

CHALLENGE



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Kourts indict killer kop Van Dyke

For LaQuan, fight for communism



CHICAGO, October 24—The Chicago ruling class escaped a potential working-class rebellion by convicting racist killer cop Jason Van Dyke of second-degree murder and aggravated battery on October 5. But even though Van Dyke pulled the trigger, firing the 16 shots that murdered 17-year-old Black teenager LaQuan McDonald, the entire racist capitalist system bears the chief blame for murdering working-class people all over the world every day.

This will remain the brutal reality until the international working class led by the communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) rises up in armed mass revolution to crush the capitalist bosses, their state, and their killer cops. True justice for LaQuan and all victims of capitalist state violence means communist revolution!

The whole capitalist state is guilty as hell

The verdict handed down by the jury was not even a slap on the hand of the Chicago Police Department (CPD) whose history of racist terror, torture and murder of Black and Latin workers can be traced back for decades, and the CPD are by no means the only culprits. When we in PLP say that “capitalism killed LaQuan,” we mean that this racist system began failing him at a very young age and Van Dyke was the final blow.

LaQuan was a ward of the State. He was assigned to the unfortunate care of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), a system

so guilty it should be convicted of murder itself. LaQuan was in and out of residential treatment centers, where youth are vulnerable to assault, rape, and prostitution and where there are no counselors, or other professionals that will provide services to this neediest population (Chicago Tribune, 12/3/14). The education system also is guilty of violence against working-class youth. LaQuan had diagnosed learning and mental health disabilities. However, Chicago Public Schools has schemed to make huge cuts in special education resources to students just like him for years (The Gate, 5/8/). Consequently, LaQuan’s school years were riddled with truancy, expulsions, and, suspensions. He was arrested 26 times since his 13th birthday and in and out of juvenile detention centers for the last three years of his life.

All “justice” fleeting under capitalism

While some might regard this conviction as a victory, it is not! The jury did not give Van Dyke first-degree murder, which is a life sentence without parole. This racist kkkop was acquitted of his charge of “official misconduct,” effectively saying that it is completely appropriate for cops on the job to empty an entire clip into a Black teen. Think what would have happened if LaQuan had shot a cop 16 times!

The racist Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the same cop union that gave Van Dyke a janitorial job after he was fired from CPD, has backed him tooth

and nail. To this end, they have vowed to appeal the verdict (WTTW, 10/5). Sentencing will not happen until October 31 and the capitalist press is already talking about Van Dyke receiving the minimum sentence for each count and running the sentences for all counts concurrently, so that he could potentially walk free in as little as six years.

PLP calls on workers to join the Red Army

PLP members and friends held a rally at a train station on the south side of Chicago a few hours after the verdict was read. Many workers were still pissed about the murder of LaQuan, the verdict and the racism that persists in this part of the city. One young man told us about his brother who was unarmed and murdered by CPD two years after LaQuan was murdered, and that there was “never any justice when the police keep killing us.”

We called on workers to join the Red Army that PLP is building so that we can overthrow this murderous system once and for all. Over 300 workers took our newspaper CHALLENGE and hundreds more took leaflets calling for communist revolution. Workers in their cars honked in support of our signs and speeches. The misleaders of the city have been calling for “peace” ever since the tape of Van Dyke murdering LaQuan was released in 2015. PLP calls on all workers to fight back when the system attacks our class. That message of fight back and rebellion was met with enthusiasm on the south side.

Rebellions are training grounds for our class to prepare to take state power away from the capitalist bosses. Rebellions also force the capitalist class to grant reformist concessions that they normally wouldn’t want to surrender to the working class such as the “right” to vote, and social security and unemployment benefits. After the 1967 Detroit rebellion, Black workers were granted access to thousands of auto industry jobs that had been closed to the Black working class. If workers in Russia had not rebelled in 1917 and eventually taken state power from the ruling class, the Nazis probably would have won World War II.

As we made speeches connecting the murder of LaQuan to mass racist unemployment, to the racist closing of 52 schools in mainly Black and Latin communities, and to the violent gentrification happening in Chicago an older Black woman said, “They (racist capitalists) only understand one thing, that’s an ass-whoopin.” It is the role of PLP to harness and organize working class anger into a fighting force that can deliver that final “ass-whoopin” to the capitalist class all over the world.✪

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.
- ★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, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. 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

KHASHOGGI CRISIS: CLASH BETWEEN FASCISTS

The apparent assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, the journalist critic of the most powerful capitalist boss in Saudi Arabia, highlights the declining imperialist power of the United States and its dependence on a corrupt and brutal Saudi ruling class. The Khashoggi affair also reveals Turkey’s ambitions to be the top Middle East power, in competition with the Saudi bosses—and the growing influence of Russia in the region. Driving all of these developments is the inevitability of inter-imperialist war.

Throughout the world today, capitalism is in a state of sharpening economic and political crisis. From Asia to Europe to the U.S. and Latin America, the bosses need more and more fascism to discipline their own class and to control and intimidate workers as they mobilize for the next global war. Only communist revolution can smash fascism for good and abolish the material basis for imperialist war, the competition for maximum profits.

On October 2, Khashoggi was seen on camera entering the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, where he needed documents for his upcoming marriage. With known ties both to members of the Saudi royal family and the Muslim Brotherhood, Khashoggi was no small-time dissident. He had allied himself with a section of the Saudi ruling class targeted by a 2017 purge by the thuggish Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). After his falling out with MBS, Khashoggi lived in exile in the U.S. while attacking the Saudi regime as a columnist for the Washington Post. He accused MBS of creating “a climate of fear and intimidation” (Washington Post, 9/18/17).

Turkey’s counter-attack, engineered by its own thug, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was to accuse the MBS regime of planning the murder. Since the journalist’s disappearance and reported dismemberment, Turkish police and intelligence sources have leaked a series of appalling details to the Turkish press. Media reports have implicated key members of the Saudi military and intelligence apparatus as Khashoggi’s killers. Set on using the incident to undermine MBS, Recep Tayyip Erdoan is now demanding that Turkey, not Saudi Arabia, investigate and try the accused (NYT, 10/23).

Though Erdogan’s fascist regime in Turkey has been called “the world leader in jailing journalists” (2018 World Report, Human Rights Watch), it is feigning outrage at Khashoggi’s murder as a pretext to undermine Saudi Arabia. Though the two regional powers have significant economic ties, they also took opposing sides during the Arab Spring, with Turkey supporting Islamist political uprisings throughout the region and Saudi Arabia doing its best to squelch them (WP, 3/8). MBS has called Turkey one point of the “triangle of evil,” along with Iran and ISIS.

Russia courts Turkey to nix NATO

Meanwhile, Russia has mounted an effort since 2015 to bring Turkey’s rulers closer (Wall Street Journal video, 6/25). President Vladimir Putin’s strategy is to split off Turkey, the easternmost anchor of the NATO alliance, from the U.S.-led coalition. Turkey commands a choke-point connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. It also provides Russia with an alternative route for energy shipments to Europe, sidestepping a hostile Ukraine.

In December 2017, Turkey agreed to purchase the S-400 air defense system from Russia; four months later, it bought a Russian-made nuclear power plant (Bloomberg 7/11). Russia will build the land section of its Turkstream gas pipeline on Turkish soil, securing its access to European markets. In return, Turkey will get a \$1 billion rebate on gas surcharges (Reuters, 5/26).

By contrast, the U.S. announced increased tariffs on Turkish imports last summer; a week later, Turkey replied in kind. The U.S. escalated the trade conflict by sanctioning high-ranking Turkish officials. But neither country appears ready to cut ties just yet. On October 21, Erdoan released a statement reaffirming his “determination for the normalization and development of Turkey-U.S. cooperation in every area.” There is no honor among capitalist thieves, and traditional alliances will undoubtedly continue to shift as war gets closer.

U.S. rulers split on Mideast strategy

U.S. rulers seem deeply divided in their response to the Khashoggi debacle. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham called for sanctions against Saudi Arabia and referred to MBS as “toxic.” Various front-line capitalists, including JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, pulled out of an annual Saudi-hosted economic conference, forcing Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to do the

SAUDI ARABIA KEY TO U.S. CONTROL IN MIDDLE EAST

In the long run, despite any current tension, the U.S. has no real choice but to maintain its relationship with Saudi Arabia. U.S. bosses have planted their flag in Saudi Arabia since 1938, when Standard Oil of California (now Chevron) discovered oil there (CFR Website 5/12/17). In 1979, Zbigniew Brzezinski, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser, proclaimed the “Carter Doctrine”: “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region ... will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” Even as the New York Times editorial board hypocritically criticized Trump’s attempt to prop up MBS, it admitted that the kingdom is “an important ally in a volatile part of the world, a major purchaser of American weapons and a powerhouse in global oil politics” (NYT, 10/19).

The U.S. needs Saudi Arabia as part of its strategy to isolate their common foe, Iran. On November 4, the U.S. is set to implement a second set of sanctions to penalize any countries doing business with Iran (Congressional Research Service, 9/26). With a steep decline in Iranian oil on the world market looming, the U.S. will be relying on the Saudi rulers to increase production and keep oil prices price down; to serve as a staging point for U.S. military actions; and to grant it legitimacy in the region.

Saudi Arabia has the largest military budget in the Middle East—more than \$76 billion in 2017 (Center for Strategic and International Studies 3/13). With U.S. support, it cemented its regional leadership by assembling a coalition of Middle Eastern and African countries to wage brutal war in Yemen against Iran-backed rebels there. The war in Yemen resulted in mass deaths, displacement, and the worst cholera epidemic in history.

Beyond undercutting Iran and slaughtering thousands of civilians, the move helped Saudi Arabia to secure its southern border (Aljazeera 3/26/15). Next step: A Saudi plan to develop oil ports in Yemen’s southeast (Aljazeera 8/20).

same (CNN, 10/18).

But with encouragement from his son-in-law and MBS cheerleader, Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump is desperately trying to salvage the Saudi ruler’s reputation (NY Times 10/19). Even as increasingly damning details of Saudi involvement emerge, Trump continues to defend MBS and a huge U.S. arms deal with Saudi Arabia. One thing is clear: The U.S. bosses will place their capitalist class interests above any fake commitment to “human rights.”

The conflicting response to the Khashoggi incident reflects broader disagreements over U.S. strategy in the Middle East. The rulers are split over how best to control the region: whether to give traditional allies Saudi Arabia and Israel free rein to butcher whomever they please, or to hedge their bets by playing both sides, as they did in the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s (under Ronald Reagan) or by reaching a nuclear deal with Iran (under Barack Obama). Trump’s administration is pivoting back to the first of these options.

With U.S. power in the region on the wane after losing two wars and recently getting outflanked by Russia and Iran in Syria, the finance capital main wing of the U.S. ruling class cannot afford a divided front. And while Trump is a wild card whose private company “has been paid tens of millions by Saudi investors and its government” in business deals over the years (businessinsider.com, 10/16), the main wing has its own reasons to tread lightly in penalizing the MBS regime—namely, its need to keep Russia at bay. As he received “special attention” from the Saudi media at the conference in the Ritz-Carlton in Riyadh, a Russian fund manager close to Putin declared, “Saudia Arabia is a great partner for us” (NYT, 10/24).

For all the capitalist media’s dramatic appeals for “freedom of the press” and outrage over an extra-judicial killing, the Khashoggi story is really about the fight between U.S. and Russia for control over the region with the world’s largest cheap energy reserves. Workers must not be fooled into supporting one or another imperialist or local proxy in this fight. Our class interest is to expose the rulers’ intrigues. Our job is to lead the fight to take state power from their bloody hands through revolution for an egalitarian communist world.☛

272nd protest for Tyrone: End gag order, distribute CHALLENGE



Baltimore, OCTOBER 10—Baltimore's workers will never forget the savage murder of our working class brother Tyrone West at the hands of more than a dozen Kops five years ago. Since then workers joined by members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have been faithfully rallying every Wednesday to remind the city's capitalist administration, of their crimes against black workers.

Today marks the 272 rally, and communist politics were at the forefront, and have become an expected and respected part of West Wednesday. These rallies demand accountability – for the police murder of Tyrone West, and for all victims of

police terror. Despite this workers attending these rallies understand that racist police terror is an indivisible part of capitalism, and cannot be reformed. This week had a special focus, demanding an end to the gag orders that accompany almost every settlement, when victims of police terror in Baltimore are awarded a financial payment from the city

Bosses can't gag the fightback

In this way, with gag orders, victims and their family members – probably hundreds of people – have been prevented from speaking out about what happened. It's an effort – by capitalist politi-

cians and top city lawyers, including City Solicitor, Andre Davis – to hold back the potential power of the movement against racist police violence. Furthermore, because talking about what happened is an important part of dealing with severe emotional trauma, the gag orders also make healing virtually impossible, after being brutalized or, worse yet after losing a loved one to street executions by police.

The slogan for this new campaign against gag orders is, "Forced Silence Condones Police Violence." Two local organizations, also concerned with this issue, stepped in to help build support for this week's West Wednesday activities. The local branch of the American Civil Liberties Union and Not Without Black Women participated in the rally outside City Hall, in the march to central police headquarters and, right afterward, in a special panel discussion about fighting the gag orders, at which CHALLENGE newspaper was distributed to just about everyone in attendance. Even more important – in terms of strengthening

our understanding about the strategy we need for victory against racism and capitalism – a monthly CHALLENGE readers' group is scheduled to start soon. So far, seven of the West Wednesday activists have said yes, they will probably participate.

Distributing Challenge is a important tool to raise workers understanding, that the only solution to eradicating police brutality is communism. To win this bright future we so badly need, our understanding of communism has to grow, and Progressive Labor Party must grow too! Dare to struggle! Dare to win, for a communist future!✊

Chicago celebrates October Revolution

CHICAGO, October 20—Tonight we celebrated the victory and legacy of the communist October Revolution with comrades and close members of our base. About 60 of us gathered at a local hall to talk about the history of the how the Bolsheviks and the Russian working class won state power over 100 years ago, and how we in Progressive Labor Party are carrying on the tradition of international fight back, particularly with an emphasis on Black workers and youth being the key to revolution.

Table talks challenge bosses' reforms & racist cops

We kicked off the event with an open mic and table talks in order to make the event more engaging for those in attendance. We led discussions around issues of conditions in working-class schools for students and teachers, the confirmation of the newest U.S. Supreme Court arch-sexist, Brett Kavanaugh, efforts of the working class organizing fight back efforts in the area, and the difference between reform and revolution.

A major part of our table conversations was the recent conviction of racist cop Jason Van Dyke for the murder of Black teenager Laquan McDonald. However, the conversation wasn't a celebratory tone. It was a realistic tone in terms of the illusions that the ruling class feed members of the working class. Their version of justice never substantially works for members of the working class, particularly for Black, Latin, and women workers.

Even the "conviction" of Van Dyke shows that the state terror against working-class people by

these killer kkkops isn't regarded as a crime at all. This is shown by the fact that although Van Dyke was convicted of second-degree murder and 16 charges of aggravated battery with a firearm, he was found not guilty of "professional misconduct." Meaning, viciously murdering a Black youth who was walking away from him wasn't contrary to his duties, and it speaks volumes about the murderously racist character of the police under capitalism.

Revolutionary speeches, strengthening youth base

After the table talks, a comrade gave a passionate speech about rebuilding the mass international movement and the need to take state power once again through armed revolution. She blasted the capitalist bosses' efforts to pacify us through their bogus "democracy" and elections, and reminded all of us that true political power "comes through the barrel of a gun." She provoked all of us to imagine what could be if the caravan of migrant workers making their way through Central America was met at the U.S.-Mexico border with arms and communist leadership.

Following the comrade, a family member of Steven Rosenthal, a 15-year-old Black youth recently murdered by the Chicago Police Department (CPD), made a heartfelt speech about the realities of police repression in our neighborhoods. He talked about the life and personality of Steven and his relationships with his friends, and the type of lies that CPD have told about him since his mur-

der. The teens in attendance noticeably gave him their attention, and the effect it had on them was visible.

These teenagers were present as a result of our growing work in local schools, and the conversations they had after the event were inspiring. It is vital that we continue to work with youth because they bear the brunt of the abuses of capitalism. A few of these young people voiced an understanding of how racism affects them, and of what awaits them if we don't fight back and smash it.

The reality is that it could be any of them or any of us if we're not successful in building a wide base among the working class as well as a massive Red Army to fight back with revolutionary violence against the fascism that's heaped on us constantly.

Onward to state power

We ended the celebration with music and dancing, the way that working-class revolutions should be commemorated. It was yet another step forward in building our communist culture among the working class, a culture that is egalitarian, multi-racial, multi-gender, and multi-generational.

Over a century ago, the Bolsheviks and the Russian workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors gave us one of history's best lessons on what can be accomplished when our class is armed and organized with communist politics. It is on their shoulders that we stand as we continue to build our Party for that inevitable day when the working class wins power once again.✊

Mexico: workers remember 1968 student massacre

The massacre of October 2nd, 1968 in Mexico City was the culminating point of the state repression of the mass movement composed mainly of students, which had great support from the working class. Hundreds of thousands in schools and neighborhoods participated in that struggle. As background and inspiration of that movement, years before, doctors, teachers and railroad workers held massive strikes and protests in defense of their labor rights and against the repressive system.

The movement occurred in the context of a growing economy of 6 percent on average in the last two decades and a significant increase in the urban population compared to the rural one. In the political sphere, there was an acute class struggle and similar student mobilizations worldwide. In that period, the polarization of the countries either under the influence of the old communist movement or of the capitalist bloc was in force.

The former was led by a clique that had abandoned the principles of communism, but which counterbalanced the capitalist bloc under the leadership of the United States. Capitalism had to be present itself as the best alternative, so it promoted struggles for individual liberties, for feminism, environmentalism and democracy, the advances in these demands are the product of those struggles worldwide. After 1968, some groups of young people became radicalized and became part of the armed movement for national liberation, but the roots of the armed struggle were actually mainly in the terrible oppression and misery in which the peasants lived in rural communities and the workers in the misery belts of the big cities.

Another sector of young people who participated in the movement remained had a more moderate line, which only sought greater freedom and the democratization of society.

A small group of members, friends, and supporters of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) recently attended a march of tens of thousands to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the mass movements of 1968 in Mexico and the massacre of October 2nd. We distributed hundreds of leaflets (see article in Challenge about Ayotzinapa) to edu-



On August 27, 1968, students in Mexico City staged the largest protest against the capitalist government in Mexico's history.

cation students, students from National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Autonomus University of Mexico City (UACM) and other social organizations.

We carried a banner in which we highlighted the struggle of communists and students against fascism and imperialism. We also participated on September 26 in a march that took place to demand the appearance of the 43 education students who disappeared four years ago, who were attacked by the Iguala, Guerrero police when they went to that city to ask for economic support from the population and take buses to Mexico City and participate in the demonstration on October 2, 2014.

Our leaflet and the banner were well received by those attending the demonstration. The pres-

ence of our party is vital to keep our class alert to the false hope that has awakened in millions of workers with the arrival of the new fake-left government of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

Communists in the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) honor the memory of those who have fought against the injustices of the capitalist system; we support the workers who continue that struggle today. We believe that capitalism is a system that cannot work for the working class (for all those who need to work to survive), so we call on them to change it for a communist system of social equality, for this we must organize ourselves in a non-electoral party like PLP, to unify internationally and maintain the interests of our class above any individual or group interest. Join us!✴

Global refugee crisis, a racist result of U.S. imperialism

Thousands of refugees from Central America—notably Honduras and El Salvador—are fleeing poverty and U.S. armed death squads as part of a worldwide workers' struggle to escape the hell of capitalist exploitation. In 2017 fifteen million refugees, over half from South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria, were forced to flee for their lives as U.S. bosses fought to hold on to their declining empire. U.S. Capitalists would rather lock immigrants up for a profit and treat our working class brothers and sisters like animals, than provide jobs, educations or housing.

The U.S. uses Honduras as a military hub for Central America where the police, gangs and drug cartels are indistinguishable and work for the same bosses. The U.S. supplies the Honduran military with weapons used to kill and intimidate workers from fighting back.

In the U.S. there are currently 100 camps in 17 states jailing 13,000-unaccompanied immigrant youth. While thousands of families are locked up, I.C.E in August increased its factory raids rounding up 1192 undocumented immigrants. These attacks are attacks on all workers and we must stand and fight back!

Politicians are no allies of refugees

The separation of families and camps for children cannot be blamed solely on Trump. They are the product of decades of policies by both Democrats and Republicans. In 1994, Clinton's "Operation Gatekeeper" poured billions into border security including high-tech surveillance systems and an increased border force. Bush II doubled the size of the border force to 20,000 while deporting

over two million and building a wall from the Pacific Ocean across California where thousands of migrants died in search for a better life. Deportation-chief Obama left office with a record of over 3 million racist deportations. .

Racism and borders divide workers

Capitalists of all nations are trying to blame the global capitalist crisis on the immigrants who are fleeing U.S.-supported terror regimes, gang violence and endless wars. In the aftermath of endless chaos, the bosses use racism against the victims of imperialism by installing concentration camps all over the world.

Mexico's "populist" president Manuel Obredor has created his own border police to violently repel Honduran refugees.. In 2017, the Mexican government detained 95,000 migrants, most of them children from Central America's gang-plagued Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

In Greece on Lesbos, camp Moria houses 8,000 Syrian refugees where police brutality occurs regularly and conditions are unsanitary with sewage running through the camp. Against the current of rising nationalism, the only solution is communist internationalism

As the crisis of refugees worsens and capitalism descends further into chaos, the bosses are pushing more racism and nationalism attempting to keep workers blaming each other instead of capitalism. Italy's new populist coalition is forcing refugees away, hate crimes have risen 10-fold since 2012 and a tide of neofascism is sweeping the country. France, Austria and Switzerland tightened

their borders and increasing anti-immigrant racism has led to violent demonstrations across cities in Germany. Rising of nationalist politicians and parties in Europe are hoping to manipulate the working class into more racism against migrants to save their rotten system.

Well-intentioned, good people try to help immigrants with donations or lunches. Some argue that the camps should have better conditions, but the issue is not that the camps should be "better", Yet the real problem is that the camps should not exist in the first place.

Fight for a communist world

A strong communist movement of millions of multi-racial workers is the only way to end these attacks. Workers of the world must reject all nationalism and borders that benefit only the bosses when they need to move money, their businesses', or fool workers to die in imperialist wars.

No worker benefits from borders that divide the working class by fomenting racism between workers suffering the same capitalist exploitation all over the world. The capitalist bosses are doing their best to scapegoat immigrants for the deepening crisis of U.S. capitalism amid sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry.

Progressive Labor Party has taken up the cause to smash all borders and create one united working class against profits and exploitation. The international working class has no borders! In the face of these attacks by the bosses, we must continue building the revolutionary communist PLP to smash all walls that serve the parasitic capitalists. We must create a new world that honors workers' labor and serves workers' needs.✴

100-year anniversary of the end of World War I

Murderous World War I, known as the Great War then, ended one hundred years ago on November 11, 1918. It might be impossible to overestimate the impact of this war upon world history. It was by far the bloodiest war in history until that time. The slaughter horrified even those many patriots who had anticipated it and had celebrated when it began.

The Great War was pure imperialist—that is, capitalist—slaughter for empire and territory. There were no reasons behind it that could be called remotely morally redeeming.

It wasn't for "freedom", whatever that means, or for "national self-determination", or for an end to colonialism, or against racism or brutality. All these notions mask the fact that, in essence, World War II was also imperialist.

No such ideological excuses can hide the fact that the Great War was over the division of the earth, a war FOR, not against, subordination, colonialism, empire.

It was a war among "democracies" — in that Germany was no less "democratic" than the United Kingdom (both were parliamentary monarchies) or, the monarch aside, than the United States.

The Great War led millions of people worldwide to seriously question or even reject "patriotism" as a cover-up for capitalist and imperialist rule.

This massive revulsion against imperialist slaughter and the misery it brought to the vast

Letter: My great-uncle, a veteran and victim of world war

Today I commemorate my great-uncle, George Devine, a veteran and a victim of the Great War. He went off to war in 1917, at the age of 21. In 1918 he returned "shell-shocked"—the name at that time for what is today called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He had been driven insane—literally—by the stress and shock of trench warfare. He never recovered.

For his family, this was worse than if he had been killed—to witness his unending suffering, year after year. My late mother remembered him living with her and her parents for brief periods in the 1920s. But then he had to return to the Veterans Administration hospital for the brain injured at Perry Point, MD, where he lived for the rest of his life.

He died there on January 31, 1941. Poor young man! His whole bright future at the age of 21 ruined, and it was not to defend his country, or any noble ideal at all. To save J.P. Morgan & Sons, and other American banks, whose huge loans to the United Kingdom would have been lost if Germany had won the war. To

put the capitalists of the United States ahead of the capitalists of Europe. My grandmother, his only sibling, could never speak of her younger brother George without weeping. Not wishing to cause her distress, we never asked her about him. And now it is far, far too late; Grandmother died in 1994, at the age of 99.

I think of him today, on the 100th anniversary of the end of the war that ruined his life. Yet he was but one of millions of young men, and tens of millions of men, women, and children the world around, whose lives were blasted by that terrible, imperialist war.

For me, great-uncle George stands in for all of them—all the people killed by wars for exploitation, for the enrichment of the few at huge cost to the many. And I prefer to believe this: As long as I—we—learn the lessons of the Great War, and struggle for a world of justice, free of exploitation, free of capitalism, free of inequality—then my great-uncle George, and the myriad of those like him throughout the history of the awful 20th century, did not die entirely in vain.

majority of the peoples of the world led to social and political progress. The Russian Revolution and the International Communist Movement; the militancy of organized labor; the certainty that a better world than capitalism, imperialism, and the devastation they produce must be possible.

The Great War was an event with mighty lessons for all of us today. No wonder it is neglected, Although largely forgotten those lessons were dynamite in 1918, and still are today. ☪

Chinatown tenants beat slumlord, take on fight against displacement



NEW YORK, October 19—Cheers from working-class fighters filled Chinatown's Jing Fong restaurant in celebration today, as the 83-85 Bowery tenants (see CHALLENGE 3/21) marked a historic victory against their racist slumlord Joseph Betesh. After a long struggle, the majority Asian tenants returned to their apartments in August. Betesh had colluded with corrupt NYC agencies like the Department of Buildings to have more than 75 tenants evicted in January after he reported building violations—ones he had done nothing to fix for years! The tenants were sent to shelters and single room occupancy hotels throughout the city. In the months before this victory, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) joined the displaced tenants of 85 Bowery, along with Black, Latin, and white workers who formed part of the Coalition to Protect Chinatown and Lower East Side, and other citywide anti-displacement groupings to swing our collective fist to beat Betesh and guarantee their return home.

Under capitalism, housing is a commodity that many working people have trouble affording, but which is the source of great fortune for developers and landlords. The lack of affordable housing is a serious crisis in NYC and other cities, with developers mostly building luxury housing and landlords trying to squeeze as much rent as possible out of tenants, while providing few services. In NYC alone, one million rent stabilized units have been lost since 2005 (wall treet journal 9/25).

Many hundreds of thousands in NYC are homeless, or doubled up with other families, or living in cramped and decrepit quarters. This in a city with the world's highest number of billionaires!

Tenants unite against Betesh

When slumlord Betesh purchased 83-85 Bowery – along with eleven other buildings – in 2013, he began a relentless effort to force out long-time tenants and convert the buildings into luxury condos. Betesh used every dirty tactic he could to remove the tenants. It began when one worker received an illegal eviction notice. Immediately, occupants banded together to form the 83-85 Bowery tenants' association, dedicated to collectively resisting Betesh's many efforts, to evict or buy them out. Rather than falling into the trap of blaming gentrification on white workers, or viewing it as an individual workers failure, the tenants saw that these problems stemmed from the city's rezoning plans favoring luxury development.

Throughout this fight, tenants united with the community to fight in favor of the Chinatown Working Group Plan. This is a plan developed by workers and organizations on the Lower East Side that would grant tenants legal protections and control over the city planning process. It would limit building heights, put a cap on rents, and ensure that any housing built be affordable. The tenants' victory and their sponsorship of the plan has now galvanized dozens of neighborhood groups in the cross hairs of the city's displacement agenda to take action.

Communism will solve the housing problem

One of the tasks that communism must devote itself to is guaranteeing that everyone has high-

quality housing, integrated with nearby high-quality schools, recreational and health facilities, libraries and art spaces, and daycare and community centers. Housing will not be privately-owned, it will not be racially segregated, and it will be democratically run by councils of tenants. In the meantime, under capitalism we fight against the landlords and the city agencies that support them.

Lessons from Workers of 85 Bowery

The importance of the 83-85 Bowery victory did not lie in legal proceedings, or even the hunger strikes the tenants bravely waged. It came from elevating their battle from being against one slumlord to a much larger war against the city's racist housing plan that is displacing workers. While housing battles historically have been reformist in nature, not challenging private ownership, PLP workers engage in these struggle because of their potential to elevate the anti-displacement battle from a working-class reform to communist revolution.

The tenants victory did not come easily. Betesh and the city's pro-capitalist apparatuses spared no expense to try stopping the tenants' return efforts. In a cruel effort to break their spirit their slumlord threw their belongings in dumpsters. During a City Hall hunger strike, the Klan in Blue tried intimidating workers protesting by keeping an uncomfortably close watch, and asking us to keep our signs off their bosses' property. Mayor De Blasio's office removed port-o-potties, even after we received permits for them days earlier.

When the bosses discovered our plan to organize this hunger strike they mailed each tenant appointments to meet with HPD (Housing of Preservation and Development) workers for public housing in the Bronx the same day it launched! However, the tenants and their supporters continued to push back with more demonstrations and endless grit. They were able to win no rent increases, rent stabilization for both buildings, and monetary compensation.

No reform struggle, no matter how impressive, will solve the housing crisis for working people. Yet, we must continue fighting the intolerable living conditions and the threat of displacement. The success of the 85 Bowery struggle came from its ability to unify our class around rezoning as a worker led process. Struggles such as this not only have the potential to build workers' power, but will also build the confidence our class needs to win the more decisive battle to smash this system, and its racist borders be it locally or internationally, for a worker run communist society where decent housing will be provided for all. ☪

LETTERS

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

Health workers, take a stance against U.S. imperialism

As the American Public Health Association (APHA) prepares to meet in San Diego from November 10 to November 14, the world is witnessing more brutal and flagrant disregard of international conventions in war zones. The murder of journalist Khashoggi in Turkey at the Saudi consulate is the tip of the iceberg of the violence supported by the United States through its provision of military support to Saudi Arabia and Israel, among others (see editorial, page 2). Public health workers can challenge this development by supporting a late-breaking resolution at the APHA convention that calls for “An End to Attacks on Health Workers and Health Facilities in War and Armed Conflict Settings.”

The resolution notes the increased murder of health workers in the Middle East and Africa and calls upon the UN Security Council to investigate recent attacks on health workers by Russian and Syrian forces in Syria, Israeli Defense Forces in Gaza, Saudi Arabian and UAE forces in Yemen, and armed militia groups in DRC and CAR. It links the U.S. support of Saudi Arabia and its allies to the deaths of civilians in Yemen and calls for an end of US assistance in refueling planes used in bombing. It calls on the U.S. government to restrict arms sales and political support to perpetrators of attacks on health care services.

Public health workers have sought to increase support for oppressed populations and refugees and can now call on the U.S. to reinstate funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides health care, education, and social services to Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. As communists, we understand that the imperialist battles over control of the oil reserves of the Middle East continue to kill thousands. A likely expanded war will kill millions more. We call upon our friends in public health to take a stand against imperialist war and growing fascism and brutality that provides no safe haven for health workers and patients and is proving devastating to the global working class as a whole.

★★★★★

Colombia: construction worker explains political economy

The biggest problem suffered world-wide by the working class is unemployment, low wages, and the struggle to find work. It represents the greatest contradiction between the ruling class and the proletariat, and also the greatest potential to build our party through recruitment and class struggle.

I work in the construction industry, which is considered by economists to be one of the pillars of the bourgeois economy and is a source of enormous value added by the labor of workers. It is there where 250 workers have their lives and health consumed by 12-hour work days, without proper safety, job security, or social benefits. They are asked to work at their maximum to construct products that will satisfy the stylistic whims of the few bosses who have the hundreds of thousands of dollars to invest in each apartment; a value created by the life and labor of workers who sweated for a few meager dollars.

Meanwhile, the cost of the force of our labor is actually worth less every day (about \$250 monthly), as the army of unemployed grows and favors the racist bosses' system that can afford to pay whatever it likes. Here in Colombia, this is depressed even more by the currently unfolding drama of mass migration by our brothers and sisters from Venezuela. Their necessity for survival has obliged these proletarian brothers to offer their labor cheaper still, further devaluing the cost of labor. These decreases affect the needs of our families, while the bankers and exploiters line their pockets even more.

This was all discussed by more than a dozen comrades, who took advantage of the potential created by the discontent of many workers in this area. While workers of all ages engaged, it is especially important for the young workers who will be the gravediggers for this racist system of wage slavery. In these discussions we are both educator and student, teaching and learning about the needs and hardships suffered by our class. Our guide is the unrivaled tool CHALLENGE, which actualizes, molds, leads, and creates the class



consciousness for a future where these sufferings will be a thing of the past. We must organize our communist international party with millions of workers, students, soldiers, and farmworkers to lead a revolution; the necessary step to constructing a communist society. This is the only way to end the problems of our class worldwide and put a finish to the dark night of capitalism.

★★★★★

The contradiction of the union demands

I recently participated in a rally led by the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing faculty and staff working for the City University of New York (CUNY). Their demands include better pay for adjuncts, greater benefits, and more full-time positions. CUNY, considered a tool for working-class social mobility, currently survives by exploiting adjunct (part-timers) labor so as to maintain the profits raked in by the Board of Trustees; the chancellor who lives in a luxury apartment on the Upper East Side, one block away from my alma mater Hunter College—all while a depressing percentage of educators live off of food stamps.

Their demands struck a personal chord for me. I grew up as a child of immigrants only slightly above the poverty line, with fears of unemployment, lack of healthcare. The salary of \$3,000 per course deterred me from pursuing my dream of becoming a philosophy professor. Instead, I took the slightly-safer path of becoming a school teacher.

As I listened to the union president, I was struck by several contradictions illustrating the shortcomings of reform work, shortcomings that bore similarities to the fight for a \$15-minimum wage. Yes, of course workers deserve a living wage REGARDLESS of the work they do. But, just as the fight for \$15 was met with mass layoffs and increased utilization of technology in the form of kiosks, an increase of pay and full-time positions will be positive for those who receive it but will also be met with a decrease in available employment overall. This is one of the consequences of reform under capitalism. There is no such thing as a gain for the whole working class.

Neither Wall Street, where the rally was hosted, nor the CUNY Board of Trustees care about education. Though the PSC's message had some validity, it was a salient reminder that so long as the wage system and profits exist, there can be no dignity in the pursuit of knowledge and education. Reform work does not contain long-term solutions; at best, it brings about short-term concessions. It does so by co-opting working-class energy that could otherwise be geared toward building for revolution, as illustrated by the PSC leadership associating itself with the energy of the rallying cry for “7K or strike” without actually committing to it.

Within the last week, though, numerous campus chapters of the union have signed on to commit to a strike. This was inspiring news for me because as a member of Progressive Labor Party, it was an impetus to give revolutionary leadership in these campus struggles.

★★★★★

Build a base across imperialist borders

Recent articles in CHALLENGE, including the October 10 editorial and the report on the worker-student movement, highlight the importance of China for revolutionaries everywhere in the world. Although the U.S. economy, when measured in nominal exchange rates, is still a bit larger than China's, when measured in actual purchasing power the Chinese GDP (gross domestic product) surpassed the U.S. in 2014. While the U.S. economic output in such things as banking and insurance services is still the world's largest, Chinese manufacturing is now 1.5 times the size of the U.S. The Chinese industrial proletariat, the largest in the world, is intensely exploited and increasingly militant. The mixture of renewed interest in real communist politics among youth in China's campuses and in the ranks of the workers is a potentially explosive mix that worries China's ruling class.

In the 1960s the Cultural Revolution in China was pushing the limits of workers' power, putting pressure on the new capitalist ruling class growing up inside the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The Chinese ruling party, then as now, still called itself “communist,” despite the obvious facts. After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the ruling bureaucrats of the Chinese government and “Communist” Party carried out a series of dramatic reversals in policy, promoting private ownership of factories and farms and exploitation of workers for profit. In other words, they embraced capitalism step by step until now they are a major capitalist economy in the world. The CCP's claims of being a party of the workers are increasingly scoffed at by workers and students.

Inevitably China has also become a rising imperialist power, following the pattern described clearly a century ago by Lenin in “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism.” War between competing empires is on the horizon. During the 1960s, young communists, including some in a newly founded revolutionary communist party called Progressive Labor Party, intensely studied the left-wing ideas and actions of the most promising revolution of their day, the Cultural Revolution in China.

Some even learned Chinese so they could communicate with like-minded communists. Today, with the imperialist governments of China and the U.S. on a collision course, young revolutionaries in and around PLP should study events in China more closely than before. Young PL'ers can build relationships with students from China. Some may even want to study in China, learn Mandarin or Cantonese and make friends with students there who share an anti-imperialist and internationalist outlook. Building a base across the national borders created by the capitalists has never been more important.

★★★★★

Protest Kavanaugh, courts, and kapitalism

CHALLENGE is our tool for building a communist revolution. On the afternoon of October 4, members of the Legal Services Staff Association (LSSA) and the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (ALAA), along with others, rallied against the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Another comrade and I were at the Foley Square New York rally where participants raised militant antiracist, antisexist and antifascist chants. The chants and the rally itself were directed specifically against Kavanaugh and U.S. President Donald Trump and their open attacks against women, Black and Latin workers, immigrants, and the entire working class. Many protesters have fallen for the lies that the present terrors being inflicted on the working class are all because of Trump and his supporters. There is a lack of understanding that Republican and Democratic politicians all serve the ruling class and that simply switching from one group of politicians to another will not benefit us.

But at the same time, some protesters are searching for real solutions to the problems we all face. At the rally, 37 people (about half the people there) took CHALLENGE. As we involve ourselves in struggles, and distribute our papers, we create opportunities to win more workers to the communist outlook of Progressive Labor Party.

★★★★★

Hawaii: hotel workers strike! Potential for mass movement



HONOLULU, October 11—“This is real education!” a professor shouted as a strike-support rally at the University of Hawaii (UH) drew to an end. It truly was. The rally also inspired because it represented the potential for mass worker-student solidarity and an island-wide working-class movement against the evils of capitalism.

About 2,700 workers had been on strike against Marriott, the world’s largest hotel chain, for three days. Organizers from Unite Here Local 5 got together with faculty and student leaders to hold a strike-support rally in front of university’s School of Travel Industry Management.

Everyone cheered when it was announced that a United Airlines’ flight crew had checked out of Marriott’s Sheraton Princess Kaiulani hotel, and that the International Association of Flight Attendants was supporting the strike. The Sheet Metal Workers and the United Public Workers unions in Hawaii have also taken actions to support the strike. The slogan for the strike is “One job should be enough.” This expresses the feeling that mass poverty among U.S. workers can no longer be tolerated and awareness that only worker rebellion can bring change. Workers shouldn’t need two jobs to survive, but the grim reality is that they do. A Local 5 hotel housekeeper gets \$22 per hour. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that it takes more than \$35 per hour to afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment.

Everyone at the rally voiced enthusiasm for building unity between workers off campus and UH students, teaching assistants, professors and workers. The rally was also the first of its kind at UH. No one could remember a campus rally led by rank-and-file workers.

The following morning, a march of about 200 workers and supporters in Waikiki picketed in front of Marriott hotels, and ended with a demonstration on the beach next to the giant Moana Surfrider luxury hotel. The speeches and chants were an inspiring show of worker determination to fight for as long as it takes to win the strike.

What is winning?

This raises the question, what does winning mean? The Marriott workers may gain a meaningful wage hike and greater job security. But, as many of the speakers at the strike rallies have been saying, workers throughout the state have been under attack from the bosses for a long time and the working class has suffered defeats as social and environmental problems worsen.

The Marriott struggle must be seen as one part of an ongoing worker’s struggle. For example, on the same day local workers joined the nationwide hotel strike, local postal workers joined a series of nationwide protests against Trump’s latest attack on the working class, a proposal that the postal service be completely privatized. The capitalists are determined to intensify super-exploitation of workers. This means more racist, sexist and anti-immigrant attacks aimed at dividing the working class.

Strikers called for a “fair share” of the massive profits capitalists gain from tourism. Working people should not have to share anything with capitalists. We have to build a communist movement uniting all working people to eliminate capitalism once and for all. Participating in such strikes helps us learn to fight back.

The rallies this week were well organized and spirited, but they weren’t big enough. Mass leafletting in advance might have increased participation. The message that the Marriott workers’ struggle is everyone’s struggle and part of an ongoing anti-capitalist struggle must be brought out forcefully to thousands. ☺



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

Chicago cop’s murder of Laquan McDonald typical of city’s racist police

NYT, 10/12 — Chicago erupted three years ago when the city belatedly released a video showing that a white officer had essentially executed a black teenager named Laquan McDonald and...the police and city officials lied about it for months.... Jurors convicted the officer...of second-degree murder....the first time in nearly 50 years that a Chicago officer had been convicted of murder....

The cover-up...began as Mr. McDonald lay bleeding on the pavement on Oct. 20, 2014.... Three other officers are charged with lying about the shooting to justify Officer Van Dyke’s actions....

Jurors....could easily see from the video that Mr. McDonald...was veering away when officer Van Dyke shot him 16 times....Van Dyke had essentially made up his mind to use deadly force even before he arrived on the scene. “We are going to have to shoot the guy,” he...told his partner while en route....Top police and city officials...stood by the officers’ tales for months....The city withheld the video for more than a year....The McDonald case — with its false statements...and concealed evidence — is typical of how the department has historically operated....[In] many cases...the department had swallowed whole a police officer’s version of events that was later disproved by video evidence....The city had failed to investigate a majority of the police misconduct cases....

The Cook County state’s attorney has vacated convictions in 42 cases...because of illegal conduct by a corrupt former police sergeant who shook down drug dealers while running a protection racket in a SouthSide public housing project.

Private prisons, slavery by another name

NYT, Book Review: “American Prison” by Shane

Bauer — ...Bauer [was an] undercover...prison guard at Winn Correctional Center in rural Louisiana [which]...hired...to run the facility [the] Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)....

“American Prison” ...adds not only the back story of CCA...but also an eye-opening examination of the history of ‘corrections’ as a profit-making enterprise...Private prisons...now house 8 percent of American inmates....Every management decision at Winn...is dictated by one imperative: maintaining profitability by squeezing expenses....Guards...trained bloodhounds by using actual inmates, [and] beat inmates outside the view of cameras....

His survey of profit-driven incarceration begins in the mid-19th century....[when] mass incarceration in the South was simply slavery by another name....Entire prisons — filled mostly with African-American inmates — were rented out to individuals or companies to provide a captive work force. Convicts did more than just plant cotton. The textile mill inside Texas’ first penitentiary became the largest factory in the state, and inmates were used throughout the South to dig mines and build railroads, generally working under horrible conditions. Death rates were staggeringly high; convicts...cost nothing to replace....This is the story of the South...compet[ing] with Northern industry...without labor unions. CCA...is now a \$3.04 billion publicly traded concern.... Inmates themselves are the commodities, and money is made by persuading legislators that a private operator can confine and care for them more cheaply — in Winn’s case, \$34 per inmate per day — than the state....

When setting a prisoner free is detrimental to a company bottom line....Bauer discovers that a Winn inmate was held for a full year after he was eligible for release, ostensibly because he had no address in Louisiana that would take him in — a technicality that earned the company an additional 12,410 from his continued incarceration....

The racist frame-ups of the U.S. execution system

NYT, 10/7 (Kristoff) — Imagine being framed for a horrific crime....You then spend 35 years in

prison awaiting execution....Imagine that you’re a black man and that the trial was tainted with racism. Meanwhile, federal judges and the F.B.I. investigators cite evidence that the real killer is a white convicted murderer....That is...what happened to Kevin Cooper, now on death row at San Quentin prison....Some hairs found clutched in the victims’ hands, possibly ripped from the killer’s head, are not from an African-American like Cooper....In the Cooper case a witness has provided a sworn declaration describing a confession by Lee [a white man] to the killings committed with two other named individuals....Researchers have repeatedly found that black defendants are more likely to be convicted, more likely to receive long sentences, more likely to be sentenced to death — especially, as in this case, where the victims are white. Another study found that judges are less likely to grant parole when they are hungry, before lunch. Another study found that judges issue longer sentences the week after their college alma mater football team unexpectedly loses a game.

Tax cuts a racist concoction

NYT, 10/12 — The tax cuts that...Trump signed into law...are disproportionately helping white Americans over African-Americans and Latinos, a disparity that reflects longstanding racial economic inequality in the United States....The vast majority of the law’s benefits would flow to the top 20 percent of American income earners....White people are far more likely to be among the top income earners in the country. That means they were better positioned to gain from a law that delivered higher benefits to top earners....The average tax cut going to white American households is more than double one going to a black or Latino one....

By steering more money to whites, the law could exacerbate an already stark racial wealth divide in the United States....”

...The white middle class reaped...just over \$15 billion total, compared with just over \$3 billion for middle-income Latinos and just over \$2 billion for middle-income blacks.

Bolshevik Revolution 101

WORKERS TOOK POWER; WE CAN DO IT AGAIN!

One hundred and one years ago, November 7, 1917, marked the beginning of the single most important event of the 20th century, the Bolshevik revolution, which directly inspired the Chinese revolution and anti-imperialist struggles around the world from Vietnam to Africa to Latin America.

Russia's working class, headed by the revolutionary communists of the Bolshevik Party and its leader, Vladimir Lenin, freed one-sixth of the world's surface from capitalism. They proved once and for all that it was possible to strive for a world without exploitation, where those who produce all value, the working class, can enjoy the fruits of their labor and not have it stolen by a few parasitical bosses and their lackeys.

The Russian Revolution was the first serious attempt by workers and peasants to seize, hold and consolidate state power. Even though capitalism has returned to the former Soviet Union, workers will not forget that the Soviet working class defeated capitalism in 1917; smashed the imperialist armies of 17 countries (including Japan, the U.S., Britain, France, among others) which invaded Russia in 1918 to try to crush the revolution; freed the masses, especially women, from the yoke of capitalist, feudal and religious oppression; and then in 1945 defeated the mightiest and most barbaric army the capitalists had ever organized: the Nazi Wehrmacht.

The revolution frightened the world's bosses, who immediately sent armies from 17 countries to try — in Churchill's words — to “strangle it in the cradle.” From 1918 to 1923, millions of workers led by the Red Army defeated the imperialists' counter-revolution. Nearly five million died in that battle, many of whom were the most committed workers the revolution had produced.

The masses showed great courage and determination in defending and building their revolution, under the leadership of their revolutionary party. They proved that the revolutionary violence on the part of the working class and peasantry were vital to the seizure of state power.

Achievements of the Revolution

The Bolshevik Revolution brought Russia to heights of productive development that capitalism, given a similar time period and circumstances, could never have dreamed of. Bringing the working class to power, the Revolution coordinated their social-economic efforts for the production and exchange of the necessities, the comforts and even some luxuries of life, making them available to all. The Soviet system of production was for use, not for profit. This can only be accomplished by abolishing capitalist profits and the private ownership of property, with its exploitation, poverty, unemployment, racism, fascism and imperialist wars.

In the 1930s, when the entire capitalist world sank into depression, and tens of millions worldwide were left jobless and starving (much like today), the Soviet Union was forging ahead building a new society without unemployment and hunger. They created some measure of a decent life for workers in an incredibly short time, transforming a 90% illiteracy rate into one in which nearly everyone was literate.

Around 1938, without any official declaration, the USSR had achieved the era of free bread. One could enter a cafeteria, order little or nothing, and receive all the bread one wanted. You needed, you received — at least to that extent. Even during a drive for heavy industry, living standards rose strikingly when the rest of the world was mired in the Great Depression. The Soviet Union not only freed workers but also fought against racism and sexism. The battle against racism was particularly significant. As pro-communist Paul Robeson said about his trips to the Soviet Union, he said :

*“I felt like a human being for the first time since I grew up. Here I am not a Negro but a human being. Before I came I could hardly believe that such a thing could be....
Here, for the first time in my life, I walk in full human dignity.”*

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Heroic fight against the nazis

In 1941, the bosses again tried to destroy the revolution. Hitler, using all of Europe's resources and the largest military machine ever assembled, invaded the Soviet Union with four million troops. They discovered the Soviets were no pushover as occurred in Western Europe. Hitler's prediction — endorsed by western military “experts” — of capturing Moscow in six weeks went up in smoke.

Nazi troops found total destruction and desolation in every captured city or town — the “scorched earth” policy. Soviet defenders burned everything to the ground that they could not take with them and then organized armed resistance behind enemy lines: the Partisans. Over 6,000 factories were dismantled and moved east of the Ural Mountains, re-assembled to produce weapons again, a feat requiring total unity and support of Soviet workers, unmatched by any country, before or since. Soviet soldiers and workers fought for Stalingrad block-by-block, house-by-house and room-by-room to halt the “unbeatable” Nazi invaders. Workers in arms factories produced weapons 24 hours a day for the Red Army, working 12-hour shifts. When Nazi troops captured factories, heroic Soviet workers and soldiers would re-take them.

The entire German Sixth Army and 24 of Hitler's generals were surrounded and killed or captured in the battle of Stalingrad. Never again would the Nazis mount a successful offensive against the Red Army. Stalingrad was truly the turning point of the Second World War. Not until the Nazis were on the run following their defeats at Stalingrad and in the Battle of the Kursk — the biggest armored battle in world history, involving millions of soldiers and 6,000 tanks — did the U.S.-U.K. forces invade Western Europe. It was the communist-led Soviet Union that smashed the Nazis, the largest and most powerful army ever mounted by a capitalist power.

All this was accomplished under the leadership of Josef Stalin. No wonder he is reviled to this day by world capitalism.

Lessons to be learned

Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks suffered from many political weaknesses which led to the return of capitalism to the USSR. From the beginning they believed that to achieve communism, first socialism had to be established, a belief Karl Marx had advanced. We have learned from that experience that socialism retained capitalism's wage system and therefore failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system. Socialism put forward material incentives to the working class rather than political ones as the way to win workers to communism. We must win masses of workers to abolish capitalism's wage system and its division of labor and fight directly for communism.

Today no country is led by revolutionary communists, but this is a temporary historical setback. While this era of widening imperialist wars, fascist attacks on the working class, mass unemployment, diseases like AIDS killing millions in Africa and other areas, is upon us, every dark night has its end.

PLP is a product of both the old International Communist Movement and the struggle against its revisionism. Pseudo-leftist groups have not learned history's lessons and continue to fight for nationalist “sharing of power” with capitalists, a la Venezuela's Chavez, not for the working-class seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our movement is daily fighting to learn from the Soviet Union's great battles and achievements as well as its deadly errors that led to its collapse, mainly that reformism, racism, nationalism and all forms of concessions to capitalism only lead workers to defeat. Give the ruling class an inch and they'll grab a mile.

We honor the bold fight by the workers of the Bolshevik Revolution against capitalism and for a working-class communist world. Today, we must organize workers, students and soldiers to build a mass worldwide working class Party that will turn this era of imperialist wars into a new, international communist revolution.✊

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