

# U.S.-Backed Israeli Fascists Bring Genocide to Gaza, page 2

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# CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

## RACIST MURDER SPARKS OAKLAND REBELLION



**OAKLAND, CA, January 12** — On January 1, Oscar Grant, an unarmed 22-year-old black man, was murdered by a racist BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) cop. Grant cried to the cop, "Don't shoot me! I have a four-year-old daughter!" whereupon the cop shot him in the back while he lay on the ground, sparking hundreds of youth to rebel. This state-sponsored execution-style murder is one of the latest examples of "business-as-usual" under the racist capitalist system.

On January 7, workers and youth held a protest rally at BART where the murder occurred. As anger grew, up to 500 people eventually marched from that BART station to downtown Oakland where a rebellion occurred. Youth attacked police vehicles and businesses along the route.

The murdering BART cop is part of a force for which Homeland Security allotted millions of dollars specifically to transit police in the rulers' "war on terror," now being turned into a racist war against black and Latino youth.

Many of the young people who marched for immigrant rights on May Day last year were present. The united anger of young people from all backgrounds was inspiring. Some held signs with Oscar Grant's picture, linking his murder to the massacre in Gaza as the latest examples of state-sponsored terror. When Oakland's black mayor Ron Dellums showed up, he was booed. When he pleaded for "calm" later at the rebellion, he was ignored. PLP'ers brought our class analysis and internationalism to the protest and distributed CHALLENGES.

The rally's open mike heard most speakers call for a calm protest, requesting a "police oversight commission." But angry youth called for action. One youth declared, "This isn't just a black thing, all of Oakland needs to unite and do something about it." Another young man said he "would personally organize a riot if the cop wasn't convicted." Thuyen Tran, 24, of Vietnamese descent, despite the damage to his family's business, said he understood the protesters' anger: "It doesn't make sense, using brutal force. It doesn't feel good because No.1, I'm a minority, and No 2, I'm a young kid." (NY Times, 1/8/09)

All these comments contained the seed of a class analysis about the difference between state-sponsored, institutional violence from the police and violence

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The expanding "war on terror," the stock market crash, mass racist unemployment and home foreclosures, police terror, fascist immigration raids and racist budget cuts are all built into the racist profit system. These are the issues that moved millions to respond to Barack Obama's call for "CHANGE."

But Obama isn't offering anything new, except a liberal face in the White House. His cabinet and top advisors are mostly Clinton and Carter re-treads with decades of loyal service to Chase, Citibank and Exxon-Mobil. His National Security Advisor is mass murderer General James Jones who led the saturation bombing of Yugoslavia, killing thousands.

Every president is a defender of capitalism, a system composed of two classes: the bosses who own everything and profit off the backs of the overwhelming majority, and the working class, who only own our labor power and produce all value, including the profits of the bosses.

The government is run by this ruling class,

which makes Obama the new CEO for U.S. imperialism.

The bankers and billionaires comprising the U.S. ruling class will continue spilling rivers of blood to maintain their control of Mid-East oil and their rank as the top imperialist power. While they try to secure a permanent presence in Iraq, they will escalate the war to Afghanistan, Pakistan and, if necessary, Iran.

**'NATIONAL SERVICE' — A BACK-DOOR DRAFT TO SUPPLY CANNON FODDER FOR THE BOSSES' OIL WARS**

One of Obama's main goals is winning millions of youth, especially black youth, to wrap themselves in the American flag and fight for U.S. imperialism in these oil wars. Right now, amid this emerging Depression (see page 5), millions of black and Latino workers and youth as well as workers in general are becoming fed up with the effects of a racist profit system gone wild. So Obama's job is to win them back with his all-class unity — "we all have to pull together and sacrifice" to save the system — which masks his role as the bosses' servant. The rulers' National Service scam is designed to get millions, especially youth, to work for low, or no, wages, as volunteers "to support America," particularly in the military.

Obama, Bush and McCain all fell in line and supported the \$700 billion bailout of the bankers and Wall Street parasites while millions swell the unemployment lines. Racist misery is built into the profit system. Black workers suffer twice the unemployment rate of white workers (four times the rate for black youth). In Detroit, Milwaukee and Buffalo, over 50% of black males, age 16-64, are unemployed. Millions more are either underemployed or have given up looking for work.

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## IS THIS THE RACISM WE CAN EXPECT FROM OBAMA?

- When Chicago's Cook County Health Bureau closed half the clinics used by predominantly black and Latino uninsured workers, slashing 2,000 jobs in 2007 — and just destroyed another 500 jobs on January 1 — not a word of protest came from Obama as clinics closed in his South Side neighborhood.

- Obama was directly involved in the destruction of Chicago Housing Authority projects on the West Side, displacing tens of thousands of black working-class tenants. The Boston Globe reported (6/27/08): Chicago's "Grove Parc Plaza, in a dense neighborhood that Barack Obama represented for eight years as a state senator...[was] subsidized by the federal government....But it's not safe to live there....Collapsed roofs and fire damage....Mice....Sewage backs up into kitchen sinks...."

"Thousands of apartments across Chicago...built with [government]...subsidies — including several hundred in Obama's former district — deteriorated so completely that they were no longer inhabitable.

"Grove Parc and several other prominent

failures were developed and managed by Obama's close friends and political supporters....[who] profited from the subsidies even as many of Obama's constituents suffered. Tenants lost their homes; surrounding neighborhoods were blighted.

"As a state senator...[Obama] co-authored an Illinois law creating a new pool of tax credits for developers....He...campaigns on a promise to create [a]...Trust Fund that could give developers an estimated \$500 million a year...."

"Grove Parc...[symbolized] giving public subsidies to private companies...an approach strongly backed by Obama...."

- Obama's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development is Shaun Donovan who, as NYC Commissioner of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), laundered public-housing renovation funds through private not-for-profit social service agencies to evade paying union wages. Donovan used HPD low-income housing funding to bring racist gentrification to Central Harlem, replacing long-time African-American, African immigrant and Latino working-class residents with luxury housing for affluent professionals and business owners. This is the guy Obama has picked to set national housing policy!☺

# U.S.-Backed Israeli Fascists Bring Genocide to Gaza

Israel's racist U.S.-backed rulers have murdered or maimed thousands of Palestinian children and civilians with aerial bombs and tank shells. One attack struck a UN school. On January 11, Israeli storm troopers began even more deadly face-to-face urban warfare in densely populated Gaza City. The current blow-up in the Middle East is part of the battle for control of oil that has been going on between the capitalists for the last 80 years. Israel has been doing its part as an arm of U.S. interests since its formation in 1948. Their indiscriminate butchery has already killed nearly 1,000 people including hundreds of women, children and elderly, and wounded 3,340 others in the first two weeks.

Israel's murderous invasion of Gaza is particularly brazen. After Hamas won control of Gaza in the 2006 elections, Israel responded with a military blockade cutting off all supplies to the 1.5 million Palestinians living there. The Israeli strategy was to starve the Gazans into turning away from Hamas and towards the Palestine Liberation Organization, the group Israel prefers to deal with now. Using food and medical supplies as a weapon against the Palestinians in Gaza.

Hamas was originally nurtured by the Israeli secret service Mossad, as a weapon against the PLO, controlled then by Yasser Arafat. This backfired on the Israeli ruling class in much the same way the the U.S. ruling class's building of the Taliban as a weapon against the Russians came back to haunt them. Hamas went from an invention of the Israeli

military to an armed ally of Iran's rulers.

Israel's crimes against humanity have sparked protests across the Middle East and beyond. The sight of young workers taking on the tanks and planes of the U.S.-funded Israeli military, as well as the many thousands who have demonstrated around the world against this genocide, is an inspiring sight, but the capitalists are leading workers down political dead-ends. The lack of a mass communist movement has made it easier for the bosses to do this. As a result, many Arabs and Muslims are supporting Hamas or other forms of militant Islam, and in the West, workers are counting on liberals like Obama to solve the crisis.

Hamas does not represent the class interests of Palestinian workers. Whatever its financial ties to Iran's mullahs, Hamas is, in effect, doing the dirty work of these energy barons masquerading as religious leaders, who seek to replace U.S. dominance of the Middle East's vast oil and gas reserves. Hamas shares Teheran's long-term goal of destroying the U.S.'s hired gun, Israel. Hamas's reaction to Israel's vicious onslaught mainly serves Iran by stirring anti-Israel sentiment among workers in supposed U.S.-allied states like Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. A perceived Hamas victory over Israel would not liberate Palestinians but "bolster Iranian influence and ambitions in the Arab world" (Council on Foreign Relations, 1/8/09). Consequently, it would make the oft-repeated U.S. threat (Obama, too, uttered it) to confront Teheran militarily all the more likely.

## U.S. LIBERALS FEAR LOSING ARAB ALLIES

U.S. rulers are just as eager as the Israeli fascists to see Hamas destroyed, but there is an important difference. Israeli bosses worry about their survival. U.S. rulers have a world they want to run. So the dominant wing of U.S. capitalists, fearing Iran 1979-style defections from their empire, dons a liberal guise and wants Israel to "tone it down." Max Boot, a fellow at the Rockefeller-run Council on Foreign Relations think-tank, urges Israel not to cease, but to calculate cold-bloodedly the number of working-class Arabs it murders. "Brutality can be counter-productive. Killing too many people, especially if they are the wrong people, risks jeopardizing popular support for elected governments that are likely to be important American allies in the future" (Wall Street Journal, 1/4/09). The U.S. will need the Arab allies Boot speaks of in a wider Mid-East war with Iran, China or Russia, or an even broader conflict that includes Europe.

The liberal establishment had installed Gates in the palace coup that ousted Rumsfeld. Covert ac-

tion and diplomacy, the Times says, are better ways to confront Iran, until, that is, the U.S. can build a coalition and raise its own troop strength to confront Iran militarily. The New York Times (1/11/09) revealed that the Pentagon had refused Israel's request for a bunker-buster bomb to take out Iran's growing nuclear facility unilaterally. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Admiral Mike Mullen, a protégé of Robert Gates, whom Obama is keeping on as defense boss, played the key role.

## OBAMA PEACEMAKER? DON'T BUY THE HYPE

So Obama, whose advisors includes a host of past, present, and would-be mass murdering war criminals, is trying to project a worldwide image as peacemaker. The following, from Britain's liberal Guardian newspaper (1/11/09) reflects this phony effort. "Obama has selected people whose doveish credentials seem impeccable. They will be responsible for reversing the political unilateralism of the Bush years and opening direct negotiations with hostile states, potentially ranging from Syria to Cuba and Venezuela and maybe including Iran and even Islamic militant group Hamas."

The Guardian mentions unambiguously those who counseled Clinton on his genocidal bombing of Serbia: Dennis Ross, understudy of James Baker, the Exxon Mobil heir and Bush buddy who helped orchestrate both Iraq wars; and Kurt Campbell, a Clinton Pentagon figure who penned a militaristic book unambiguously titled *Hard Power*.

Obama's pledge to withdraw from Iraq is a similar lie. His establishment handlers represented by the liberal Brookings Institution remind him (Memo to the President, 1/5/09) that forcibly controlling petroleum profits trumps campaign promises, "Oil-rich Iraq's long-term stability remains a vital U.S. interest. Everything else your Administration seeks to accomplish in the Middle East will require Iraq's stability."

In the face of the greater genocide that the Gaza carnage only hints at, we need to build a working-class anti-war movement with the outlook of communist revolution. Every other kind of organization — nationalist, religious, pro-liberal — ultimately serves one camp or another of capitalist war-makers. ✪



## Unite with Israeli, Palestinian Workers

Several comrades joined thousands of people in Lafayette Square outside the White House on Saturday, January 10th to demand an end to the siege of Gaza. We distributed CHALLENGES and communist leaflets to the demonstrators. Hundreds of Palestinian families traveled from the East Coast to rally against U.S. support of the war and against Israel's genocidal policies.

We argued that if people didn't try to forge working-class unity now, there would never be an end to war and genocide in the Middle East. One man carried a sign attacking all the Arab leaders in the Middle East and talked about his childhood in Palestine when his family lost their home in 1948. He had no illusions about the betrayal of nationalist leaders!

A long-time Palestinian friend of the Party helped distribute the PLP leaflet. She stressed international worker solidarity when we distributed the communist leaflet. All of us had good conversa-

tions with people about our long-term goals and our opposition to nationalism.

Asking people for some contribution for the paper when we are in large crowds like this is important, given the Party's financial crisis. Expressing ideas about the economic crisis and pointing out that our Party is made up of workers hit home; and I collected about \$15 for 25 papers. One man gave \$5 and took another copy to give to a friend.

I hope that everyone in the Party takes their international responsibility to express solidarity with our brother and sister workers in Palestine and Israel quite seriously. I was thrilled to hear that over 10,000 Arab and Jews demonstrated in Tel-Aviv and tens of thousands more demonstrated worldwide!

D.C. Red

## OUR FIGHT

★ **Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.**

★ **Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**

★ **Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**

★ **Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.**

★ **Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**

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

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

★ **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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# PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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# No Debate About Bosses' Crisis Causing Cuts

**BROOKLYN, NY, January 9** — During a high school debate tournament here, a "speakout" of over 100 students and teachers was organized against the budget cuts. While awaiting the final awards ceremony, debaters described how the budget cuts affected them and their schools. Usually this time is spent just hanging out but coaches city-wide responded well to PL's call to push debate from talk to action.

Initially it seemed interest in the speakout would be low, but as the ball got rolling and some stated they lacked books in class and others stated that they had no lunchrooms, a hush fell on the room. Scores of teens listened intently to each other, and applauded more vigorously than for awards later on. Many made direct connections to the war in Iraq.

A PLP'er and debater attributed the budget cuts to capitalism, accusing the bosses' government of shelling out \$700 billion to save Wall Street and then attacking workers by making us pay by cutting our school and hospital budgets and laying us off. She also advocated organizing fight-backs and described a walk-out the year before on May Day against budget cuts and the immigration raids.

Another ex-debater, now a college student, championed the need to fight racism and other divisions existing under this system. She focused on the importance of shaking hands after a debate round, remembering that we are one community, not each other's enemy.

Then teachers spoke up, relating the hardships in their schools caused by the cuts and being in-

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spired by students taking a stand at this speakout. Others declared that more than a speakout was needed, calling for actions and demonstrations against the budget cuts and environmental injustice, a topic relevant to this year's debate.

The speakout must have hit a nerve because at the end the leader of the debate organization said that while our talking about issues was good, we

need to complain to our political leaders, especially now with Obama's election. He said that he kept hearing students blame "them" (the government) for these problems. We in PLP applaud the indictments of the rulers by the youth at the tournament but this "leader" advanced his rotten liberal line — "we all need to take responsibility" for a degraded environment, racism and a collapsing economy.

He didn't want us joining together and proposing action to find a solution. It was good to see him exposed in his closing remarks; the applause for him was minimal.

After the tournament, students and teachers showed their openness to communist ideas, taking over 100 CHALLENGES. Some coaches have also agreed to take subscriptions and use them with their debate teams.

The bosses' economic crisis and Mid-East invasions will intensify in the immediate future. Today's debaters will be tomorrow's national service "volunteers" and draftees. We must continue to organize workers and youth to reject liberal misleaders who try to deflect our righteous anger away from the billionaires, their politicians and their system and to win them to embrace the communist PLP. ☛

## Racist Lynching Must Be Punished!



**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD, December 22** — The People's Coalition for Police Accountability, joined by CASA de Maryland and other community organizations rallied today at the Upper Marlboro Courthouse. The rally demanded that the State's Attorney (the county prosecutor) Glenn Ivey indict the prison guards who, without a doubt, strangled Ronnie White in his jail cell. The medical examiner's final report determined that he was, in fact, murdered in his cell.

The lynching of this 19-year-old black man must not go unpunished! Capitalism maintains extreme racism to keep the working class intimidated and divided, so there's no surprise that Ivey dismissed the grand jury investigating this case, without an indictment. Under capitalism, there's no justice in cases like Ronnie White's. Only a revolution for communism will end racism and the ruling class's attacks on the working class.

Anti-racist organizers leafleted hundreds of people at Metro stations and at the courthouse. White's family stepped forward boldly to attack the media's demonization of Ronnie. Tens of thousands of people in the Washington, D.C. area saw TV and journal

news reports about the rally. The bold, loud demonstration at the courthouse made it impossible for Ivey to ignore it. He felt compelled to speak to the press and continue his lie that he was still investigating the case and just had "a few loose ends" to finish up! He spent an hour with a protest delegation trying to sweet-talk his way out of trouble. We will never let him make this lynching a "cold case"!

Mobilizing workers around the racist brutality of the law enforcement system is the order of the day. We must attack the "blue wall of silence," the culture of racist police violence and the cops' and guards' ability to kill with impunity. As capitalism's current international financial crisis intensifies, the bosses will use the full extent of their state power to terrorize workers even more.

We in PLP must bring our communist politics to the struggle against the racist brutality of the bosses' goons (cops, guards, etc.), showing that only a society without bosses — communism — is the long-range end to this horror. CHALLENGE must become our ideological weapon in this vital task. ☛

## Oakland Rebellion

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among youth due to being saturated with divisive capitalist ideas. They present an opportunity for PLP'ers to raise with co-workers and friends that pacifism towards the police won't stop cops' violence (nor gang violence). Only developing class consciousness among young working-class people will do that, understanding that they are all in the same boat, and have a common, often violent, class enemy that controls the government and uses the police to repress workers' opposition to ruling-class oppression.



Whether through unemployment or underserved schools and resources, capitalism has always marginalized black and Latino youth. The large, militant response to this murder shows that these youth are a potential force for rebellion. However, they need to see the connection to the overall capitalist system, which depends on racist super-exploitation for super-profits.

It is precisely these angry youth who the ruling class wants Obama to divert away from rebellion against racist oppression into patriotic "national service" to fight in U.S. imperialist wars. (See editorial front page.)

As the bosses' economic crisis deepens, continued attacks here and abroad will intensify. The current massacre in Gaza reflects what this system has in store for the working class worldwide.

This protest showed the need for communist leadership to develop this kind of analysis among these youth. We must step up our participation in the community organizations in and around Oakland and build our influence on our jobs, in our unions and in the schools and not be caught off guard. Calling for strikes on the job against these police-state murders is more relevant in light of this rebellion.

Just as we saw in Greece, where the working class was already in motion against austerity measures and was inspired by the action of young people, this rebellion here shows that the working class is smoldering and impatient, that working-class-wide unity is possible.

The door is wide open in these events when we go with our friends and co-workers.

Oscar Grant's murder has outraged vast numbers worldwide who know the intimate details from the internet. To go from outrage and rebellion to class-conscious, planned, working-class-led revolution is a long process. It requires a communist party — PLP — active among workers and youth to lead to this goal. ☛

# Obama's Racist Education Secretary Wrecked Chicago's Schools

On December 16, Barack Obama presented Arne Duncan as the new Education Secretary at a press conference at Dodge School. The claim was that this school exemplifies his "Chicago miracle"—low-performing, low-income African American or Latino schools with rising test scores. Students, teachers and parents who dominated the Board of Education meeting the next day knew better. In Duncan's seven years as CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS), he has intensified racist stratification, privatized 10% of the schools (with plans for more), and militarized CPS with the complicity of the Chicago Teachers Union.

Duncan, friend to Chicago's Business Roundtable, Mayor Richard Daley, and Obama, is no friend to the majority of Chicago students. Duncan (and Daley's) signature plan, Renaissance 2010, closed 19 schools, mostly in formerly black or Latino neighborhoods now being gentrified. With the working-class students in schools far from the neighborhood, Duncan then built "Renaissance" schools for the wealthier families. Daley's plan to bring middle- and upper-income families into the city (while driving out the poor by tearing down their housing) depended on having schools for their children.

As the U.S. military involvement abroad deepens, Chicago has JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp) programs in 31 high schools and 21 middle schools, 7 military "schools within a school" and 5 Military Academies. Next September, when the Air Force Academy opens, Chicago will have the distinction of being the only city with an academy for every branch of the Armed

Forces. Duncan calls this militarization "choice." Also under "Ren 2010," 75 new charter schools have opened. Charter teachers are not allowed to join the union. Their salaries are capped at ¾ that of senior union teachers, and they work longer hours. Charter schools are not about better education. They are about saving money, destroying unions and turning control of schools over to private companies.

Duncan's new "turnaround" fires all the teachers in poor black schools and turns them over to private enterprises. The racist result has been that

**'The racist result has been that most of the experienced African-American teachers at these schools are replaced with inexperienced, predominately white ones.'**

most of the experienced African-American teachers at these schools are replaced with inexperienced, predominately white ones. There are 2,000 fewer black teachers in CPS now than in 2002, a significant reversal of the hard-fought struggles of the 1960's and 1970's to integrate Chicago's teaching staff.

Duncan and Board president Rufus Williams tried to intimidate students who spoke out at the Board meeting against Ren 2010, claiming "someone is feeding you wrong information," but the students held their ground. Students and teachers described the harmful effects of a CPS policy which refuses to staff new teachers until October, while students sit in overcrowded or teacher-less classes.

Those subject to this attend schools in neighborhoods ravaged by capitalism, where low-paid jobs and a myriad of housing and economic problems force them to move around. Duncan and his cronies know this, but deliberately refuse to staff schools based on predicted fall enrollment.

Under Ren 2010 (now extended to Ren 2015) a number of schools were shut down and replaced with smaller, more selective schools with adequate numbers of teachers and renovated buildings. Such was the case with Dodge School. As one parent activist said, the "rising" test scores occurred among completely different students than the ones attending the old Dodge. Other parents, teachers, and students exposed the Board's racist "shell game" where higher performing students are moved into a building and Arne Duncan is given credit for "increasing test scores."

PLP members are playing an active role in the struggle against these attacks on students. Many of the teachers, students and parents involved in struggle understand that capitalism equips students only with the knowledge and skills needed so the system can exploit them. The system "trains" many to be unemployed or cannon fodder by providing no education and then blaming the students themselves for their lack of knowledge, or indoctrinating them through military presence in the schools (and in many other ways as well). PLP is winning students, parents and teachers to a different vision of the future: one where young people will be cherished and active participants in the building of an egalitarian communist society. ☛

## Mexico's Cabbies Defy Union Goons While Building Co-op and PLP

**MEXICO CITY, MEXICO** — The fight against the rulers of economic and political power in the transportation industry is heating up. This community has become the center of attention for hundreds of taxi drivers, their friends and families. That's because a group of taxi drivers, tired of years of abuse, deception and fraud by their union leaders, decided to start a movement against injustice. They began organizing other taxi drivers to leave that institution and set up a Cooperative Society.

The gangster bosses, trying to stop workers organizing, sent goons to beat and shoot at these workers in their attempts to intimidate and stop the movement. They are also using the State Secretary of Transportation to crack down on drivers by impounding their cars if they don't have the required documents, taking away the worker's job. These actions by the bosses, far from discouraging the workers, have generated more anger to sustain the movement. The movement has begun to spread to workers in the same company in different areas and a few weeks ago the workers set up their Co-op. This motivates many workers to keep up the struggle.

We know that the cooperative is only a temporary form of winning certain improvements in working conditions. That's because capitalism continues exploiting and terrorizing the whole working class. We're in this struggle so that hundreds, thousands and millions of workers will see the need to destroy this rotten capitalist system with a communist revolution.

In this movement the Progressive Labor Party has played an important role. Several workers have joined PLP. There's a tremendous potential that other workers can join the struggle to free the working class, since CHALLENGE newspaper is well read by many. We're sure that some day we workers will raise the banner of liberty for all workers. Long live Communism. ☛



## New CEO for Imperialism

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Twelve million undocumented workers and youth face racist detention camps and deportations just for looking for work.

Obama will now preside over the world's largest prison population, 2.4 million, 70% black and Latin males. Hardly a black or Latino family in the U.S. doesn't know someone who's either in jail, on probation or parole. This result of racist police terror rivals the old South Africa apartheid system.

One of Obama's mentors, Chicago's Mayor Daley, rose to power as a State's Attorney prosecuting black workers and youth who "confessed" to crimes they never committed while being tortured in Chicago police stations. The prison doors will not swing open on Obama's watch. The victims of racist police terror will not be sent home to their families.

The change we need won't come from reshuffling capitalist politicians and bureaucrats no matter how "smart" they appear. We need mass actions and a mass movement, not to "fix" capitalism but to smash it. We need to turn every attack into an opportunity to build a mass revolutionary communist PLP that can ultimately lead the working class to power and to a world based on meeting the needs of the international working class.

### FIGHT BACK!

- **IN THE FACTORIES AND UNIONS.** Oppose every plant closing; organize strikes and plant occupations, like the 240 Latino and black workers at Republic Windows did in Chicago last month. Learn from the striking UAW workers at American Axle in Detroit, Seattle's Boeing workers and Stella D'Oro workers in the Bronx. Show solidarity with rebelling students and workers in Greece, throughout Europe and China who fought fascist conditions

this year. Build unemployment committees on our jobs and in our unions to unite laid-off workers with their still-employed brothers and sisters.

- **IN THE COMMUNITIES.** Organize factory, union and neighborhood committees to fight evictions and immigration raids. Work in community centers and church soup kitchens and food pantries, talking to volunteers and those in need about the racist profit system and the need to destroy it.

- **IN THE SCHOOLS.** Fight budget cuts, racist testing, militarization and fascist conditions.

- **IN THE MILITARY.** Bring the fight against imperialist war and racist police terror in all these organizations to show how the only way out of this endless and escalating war on terror is to win soldiers and sailors to rebel against the brass and overthrow the capitalist war-makers.

The more we do, the more we can expand the circulation of CHALLENGE. The more we expand the readership of CHALLENGE, the more we can do in the class struggle.

The nature of the capitalist beast will not change because a liberal face is in the White House. He won't bring peace, full employment or freedom for immigrant workers or to workers jailed by this criminal INjustice system

Yet, in the absence of a mass revolutionary movement, millions of potential revolutionaries hold out hope. Many illusions must be shattered. We have a big job before us. Let's engage the enemy everywhere we can, and use every battle to build the revolutionary communist PLP. ☛

# 27 Million Jobless in U.S. Racist Unemployment an Attack on All Workers

U.S. capitalism — the “world’s greatest superpower” and “history’s most powerful economy” — is sinking into another Great Depression. Its Total Unemployment figure (see below) is nearly 25 million, 13.5% of the labor force (NY Times, 1/10/09, and all following quotes) and by early next year could conceivably hit 20%. “This recession is going to be...long and...deep,” the longest since the 1930s. Millions of workers are also losing their jobs, from Spain to China.

Great Depression II is causing untold hardships for tens of millions of workers, and double that for black and Latino workers because of the racist nature of unemployment (see below). Lost wages, stolen pensions, workers losing their homes in the 8th “recession” in 60 years: that’s the “fruit” of an anarchic economic system driven by profits. Despite the bosses’ claims that “communism doesn’t work,” that “communism is dead,” it is capitalism that is destroying the lives of hundreds of millions worldwide, through Depressions and imperialist wars for oil and pipelines to defend their system. Only a massive communist-led workers’ revolution will end this capitalist nightmare.

In the Great Depression 75 years ago, the capitalist world threw tens of millions onto the streets. Only one country had no unemployment: the Soviet Union. Its system was not motivated by profit but by collective actions of its working class to produce for the needs of the whole class, not for the profits of a few bosses, which is why world capitalism tried to destroy it. Although that revolution was reversed, the ideas that produced it did not die and will live again based on the revolutionary ideas and actions of the communist Progressive Labor Party.

Well over a century ago, Karl Marx discovered the source of capitalism’s anarchy, of the never-ending cycle of boom and bust, of periodic depressions: the over-production of the means of production. Within every industry, in the drive for maximum profits, each capitalist builds factory after factory, attempting to capture as much of the market as possible without any overall plan, trying to slow the falling rate of profit. The result? Far more is produced than the market can absorb. So in their attempt to maintain profits, or even survive, bosses must reduce costs, the “easiest” being labor costs. This is precisely what’s happening now, and without mentioning Marx, the capitalist pundits agree.

NY Times columnist Paul Krugman, one of the system’s leading economists, wrote (1/9/09): “A huge gap is opening up between what the American economy can produce and what it’s able to sell.” Krugman quotes the Congressional Budget Office statement that “economic output over the next

two years will average 6.8% below its potential,” which Krugman says “translates into \$2.1 trillion of lost production.” And the bosses’ latest hand-picked defender of their system, Barack Obama — in attempting to close this gap between what capitalism can produce and what it can sell — has a plan that Krugman says “could easily end up doing less than a third of the job.”

So the bosses handle this crisis of overproduction “The simplest way... drain their inventories and fire their workers.” The Times says there is “a pervasive fear among employers that if they fail to shed workers quickly, their companies may go under in a recession poised to become the worst since the 1930s” — “everywhere you look that is what is happening now.” For the bosses, “laying off [workers] is an effort to survive.” Bosses “solve” their crises on the backs of workers. (For PLP’s fight-back plan, see editorial page 4)

The “official” figure of 11.1 million unemployed, plus 8 million part-timers unable to find full-time jobs, plus 5.2 million “discouraged” workers — those who have given up looking for non-existent jobs — the Times calls this “Total Unemployment” — or 24.3 million. Add 1.7 million imprisoned for non-violent offenses (70% black and Latino), who would be unable to find work in this crisis, plus possibly another million who joined the military because they couldn’t find jobs, and a Grand Total Unemployment” becomes 27 million! (This excludes those on welfare because they can’t find jobs.)

Such is “American prosperity” in the 21st Century.

This recession for workers overall is already a depression for black and Latino workers because of racist discrimination: last hired, first fired. Their jobless rates are twice that of white workers. If the Total Unemployment rate quoted above is 13.5% for workers in general, it is 27% for black workers. The Big 3 meltdown is even deadlier for black auto workers in cities like Detroit and Flint. This super-exploitation of black and Latino workers — central to the existence of U.S. capitalism — produces super-profits for the bosses, through lower wages and benefits, accounting for one-third of the nearly \$700 billion of U.S. net corporate profits in 2003.

The bosses’ media say the Madoffs, the sub-



**Washington, D.C., Sept. 1945 — Black and white workers march united for jobs after the end of WW2.**

prime mortgage scam and the housing bubble led to this crisis. But overall, these swindlers are motivated by the drive for maximum profit as fast as they can get it. That profit drive is behind the over-production leading to periodic recession/depressions. U.S. capitalism had no unemployment during World War II when it “solved” the 1930s Great Depression by putting 14 million workers and youth into the military. “Peacetime” capitalism has always created millions of jobless and always will.

It is in the class interest of all workers to fight racist unemployment because the bosses use this political and economic weapon to divide and super-exploit ALL workers. Many workers support union leaders’ claim that immigrant and “foreign” workers “steal ‘our’ jobs.” This racism lets the bosses carry out mass firings, weakening the entire working class.

The anti-racist, international unity of all workers is crucial in the fight for a system without any profit-hungry bosses and their racist unemployment. Only with a system based on workers reaping the full benefit of their collective production and allotting it according to need — communism — will the working class realize our full potential, free of the horrors of capitalist depressions and wars. That’s PLP’s goal. Join us. ☺

## The Only Growth Industry: Prisons

“Larger Inmate Population Is Boon to Private Prisons.” (Wall Street Journal, 11/18)

It looks like the only “growth industry” in the U.S. is expanding the prison system.

“Prison companies are preparing for a wave of new business as the economic downturn makes it increasingly difficult for federal and state government officials to build and operate their own jails.”

“As a crackdown on...[undocumented immigrants], a lengthening of mandatory sentences for certain crimes and other factors have overcrowded many government facilities,” (WSJ) thousands of inmates are being contracted out to private prison corporations like the Corrections Corp. of America (CCA).

Inmate population in 10 states is expected to increase by 25% or more by 2011. The net profits of CCA, the largest private-prison operator, has risen 14% to \$37.9 million. “There is going to be a larger opportunity for us in the future,” said Damon Hininger, CCA’s president.

California has shipped more than 5,100 inmates to CCA prisons since late 2006. “Prisons were so overcrowded that hundreds of inmates were sleeping in gyms....

Outsourcing incarceration to prison companies can reduce a government’s cost...by as much as 15%....Private operators say...“their payroll costs are lower and they can consolidate prisoners from many far-flung jurisdictions into facilities located in areas where land and building costs are very low.”

“Profit is...structured into the way these prisons are operated,” says Judy Greene, a justice-policy analyst....” (WSJ)

An ACLU suit charged CCA with “operating an overcrowded, unsafe immigrant-detention center.... Detainees were routinely assigned in groups of three to sleep in two-room cells — meaning one had to sleep on the floor near the toilet....The suit also alleged that detainees had little access to mental-health care.”

It was under Obama’s Democratic Party pred-

ecessor, Clinton, that the prison population skyrocketed to over two million and the immigration “reform” law was passed which is being used to jail undocumented immigrants. Somehow, “changing” this situation escaped Obama’s promises.

As the fascist attacks on immigrants intensify while unemployment rises and workers become more desperate, look for thousands of the jobless and immigrants to find themselves behind bars, and then “employed” in prison factories turning out products at 23¢/hr “wages.” Thus do U.S. bosses jail their unemployment problem and reap slave-labor profits. ☺

# LETTERS



## Used Labor Reform Laws, GI Bill Used to Deepen Racism

Congratulations on the excellent history of communist-led struggles during the Great Depression (CHALLENGE, 1/14), especially its emphasis on fighting racism. (We might have mentioned this history focused on the U.S. while communists were active internationally.)

One addition, about racism and U.S. history. The labor reforms ("organizing rights") and the GI Bill of Rights of the 1940s were profoundly racist. Their racism creates a central problem for communist struggle in the U.S. today: the profound inequality within the working class between black and white workers.

Because the labor reforms purposely excluded areas where black workers were concentrated (farms and domestic work), they increased the income gap between black and white workers. In World War II, unlike later wars, the U.S. military was disproportionately white (because racist IQ-like tests were used to exclude black youth). So GI benefits in housing and education went disproportionately to white vets.

Moreover, many black vets were excluded from the GI benefits by racial bans in education and housing (racial covenants; Levittown, NY, barred black homeowners; southern black vets were unable to attend colleges).

Consequently, over the years white vets improved their employment skills and accumulated assets in their homes which they then passed down to their children. Black workers were unable to accumulate similar assets, which serve as a backup in hard times and make it possible to finance more education for a person's kids. This sustains the hope (and, to an extent, the reality) of escaping the worst effects of capitalism through individual achievement for yourself and your kids.

In contrast, many black workers live in overwhelmingly black neighborhoods with poor public schools, where their homes have little value. Black workers often have no net assets or fall into debt. Overall, the black family has less than one-tenth the assets of the white family.

Now the entire working class is under attack. To the extent that government programs may protect homeowners, they may be protecting primarily white workers and maintaining racial inequality.

As we sharpen the fight against racism, we need to come to terms with the material basis of racism today. There's a large racial inequality within our class. I'm not sure how to address these issues, but communists must do so.

*Chicago Comrade*

**P.S.** Useful books on this history include: Ira Katznelson's "When Affirmative Action Was White" (about the racism of government programs that created inequality in the '30s, '40s and '50s); Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro's, "Black Wealth, White Wealth"; Dalton Conley's "Being Black, Living in the Red"; and Thomas Shapiro's "The Hidden Cost of Being African American" (all about wealth inequality and its effects).

## New Salvadoran PL'ers Pledge to Build Party

We are new members of PLP here in El Salvador. We've been active in many social struggles here. We want to send revolutionary greetings to our comrades around the world, and to the comrades who came to talk to us about a factory struggle, giving our work more focus. That's when we discussed how capitalism is the root cause of the suffering of workers and youth all over the world, from criminal drug gangs to wars, unemployment and the break-up of families because of racist immigration laws. Even more importantly, we discussed the building of our revolutionary movement.

It's important to us to organize ourselves as workers, in order to defend our rights no matter who comes to power. The bosses' politicians are

never going to make major changes because the capitalist system always benefits a few and punishes the many. When the capitalists make huge profits they put them in their own bank accounts, but when there are losses or deficits, they pass them along to the workers to pay. This is as true with Barack Obama in the U.S. as with Funes, the candidate of the FMLN. That's why we see the PLP as the only alternative for the struggle to meet our needs through revolution.

We respect workers' rights and fight to end the wage slavery the capitalists subject us to paying us a few crumbs while they make huge profits off our labor. That is why we organize to put an end to all the evils of this capitalist system. And to do that we will fight to make workers and youth conscious of the need to completely change the system and build one without borders or divisions, where workers and their allies run society.

*New comrades in El Salvador*

## Lauds CHALLENGE, Vows to Spread It

Responding to your financial appeal, I have pledged a monthly donation. I'm on a fixed income, but I intend to increase that amount as much as I can. The December 24 CHALLENGE was one of the best I've ever read. How wonderful to see "Workers Occupy Factory" as the cover headline. It was exciting to see that PL is organizing a food and clothing drive.

Let's all remember that the modern union movement, though sold out by the Walter Reuther gang, began with sit-ins and spread, along with communist ideas, rapidly around the country. (I was working in a Ford plant when Reuther died in a private plane crash, and another comrade and I laughed at the news.) The rest of the issue was as good, especially the exposures of Obama. A friend of mine voted for him, and almost immediately phoned and told me that I (that is, PL's line) was right again. Also, the good news out of China about "Mass Uprisings of Jobless" (same for Greece) warmed my heart and made me want to do more, and I will. PL's founder once said that fascism is a sign of weakness — that the ruling class can no longer rely on liberals and payoffs — which means now is the time to go on the attack. To begin with, everyone should attempt to sell three more CHALLENGES an issue. Take the paper's name literally!

*North Country Red*

## More Info About Organizing for Teachers Demonstration

In the last issue (CHALLENGE 1/14), we reported about the city-wide demonstration protesting cuts in teachers' health benefits, increase in class size, a hiring freeze and other possible cuts. Below is a more detailed account of PLP-led work to organize our base around this struggle.

The students and teachers most involved in the preparations leading to and during the action have been CHALLENGE readers for a while. The preparations included writing and defending a leaflet attacking capitalism, making the picket signs, writing and presenting a petition, visiting classrooms, making and carrying the banner, leading chants and distributing the paper at the demonstration. This shows that a Challenge Readers Group (CRG), here made up of black and Latino students, can be mobilized under the Party's leadership for united action. Also, the CRG defended the Party repeatedly before and during the demonstration.

At the union meeting weeks prior to the demonstration, in a highly energized debate about the huge attack on teacher's health benefits, when union leaders declared, "we must do everything within our power to defend our health benefits," a comrade said "It's very good that all of us are angry at this attack on our benefits but if the board



Demonstrations against the criminal Israeli rulers' attack on Gaza are spreading worldwide, including in Israel itself where some 10,000 Arab and Israeli marchers protested in Tel Aviv as soon as the invasion began. Five hundred residents of Sderot, the town most targeted by Hamas rockets, have signed a petition to stop the Israeli bosses' violence. Others have been arrested lying down across the entrance to a military airfield. Dissident Israeli vets and reservists have also denounced the invasion.

Meanwhile, the bosses' media, especially the NY Times, wants us to believe there is virtually no opposition inside Israel. These current protests contrast with the much smaller ones during the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

It's a life-and-death question for workers and their allies in Israel and throughout the Mid-East to stop supporting their own rulers on the basis of religion and nationalism. Behind all the bosses' talk about "our people" lies the profit interests of the local capitalists and their U.S. imperialist backers.

leaves our benefits intact at the expense of our students and parents (class size) and working conditions it will be a tremendous defeat. We will not be divided." Also, when a comrade proposed the amendment "to start preparations for a strike" to a resolution and was shot down by the union leadership, many teachers applauded and congratulated us.

In a period of U.S. imperialism declining and expanding inter-imperialist rivalry which will ultimately lead to World War III, the U.S. rulers must attack the workers more ruthlessly. The bosses are not in a position to grant reforms — unless they divide the working class and grant temporary improvements for some while attacking others. It now seems that the teachers union (UTLA) is negotiating a reduced attack on teachers' health benefits at the expense of 1,000 teacher layoffs and a class-size increase from 20 to 29 (in K-3rd grade). This will have a racist nature to it; it is an attack on the students, who are 85% black and Latin, and also attacks the teachers, the majority of whom are white.

The role of unions, to focus on narrow trade unionism, means more racist division of the working class. The question becomes how we defeat narrow reformism and build revolutionary working-class consciousness, unity of the working class and fight for a communist future? We are fighting to blame capitalism, distribute the paper regularly and organize CRGs to encourage black and Latin students to act under the leadership of the Party and defend it. The CRGs study CHALLENGE, organize class struggle and fight reformism. Our security and livelihood does not lie within this murderous racist system but in building a mass communist party.

*L.A. Comrade*

## Turn Anger into Action

We're glad that CHALLENGE received and printed the letter from Greece in the last issue (1/14/09). The letter was written by an airport worker angry and frustrated with the fascist police and unemployment, saying "we're just pissed off... our whole system needs to go down." We need to take this anger into communist organizing.

The only way to end police terror, unemployment and poverty — all products of capitalism — is by organizing a revolutionary communist party,

# LETTERS CONT.

the international PLP, based on Marxism-Leninism, among workers, students and soldiers to destroy capitalism with communist revolution. Without such a party, the workers, youth and soldiers of Greece will continue to be angry and frustrated, but without knowing the source of their problems or how to end them.

CHALLENGE is a crucial tool for us in the struggle to win angry and frustrated workers such as this one, in every corner of the world, to fight for communism.

*Some comrades*

## 1930s Lesson: Turn Class Hatred into Class War

The CHALLENGE article (1/14/09) "1930s Depression: Red-Led Working Class Fought Like Hell" was excellent. Given what were facing today, it's so important for workers and others worldwide to learn the history, both in the U.S. and elsewhere, of the struggle of our class against the bosses' Depression, racism and wars. As the article says, we must also promote the need for communist revolution, not reforms, to get off what appears to be a never-ending cycle of misery, deprivation and horror for the working class.

"Government stimulus packages" or massive public works did not end the 1930s Great Depression. After some initial recovery, another serious economic downturn occurred in 1937. A world war, with the U.S. on the winning side, led to a post-war expansion for U.S. imperialism. The U.S. used its resulting power to shift some of the burden for future crises onto workers' backs worldwide.

The current U.S. decline relative to its main rivals makes it harder for U.S. rulers to emerge from this Depression and wars in the lead. But as the

U.K. example shows, their system will survive any potential loss of top-dog status. That's why PLP's analysis of past revolutionary history is vital.

Although the Bolsheviks definitely linked the fight for reforms to the fight to overthrow capitalism, they organized for socialist, not communist revolution. Even though communists led society under socialism, ultimately the many concessions to capitalism inherent in the old movement's two-stage strategy in moving to communism doomed the aspirations of hundreds of millions for permanent change. These reversals have given capitalism a new lease on life. In hindsight, in one way socialism was a radically reformed version of capitalism. In this sense, the article was unclear about PLP's disagreements with the old movement.

There is simmering worldwide working-class anger over the capitalists' attacks of mass layoffs, evictions, against immigrants, police terror, etc. One missing ingredient is the transformation of this spontaneous anger into class hatred for, and class war against, the bosses' attacks. PLP has many opportunities to give leadership to this process, while advancing the full range of communist ideas about the causes of, and our solution to the horrors of the bosses' system. Such leadership can slowly but surely rebuild the heroic class consciousness and militancy of the 1930s at a higher political level.

*New Jersey Reader*

## A THANK YOU TO VETERAN COMRADES

My girls seemed even more beautiful to me when I got home from a series of meetings this weekend. I looked at my girls and saw them as even more powerful – as if for them anything was possible. I looked at my beautiful daughters

and realized their gender, brown skin or surname wouldn't limit them. Unlike the masses, this wasn't the result of the most recent of the bosses' clever tricks – the Obama phenomenon – but instead the incredible work of the comrades who have come before me.

Leaving my girls for meetings is tremendously difficult for me. However, as I heard of the incredible work the Party is currently doing, and the daunting obstacles and remarkable gains Party veterans have made over more than four decades of work, I was humbled and inspired. I listened in stunned silence as seasoned comrades shared their stories of struggle, and felt proud to be a part of it all.

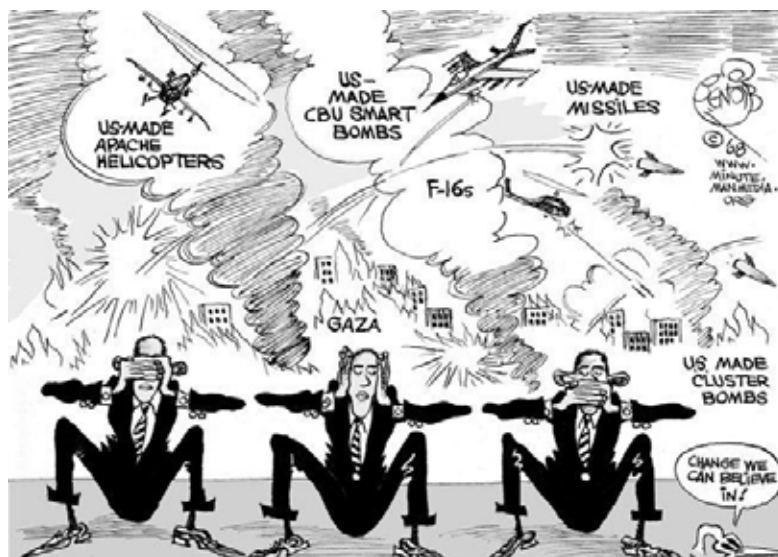
Without sacrifice, dedication, and the disciplined work of those who came before me, there might not be a group who could stir the confidence to believe my girls will one day realize their full potential and become powerful warriors of the working class. Without the commitment of veteran comrades who have created a strong and sustainable Party, I would have been disillusioned and desperate, as many of the masses who have not yet learned about PLP are.

And so as we celebrate Veteran's Day, a holiday to pay tribute to those who serve the capitalists' agenda in the bosses' army, I would like to extend an all too rare "Thank You" to the veterans who have served in the army under our flag, the workers who toil in the factories spreading the message of working class unity, the professors and students who bring our line to the schools, and those who have dedicated the better part of their lives to offer the working class of the world a true alternative. I thank you for the opportunity to learn the priceless lessons you have to teach, and I thank you for my daughters and theirs to follow, for the promise of a tomorrow free from capitalist chains.

*A Comrade*



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



## Capitalist insiders love a crash

NYT 12/29 — ...like the last go around, a great deal of money will be made by a select group of investors and business operators particularly close with government contacts...They acknowledge they intend to be among the winners who emerge. "Fortunes will be made here, no doubt about it.... The opportunity going forward is unprecedented. It is fantastic. It is as if I had been training for this for the past 40 years of my career."....Billions of dollars worth of real estate or at least mortgage-backed securities and other "illiquid" financial instruments will most likely need to be sold off at discounted prices.

## Bad arrests by cops in schools

NYT 1/5 — More than 17,000 police officers patrol school hallways nationwide....Often the arrested students suffer from learning disabilities or mental health problems that, if addressed, could alleviate the behavior that got them in trouble in the first place.

With this as a backdrop, the American Civil Liberties Union and its Connecticut affiliate examined school-based arrests in Hartford....Minorities were far more likely to be arrested than white students

who committed the same infraction. In Hartford's overwhelmingly minority school system, police arrested students at disturbingly young ages: 86 primary grade children in a two-year period, including 13 in grade three or below....

Connecticut is hardly the only state with these issues....

## Greedy U.S. backs Afghan crooks

NYT 1/6 — Obama is planning to commit thousands of additional American troops to the war in Afghanistan, which is already more than seven years old and which long ago turned into a quagmire.... The government we are supporting in Afghanistan is a fetid hothouse of corruption, a government of gangsters and weasels whose customary salute is the upturned palm. "....The state built on the ruins of the Taliban government seven years ago now often seems to exist for little more than the enrichment of those who run it."

Think about putting your life on the line for that gang.

## Best black jobs first to go

NYT 12/30 — "African-Americans earn much higher wages in the auto industry than in other parts of the economy, and the loss of these solid, middle-class jobs would be devastating"....

By last month, nearly 20,000 African-American auto workers had lost jobs, a 13.9 percent decline in employment.... That compares with a 4.4 percent decline for all workers in manufacturing.

## Capitalism lives off Madoff-ism

NYT 12/ 27 — ...While \$50 billion is a lot of money to defraud, there's nothing particularly modern about Mr. Madoff's ethics or technique....

Some say that Mr. Madoff's fraud is a harbinger of the downfall of the 21st-century's frenetic variant of capitalism. I would suggest that it underscores how stable the strategies and institutions of finance really are.... And Mr. Madoff's strategy...is strikingly similar to that of brokers and the financiers who built lucrative legal businesses convincing investors that something...would appreciate forever for some superspecial reason.

# CUBA: NO CLEAR LINE TO COMMUNISM BRINGS STATE CAPITALISM

Part I (CHALLENGE, 1/14/09) described the mass strikes and naval uprising that, along with the Castro-Che Guevara-led guerrillas, helped overthrow the Batista dictatorship in Cuba 50 years ago.

The July 26 Revolutionary Movement (J26M), formed to support the guerrilla fight against the Batista regime, included different forces, students as well as businessmen, who just wanted to eliminate Batista without changing much else in Cuban society.

However, the J26M had no base among the unions, which the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) did. The PSP was the old Cuban Communist Party. It had followed the CPUSA, which had been dissolved by Earl Browder during World War II. Browder was later attacked and removed from the leadership. It was then that the Cuban CP, loyal to the CPUSA, changed its name to PSP. The PSP's policies were always very opportunist, even supporting Batista in the early part of his regime.

The J26M's urban leadership decided to call for an insurrectional general strike for April 19, 1958, to overthrow Batista. The PSP — while advocating armed struggle in the mountains, opposed it in the cities — was not part of the building for the strike.

While many cities were totally shut down, the strike came up short in Havana. By mid-afternoon it was finished because of its premature call, the sabotage by the PSP and some right-wing J26M leaders and because of repression by the regime. The PSP leadership was hoping the strike's failure would force the Castro-led movement to include in a post-Batista government followers of former Presidents Grau and Prío Socarras, and hoped the guerrillas would tone down their anti-U.S. stance.

The strike's failure was a set-back for the mass militant actions in the cities but reinforced the guer-

rillas' leading role in the anti-Batista struggle. Batista figured the strike's failure meant the movement was near collapse, so on May 24 he launched a massive military campaign — with 17 army divisions, planes, tanks, napalm bombs and U.S. advisors — to crush the 300 guerrillas in the mountains.

The Batista offensive lasted only 25 days, suffering heavy losses from guerrilla ambushes and attacks by the peasant population. Within a month, the Army had retreated in disarray from the Sierra Maestra mountains. Troops deserted and refused to fight, marking the end of the Batista regime. In six months, the powerful Batista army totally disintegrated. On Jan. 1, 1959, Batista fled to the Dominican Republic, ruled by fellow dictator Rafael L. Trujillo. A January 1st insurrectionary general strike in Havana — with support of the PSP trade unions — crushed the plan to maintain the old society, just without Batista and without Fidel and the guerrillas in control of the new government. A few days later the triumphant Rebel Army entered Havana, greeted as liberators.

The Movement's program was basically radical-nationalist, but some forces in the anti-Batista movement just wanted conditions to remain the same. The most pro-U.S. forces in the J26M refused to let the PSP into the new ruling coalition — since Washington feared it despite its opportunist politics because it was pro-Soviet — even though Fidel fought for it. The PSP was only admitted to the coalition's union section because of its leadership role in the labor movement.

Eventually, the workers and peasants wanted more than just cosmetic changes. They seized factories and sugar mills owned by U.S. multi-nationals and were pushing the revolution to the left. But the PSP began to play a bigger role in the government and basically followed the Soviet pattern. By then, the Krushchev-ruled Soviet Union, the right-wing of



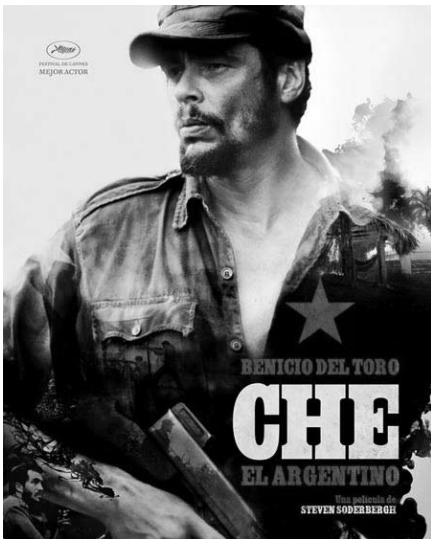
the communist movement, was becoming increasingly state capitalist.

The Progressive Labor Movement, later becoming the Progressive Labor Party, was born in that period, breaking with the CPUSA and its opportunist politics. We were the first one to break the U.S. travel blockade to Cuba and carried out many activities opposing the attacks against the new Cuban government. But as the latter became more and more pro-Soviet, PLP sided with the forces in the international communist movement attacking what became known as "Soviet revisionism."

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) in China was the last mass attempt to reverse the move to the right of that movement. The GPCR was defeated and now China, as well as the former Soviet Union, are completely capitalist.

Fifty years later, the world capitalist crisis is hitting Cuba hard. It is trying to deal with it by forcing workers to sacrifice even more. If the goal was a real communist-type society, that sacrifice would be worthwhile. But it's basically an attempt to maintain a state-capitalist system. And capitalism by any name means exploiting the working class.☪

## Che Gripping Film But Lacks for Real Revolution



"Che," now in theaters in the U.S. and world-wides, makes strong points. But, being a commercial movie, it misses the main political reason why Che's guerrilla tactics failed: without building a mass-based Marxist-Leninist party, communist revolution will fail.

"Che" is directed by Steven Soderburgh, and is based on the writing of Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentinean doctor who fought in the guerrilla rebel army against the Batista dictatorship. Shot in documentary style in two parts, this four-and-a-half hour film realistically depicts the military operations of 1956 to 1959 that defeated the Batista army and the 1967 failed guerrilla attempt in Bolivia that led to Che's murder under orders from the CIA.

The film treats revolution as a serious business, showing armed struggle necessary to end capitalist exploitation. It shows the tough, day-to-day struggle of guerrilla warfare, the rigorous training, the hardships when food is scarce and lives are lost. We see the constant effort needed not to degenerate politically in life-threatening circumstances and experience the exhilaration that comes when, in village after village Cubans join the guerrilla army, providing the support to make the uprising successful.

Guevara is portrayed as a committed revolutionary who gave his life in the service of the working class that inspired him, not as the glamorous "Icon of Revolution and Liberation," of the face on a million T-shirts. But still Guevara comes across as a central figure in the struggle to overthrow Batista.

Barely acknowledged is the critical role of the Cuban workers, peasants and students who for decades had been organizing against the regime and U.S. imperialism. Its concentration on the military aspect of the struggle against the U.S.-supported Batista regime, with only passing reference to the politics, raises many unanswered and important questions.

The first part, "The Argentinean," hints at ideological struggle between different factions within the Cuban guerrillas but doesn't present the ideas fueling their disagreements. Battle scenes are cut with flash-forwards to 1964, with Guevara — now Cuba's ambassador to the UN — addressing the General Assembly. He attacks U.S. imperialism and its lackeys in Latin America and correctly places the blame for poverty and misery on capitalism. But we don't learn what kind of society was being built in Cuba or where, for instance, Guevara stands on the great political debate of the day, between the revisionist betrayal of the Soviet Union and the more

leftist forces led then by China.

In Part II, "Guerrilla," Guevara leads a small group of Cubans and Bolivians in an attempt to seize power in Bolivia. The armed struggle fails, largely because the indigenous peasants don't join the guerrillas and because of the betrayal by the pro-Soviet Bolivian "Communist" Party. "Che" doesn't discuss how Guevara's main political idea, the "foco" theory of revolution, contributed to the failure. Abandoning the Marxist idea of building a mass base in the working class, Guevara believed that a small band of insurgents, a "focus group," could jump-start a revolution by example. Tragically in Bolivia, practice disproved this theory.

"Che" is a gripping and thought-provoking film but lacks the complexity the revolutionary process deserves. In the struggle to change society, the ideological battle to win the masses to communist politics is as important as the military, if not more so. "Che" adds to the knowledge of our past and, with discussion and further reading to fill in the blanks, can strengthen and inspire our fight today. (See the above article and the 1/14/09 issue, for PLP's analysis of Cuba, past and present.)☪

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