from the old movement's errors would be a grave mistake. But a failure to recognize its achievements is equally dangerous.

Bosses Attack and Distract

The threat to U.S. imperialist hegemony was temporarily contained as the U.S. moved off the gold standard and ended its troop buildup in Vietnam. But the elements that precipitated the galvanizing events of 1968 remained intact. Confronted with an economic crisis, the U.S. capitalist bosses stepped up their attacks on workers around the world. In Vietnam, they escalated their genocidal bombing campaigns. Within the U.S., troops were sent to cities to brutally put down rebellions. The capitalists used drugs and anti-drug laws to pacify and then incarcerate millions of mainly Black workers. Inflation, layoffs and factory shutdowns forced millions more into unemployment and poverty.

Yet even as they stepped up their attacks on the working class, U.S. imperialists began negotiations for trade with socialist China. In

1972, as the deals were sealed, racist mass-murderer Richard Nixon was feted in Beijing. New markets for goods and investments propped up profits for U.S. bosses, even as newly minted capitalists in China and Russia paved the way for the heightened inter-imperialist competition of the current period.

By late 1973, the U.S. and Europe had entered the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Industrial production and the rate of profit plummeted. Unemployment and inflation both soared into double digits. "Stagflation," as the bosses' media called it, was a form of capitalist crisis never seen before. Its "solution" triggered the crippling bank failures of the 1980s.

Revisionism restored the profit system to the former Soviet Union and China. It turned Vietnam into a sweatshop haven for international capitalist investment. Nationalism degraded inner-city rebellions into electoral campaigns for Black mayors. The bosses also installed more Black police chiefs, principals, military officers, and corporate executives—all of whom helped to usher in even more intense racism. Pro-capitalist union leaders and patriotic class collaboration destroyed the once-mighty strike movement. After Democratic President Jimmy Carter initiated deregulation, inflation, and austerity programs to cut real wages, he stoked anti-immigrant racism by building a fence on the U.S./Mexico border.

In 1981, Ronald Reagan ushered in the modern era of workplace fascism when he fired striking air traffic controllers and replaced them with scabs. Bill Clinton picked up where Reagan left off by abolishing welfare. He instituted the racist and sexist slave labor called "workfare," forcing former welfare recipients, mainly mothers, to replace unionized workers and "earn" their old welfare checks. "Workfare" added more than a million workers to the low-wage labor pool.

The emergence of a new capitalist ruling class in former colonies and battlegrounds like Vietnam spawned pessimism and despair within the working class. By the 1980s, U.S. rulers had seized on the ideological vacuum to promote

workers' acquiescence in the profit system. To distract the working class and divert anti-capitalist anger, the bosses' media and universities encouraged a fragmented "identity politics" based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and the pseudo-scientific concept of "race." This reactionary ideology has spread from college campuses into the workplace and even the military. To further submerge class consciousness, U.S. capitalism pushed the most vapid, self-interested consumer culture: You are what you buy.

There Are No Lesser Evils

The damage to workers' struggles appears even greater when viewed in today's global context. Inter-imperialist rivalry, the main source of international conflict today, has sharpened significantly in the years since this document was first published, mainly to the detriment of U.S. rulers. Russia has annexed Crimea and invaded Georgia and Ukraine. China brandishes its growing military might in East Asia and the South China Sea. After a small success in Kosovo, U.S. imperialists have struck out in Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq.

But the U.S. rulers' losses are not necessarily workers' gains. Without exception, the main opposition to U.S. imperialism is reactionary and nationalist in character. In many cases, it is equally imperialist. A case in point is the U.S. rulers' bungled invasion of Iraq, where ISIS capitalists have used Islamic extremism to gain control over vast swaths of territory in both Iraq and Syria. There is no "good" side here, only a choice among thieves and murderers: oil field-seizing ISIS forces led by former officers from Saddam Hussein's famously corrupt Sunni regime; Shia politicians, who aspire to dominate oil profits in open league with Iranian bosses; Exxon-backed Kurdish fighters; the U.S. itself and its British junior partners; their rising Russian and Chinese capitalist rivals. Growing foreign enlistments reflect a degree of support for ISIS among oppressed people around the world. But as CHALLENGE has pointed out, the group's main funding comes from the same non-royal wing of Saudi bosses that bankrolled Osama bin Laden. They want to oust ExxonMobil and capture Saudi

and Iraqi oil profits for themselves. An ISIS-ruled Persian Gulf would give the region's oppressed masses only a new master to enslave them.

This is fundamentally different from 1960s Vietnam, where communists led the resistance to U.S. imperialism. For all the revisionist weaknesses that eventually defeated them, they rightly inspired millions around the world. The same cannot be said of ISIS, al Qaeda, Hamas, or Hezbollah, whose leaders are driven by dollar signs. The old communist movement's mistake of promoting "the lesser of two evils" has proven more deadly than ever.

Revolutionary Politics Over Economics

Our badly mistaken estimate of the consequences of the old movement's collapse held back every area of our work. Within our press and internal documents, it led to reformism and economism—the misguided notion that economic factors can outweigh politics. Political struggle must always be primary in building a movement to abolish capitalism. Throughout the 1990s, we wrote about economic upheavals like the collapse of the "Asian Tigers" and the rising dilemma of capitalist overproduction. While we paid lip service to the primacy of politics over economics, and repeated that only communist revolution could destroy capitalist exploitation, these articles emphasized the growing economic crisis faced by U.S. imperialism. We proposed that the Asian economies were doomed and that the U.S. economy could soon follow them. We were wrong. We placed mechanical economic relations above political relations between classes.

Overproduction is an absolute characteristic of capitalism and its relentless drive for profits. But our suggestion that overproduction by itself would lead to a capitalist Armageddon was far off the mark. As has been shown many times, the bosses can survive any crisis, depression, war, or nuclear "holocaust." What they won't be able to survive is communist revolution. Free (for the moment) of an imperialist rival that can challenge them militarily, unchecked by an aroused, communist-led working class, U.S.

imperialists have managed to contain their problems and stay on top. This doesn't mean their contradictions aren't serious, or that they won't ultimately become impossible to manage. But the rulers are managing them at the moment. They are able to do so mainly off the backs of a weakened working class, made more vulnerable by a decline in class consciousness.

Indeed, U.S. capitalists have largely recovered from the Crash of 2007, a reflection of the profit system's cyclical boom-and-bust that stems from overproduction. Aided by falling real wages and a sharp increase in actual unemployment, corporate profits have surged even beyond the levels of the early years of the American Empire, immediately after World War II.

In *What Is to Be Done*, Lenin exposes the bankruptcy of "economism," the ideological deviation that economic strife will "spontaneously" assume a revolutionary political character. In fact, worsening economic conditions do not automatically generate revolutionary consciousness among workers. Revolutionary consciousness requires a revolutionary Party with a mass base. (If it were otherwise, most of the world would already be in revolt.) While we have opposed this deviation in theory, our practice has been less consistent. In our press, economism can take the form of one-sided articles that emphasize the immediate economic or reform struggle, with the obligatory concluding call for communist revolution. If only reality was so simple!

Both the deviation and the correction begin with the Party leadership. The mere existence of *Road to Revolution IV* cannot guarantee immunity from reformism. Viewed with more than thirty years of hindsight, *RRIV* barely scratched the surface in assessing the consequences of the old movement's defeat. Reality always outpaces consciousness. The life-and-death struggle against reformism/revisionism will be with us as long as social classes continue to exist. Mao's prediction of ten thousand years of struggle after the seizure of power, while perhaps an exaggeration, doesn't seem so far-fetched.

Smash Individualism

The struggle to sharpen CHALLENGE articles, for the relevant communist points to emerge clearly from the start, is an essential first step. We must strive to draw correct revolutionary lessons from battles over racism, wages, schools, police brutality, rotten medical care, the bosses' electoral circus, the special oppression of women, or any other issue that affects workers.

Yet we are after something even more profound. The fight for communism is, more than anything, a fight to make communist politics primary. That was the main lesson of the Cultural Revolution in China. Although the Chinese communists wound up with the wrong politics, they also made advances that we are still struggling to absorb. Making politics primary means more than pointing out that the capitalist police can never serve the working class, or that imperialism makes war inevitable, or that the profit system cannot survive without racism. These are all crucial points, and we must struggle in our press and our daily political work to make them skillfully and persuasively. But the fight to make communist politics primary has another, deeper level. It lies at the crossroads of ideology, culture, philosophy, and psychology. It is the struggle against idealism, subjectivity, mechanical thinking, and one-sidedness—in other words, the fight for revolutionary dialectics.

Understanding dialectics requires practice, class struggle, and a simultaneous battle against all of the system's rotten "isms." Chief among these is individualism. As "Jailbreak," the Party's popular explanation of dialectics, says from the start,

"The worst jail is the mental one you don't recognize." Individualism is the antithesis of objectivity and working-class consciousness. The rulers promote it from the time children are in the womb. While capitalism encourages selfish individualism, it suppresses individuality by forcing people to work, consume and learn along rigid paths defined by the biggest corporations. Under communism, individuals will contribute in many different ways, but always in the interest of the collective.

The communist principle of democratic centralism reflects the need to destroy and

replace individualism with a radically different world outlook. Democratic centralism considers the experience of millions of workers and applies it scientifically to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat and against capitalist ideas and practices in our class. The working class needs to develop a sophisticated understanding of great political questions on an international scale. Lenin wrote that a baker should be able to analyze the affairs of state. But knowledge is useless if workers aren't won to replace individualism with a commitment to their class, and to infuse their daily lives with class consciousness.

Veteran PL'ers have an advantage. They joined the movement when hundreds of millions of people worldwide were engaged in militant class struggle. At the height of the Vietnam War and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the contrast between capitalist individualism and communist theory and practice was far clearer than it is today. Workers involved in those movements learned that the working class can accomplish great things, but only when people overcome the selfish, individualist attitudes and habits we are taught under capitalism.

In the USSR of the 1930s and 40's, millions learned the collectivism that is integral to working-class consciousness. They learned it from political struggle, from collective labor, and from an educational system imbued with these ideas. In *The Soviet Power*, Hewlett Johnson, the "Red" Dean of Canterbury, wrote the following about the U.S.S.R. prior to World War II: "From the tenderest years the Soviet child is taught to work with others at useful and corporate tasks. Soviet children, like English children, for instance, will play with cubes [blocks]. But Soviet cubes or bricks will often and purposefully be too large for a single child to handle. He will call a companion, and together they will build their house of cubes. Co-operation becomes instinctive."

The power of this collectivism was dramatically displayed in 1941 in the huge eastward relocation of Soviet industry, beyond the Ural Mountains, carried out to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Nazis. As Hitler's armies

advanced, 1,500 complete factories and more than two million workers were packed onto trains and barges and moved a thousand miles or more. Living under horrendous conditions in tents and dugouts, the workers resumed making tanks and planes in less than three months. This enormous job was essential to the Soviet victory over the fascists. It could not have been carried out by people whose outlook was “me first.”

In Johnson’s seemingly insignificant detail about children’s play, one can measure the impact of the defeat our class has suffered. Our Party believes in making class consciousness “instinctive,” but wishful thinking won’t make it so. Class consciousness can replace individualism only after a protracted period of the sharpest class struggle and the consolidation of communist state power. Regardless of its political shortcomings, Soviet education in the 1930s was on to something crucial with those blocks and bricks. We live in a capitalist culture infested by reformism, subjectivity, and individualism. Every member and leader of our Party suffers from these diseases.

From the Masses, to the Masses

But we also have powerful tools at our disposal. If used correctly, they can help us advance.

First, we have our Party and its political line. The Party stands for communist revolution, the violent seizure of power for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Party stands for working-class consciousness, objectivity, and dialectical materialism. The Party teaches us to serve the working class rather than ourselves. To act on this line, to overcome our errors and bourgeois tendencies, represents the work of several lifetimes, especially in an era of anemic class struggle. But the line remains a beacon to keep in sight at all times.

Second, we understand the critical importance of building a base in the industrial working class and among workers in the military. In addition, we continue to organize in the non-industrial working class and service industries and among youth. We have much to offer our fellow workers in terms of political understanding. The demanding, rewarding struggle to build

unbreakable personal and political ties with our fellow workers and others is more crucial than ever. We all know people who are communists at heart and in search of a movement, even if they don’t yet realize it.

In today’s political climate, where rotten capitalist ideas hold sway 24/7, these personal ties must be our highest priority. If we are to convince other workers on our jobs that we have the solution to end capitalism, we must prove to them that communists will fight at their side. Only deep friendships, developed over years and tested in all sorts of struggle, can get the job done.

At the same time, we need to understand that communist development is a two-way street—as Mao wrote, “from the masses, to the masses.” Our fellow workers have a lot to offer us, sometimes more than we have to offer them. As we gain a more dialectical materialist understanding, we’ll also learn more from workers in class struggle—theory and practice will go hand in hand. We’ll continually develop our line to keep up with our newfound collective understanding.

Ultimately, a Party immersed in the working class will destroy imperialism and the old capitalist order. Relying on other workers will make us immeasurably stronger. It will sustain us through hard times and secure the Party against fascist terror. We cannot hope to win any other way.

Expanding the Limits

Recognizing opportunity in a general way is one thing; acting on it specifically is another. Wherever we fight to sharpen the class struggle in our concentrations, whether on the job or in the community, we get a strong response. In our participation in the recent wave of demonstrations against racist police terror, we showed how a small but disciplined and organized group can influence the masses. The slogans of PLP became mass slogans; the boldness of PLP pushed the limits in a range of actions.

We can do even more. By building PLP in our strategic concentrations, we can give leadership way beyond our numbers. We can challenge the liberals and union hacks for leadership of large sections of the working class. As we grow stronger, we can lead strikes and walkouts against racism on our jobs. Imagine transit and auto workers walking out against racist terror and taking over City Hall. In class struggle, we must constantly push the limits.

Communist criticism and self-criticism seeks correction, not confession or revenge. We must take the same clear-headed approach to our own shortcomings that we use to analyze the world situation. Though we are trying to do the right thing, we have serious weaknesses; we must struggle constructively with each other to recognize and rectify them.

Workers and working-class youth remain the cornerstone of our revolutionary strategy. Each day we can see glimmers of real hope. Many of our comrades work hard to carry out the line and have earned the trust and confidence of their co-workers. One high school teacher regularly distributed 300 CHALLENGEs while earning a well-deserved reputation as an excellent educator. Within a liberal immigrants rights group, a PLP club has built a CD readership of 150 and recruited 12 immigrant workers to the Party. These examples and others like them serve as models of communist cadre and leadership.

In Washington, D.C., a PLP member's election as president of the bus drivers' union local contains valuable lessons. This breakthrough required decades of day-to-day struggle and base-building with the comrade's fellow workers. It required a militant fight against racist and sexist wage differentials. It involved the consistent mass sale of CHALLENGE. It included the patient, principled struggle against reformism, both inside the local and within the Party. And the process is far from over. New opportunities—and new dangers—are already arising in this work. The general point is that we must continue to fight for more revolutionary practice in the mass organizations.

In the Bronx, in a long-term Party effort in solidarity with workers at the Stella d'Oro cookie factory, we saw the importance of fighting sexism to strengthen our unity against the bosses. After they offered a raise for the more skilled workers, who were all men, by taking money from wage cuts to women workers, the rank-and-file voted the deal down and went on strike. Conscious anti-sexism strengthened the struggle both tactically and politically, and led to the recruitment of several workers to the Party.

In the recent fight against racist police terror led by workers and youth in Ferguson, Missouri, we have had some modest success. The grand jury's refusal to indict racist cop Darren Wilson for the murder of unarmed 18-year-old Mike Brown—a decision rigged by the bosses' prosecutor—catalyzed mass rebellion. First we waged a struggle within our Party to go to Ferguson over the Thanksgiving weekend. Once we arrived, we organized a plan to break the cops' ban on street demonstrations by stepping off the curb and marching in the street. The workers in Ferguson joined us. The police attacked with pepper gas and clubs and arrests. We withstood their attack and returned even stronger the next night.

Of equal importance, we built ties with Ferguson workers and youth by hosting a dinner and discussing the principles of PLP. As a result, we've been able to recruit a number of Ferguson rebels and bring others closer to the Party. We've also recruited small groups of rebellious workers in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Baltimore and other cities.

Through the actions in Ferguson and subsequent demonstrations around the world, our younger comrades learned—and older comrades were reminded—that we must respond with boldness and enthusiasm to the class struggle. When we are able to put the needs of our class first, we invariably win more workers to the revolutionary communist PLP.

Seizing Opportunities

The Party press is another area where significant improvements are needed. As conditions sharpen and the capitalists' dominant, finance-capital wing further implements its plans for

police-state fascism and global war, the importance of CHALLENGE will grow, both as a tool for mass organizing and a vehicle for internal Party communication. At the moment, sales are modest. The hand-to-hand distribution of CHALLENGE and the development of reader/seller networks remain crucial to our base-building strategy. The more we increase those sales, both in public and in our networks, the more the communist content of CHALLENGE articles will improve. The paper's quantity and quality are directly interrelated.

The present low level of class struggle will not last forever. World War I gave birth to the Bolshevik Revolution; World War II gave rise to the Chinese Revolution. If wars are prerequisites for communist revolution, there are even deadlier ones

coming our way. Driven by their need for maximum profit, the capitalists are heading pell-mell toward World War III.

But that's just one side of the story. History shows that rebellion within the capitalists' armed forces will grow. U.S. workers will not sit still indefinitely as the rulers fortify their fascist police state. These contradictions may take many years to reach a boil. But at some point, perhaps sooner than later, the pace will rapidly accelerate. As the next world war approaches and capitalist oppression intensifies in every corner of the globe, we can make great leaps in influencing the masses. But the working class will not wait for us. History is made by those at its leading edge.

We have done better of late in responding to the rulers' attacks. In Brooklyn, we are first on the street against racist cops and their allies: sell-out politicians, church leaders, and other pacifist community groups. In South Asia, we are in active struggle against the super-exploitation of women, often taking on traitorous trade union misleaders. In Mexico, we have joined fights against the rulers' deliberate flooding of poor neighborhoods and the education bosses' campaign to implement an even more oppressive system for students and teachers. Wherever we have worked to earn our reputation as staunch

anti-racist fighters and communist organizers, we have recruited to the Party.

The rulers are rightly worried about their ability to motivate oppressed and impoverished workers to join the military and die for U.S. imperialism. Winning Black and Latin soldiers—men and women—to sacrifice their lives for this rotten system is no easy task, especially after the Iraq and Afghanistan fiascos engineered by Republican Bush and Democrat Obama. The military is demoralized. These soldiers are among the workers most subjected to racist police violence, mass incarceration and mass deportation. More time may be needed before the military erupts into open rebellion, as we saw in the U.S. war against Vietnam. But the trends don't favor the imperialists; they represent an opening for us.

The economy lends us further opportunity. The current "recovery" is based on the heightened exploitation of the working class. The liberal agenda for fascism and war will continue to grind down workers' living conditions. As wages fall, retirement vanishes, medical care worsens, schools deteriorate, housing collapses, and racist police atrocities mount, workers will grow more militant. Cynicism and passivity will give way to anger. Once this happens, our communist practice today will determine our potential. What we do now, counts.

The Future Is Bright

Our responsibility is immense. From the shop to the battlefield, the future of class struggle and humanity depends on workers' political consciousness and activity. As the current wave of anti-immigrant racism illustrates, the political line of the working class will derive from one of two sources: capitalists or communists. The liberal capitalist line points to the Koch brothers as the enemy and offers the likes of Hillary Clinton as an alternative. The communist line takes a class position on internationalism and imperialist war, and calls for revolution. There is a world of difference, a life-and-death difference, between these two positions, and it is our obligation to make that clear. If we fail, workers will remain trapped in the enemy's fortress. If we

succeed, the working class will break out at last to create a communist society, no matter how long or demanding the road may be.

The mass international protests in 2003 against the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the mass anti-racist marches of 2014 and 2015 should be viewed as straws in the wind. They show the potential for a mass working-class movement. The anti-war protests died out because the protestors had no ideology beyond the immediate issue. When the war happened despite their efforts, they were demoralized. The anti-racist protests have faded (for now) because they had nowhere to go beyond a call for police reforms and the election of liberal capitalist candidates.

Even so, we should view these outbreaks of unrest as positive signs of more to come, as an opportunity and a challenge. As U.S. rulers plunge into broader global conflicts, turmoil and mass protest are sure to follow—and on a scale we have not seen in close to half a century. The international character of these protests should confirm the correctness of our commitment to build an international PLP. We need to look no further than the 2014 slogan, “We are Ferguson,” which spread throughout the world.

The profit system’s contradictions are universal and absolute. Our response to the bosses’ rivalries and wars will help us grow where the Party is established and generate new possibilities where we don’t yet exist. With a sharpened internal struggle against reformism, we can train ourselves to carry out this all-important assignment.

Each Party member must build a base and become a leader, both inside the Party and within the mass movement. Each Party club must recruit members, spread CHALLENGE and our ideas, and build the fight against the racist bosses. No amount of fascist repression or imperialist war can erase the historic need of the international working class to make communist revolution.

As Marx wrote: Every problem creates the elements of its solution.

PLP represents the future. For all of our limits and shortcomings, despite the difficult period we are facing, our opportunities are abundant. By learning to diagnose the disease of reformism more quickly and sharply, we can also learn to cure it. The task will be arduous, the years of struggle many and long. But history demands nothing less of us. The working class deserves nothing less.

As we continue to build upon the theory and practice of the communist movement, Progressive Labor Party has the potential to midwife a new humanity into the world. We must stay the course with revolutionary patience and revolutionary urgency. The current period will not last forever; the change may come sooner than we can now foresee.

Dark Night *will* have its end.