

“Dark Night Shall Have its End”

—Message of encouragement from Chinese Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong to U.S. Communist Party chairman William Z. Foster, in answer to Foster’s complaint that U.S. imperialism appeared indestructible.

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

—From Road to Revolution III

Capitalism is proving every day that it can offer the world’s workers nothing but endless horrors. Its “triumph” brings imperialist war; mass, racist poverty; fascist Homeland Security and police terror; famine and “ethnic cleansing” genocide; and mind-numbing cultural degradation. Such is the legacy of the profit system, and it will continue until it is smashed by communist revolution. That is the main task for workers, soldiers, and students: to destroy the old order and create something new. The task was never easy, but today it is harder than ever. Why? Because of the cynicism and passivity resulting from the old communist movement’s collapse.

Nonetheless, we have every reason for revolutionary optimism. Our Party’s experience in the mass movement

shows that a growing number of workers and students are seeking answers. Their search creates greater potential for winning them to our line. Though we cannot “get rich quick,” what we do now—or what we fail to do—is more important than ever. We must boldly face the fascist onslaught with a vision of a communist future free from exploitation, racism and bosses’ war.

Lacking a center for the world communist movement, the international working class is suffering unprecedented poverty, hunger, war, disease, and racist oppression. The Jihadists in Iraq and Iran, bin Laden, the Taliban, Bush, the liberal Democrats—all represent one set of billionaires or another. These “alternatives”—be they reformist, nationalist, or openly fascist—have no solutions for us. The only solution to imperialist bloodbaths remains international communist revolution.

In the recent period, inner-Party struggle over reformism has intensified. This is a healthy, necessary development. From its origins in the Communist Manifesto through Lenin’s What Is To Be Done and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, the communist movement has always advanced through the fight against reformism.

Known to communists as “revisionism,” reformism was the old movement’s Achilles’ Heel. The bosses love to gloat that communism was an illusion from the start and that it could never work. They have rewritten history to portray Stalin as worse than Hitler, and they continue to slander one of the greatest leaders in working-class

history. Despite all the advantages the capitalists enjoy today, the specter of communism still haunts them.

The political seeds of the old movement's collapse were already present in many of its leading documents and policies. These errors weakened and eventually reversed the achievements of monumental revolutionary organizations and unparalleled working-class heroism. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao all believed in socialism as a necessary halfway step on the road to communism. They all spoke on both sides of the question of nationalism. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin upheld the incorrect notion that the state apparatus should remain separate from the Party. All feared that communism was too advanced for workers and that the Party had to win them to something less, motivating through individual material incentives. Mao compounded this opportunism with his theory of "New Democracy," which twisted dialectics to justify alliances with "lesser-evil" bosses. In another example of opportunism, all of these leaders, to one extent or another, practiced the cult of the personality.

Our Party was born in the fight against this opportunism, and has continually deepened this struggle. A series of PLP documents, including *Road to Revolution I-IV*, *Revolutionaries Must Fight Nationalism*, *Reform and Revolution*, and others, were significant developments in communist ideology. The Party began in defiance of the CPUSA's opportunism. In the heat of struggle against the Vietnam War and racism, we came to understand by the 1960s that the Soviet Union had turned into its opposite—that is, it had become an imperialist power in competition with the U.S. Practice and further ideological struggle led the Party to conclude that all nationalism was poison. In the early 1980s, with *Road to Revolution IV*, PLP concluded that winning power—and keeping it to build a communist workers' dictatorship—hinged on bringing communist consciousness to hundreds of millions of workers and requiring a rapid destruction of the wage system replaced by distribution according to need.

These advances were vital ideological contributions to the arsenal of revolutionary communism. On the other hand, we haven't yet managed to replace the old movement as a beacon of hope for billions of the world's workers. In the present period, we have to struggle very hard just to make small advances. Each advance, from the sale of one more CHALLENGE to the recruitment of one more worker, has political significance and value. Each helps us progress toward a higher level of struggle.

If we are to accomplish our task, we must do better at taking advantage of the many existing opportunities.

It is imperative, however, that we approach this question dialectically. While there is plenty of room for improvement, and the quality of work falls far short of our potential, we also need to acknowledge that the current relationship of class forces is not in our favor. Reversing this relationship will take much time, effort, commitment, persistence, sweat, and blood.

A good part of our predicament is objective. The old movement's collapse is the worst defeat ever suffered by the working class. The recovery is taking generations. Stalin warned that a new Dark Age would follow the defeat of the Soviet Union. In many respects, the international working class now labors under heavier economic, political, ideological, and cultural burdens than at any time in its history.

But communists must never use "objective circumstances" to avoid criticism and self-criticism to correct errors and advance the revolutionary process.

'These advances [by PLP] were vital ideological contributions to the arsenal of revolutionary communism.'

Although we may remain small for some time, we must continue to sharpen the internal struggle against reformism/revisionism. Without this struggle, we can never hope to overcome the errors of the past. With it, we can begin to expand the

opportunities for growth in this period; we can hand over to our successors, and to their successors, a Party that will move mountains. New revolutionary conditions will emerge. Sharpening our line and practice will determine our future ability to make the most of these conditions.

The most significant error our Party made in the period following *Road to Revolution IV* was to underestimate the significance of the old movement's collapse. We correctly identified the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and China. We failed, however, to understand the devastating consequences that this development would have on the revolutionary process world wide and the new life it would breathe into U.S. imperialism.

In the decade and a half since the Soviet Union's voluntary break-up, U.S. rulers have received a blank check to wreak murder and mayhem in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. The end of socialism, and the subsequent (though possibly temporary) removal of the USSR as a key rival imperialist superpower, also enabled the U.S. rulers to dodge many of capitalism's inevitable contradictions. Even more critical, it has had a chilling effect on class

struggle all over the world.

In 1968, the world was a different place. United States imperialism was rocked by the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. Speculation in the gold market threatened to collapse the entire US financial system. This threat was temporarily contained when the US began to move off the gold standard and to end its troop buildup in Vietnam, but the economic forces that precipitated the 1968 crisis had not been eliminated. By late 1973, the US and Europe had entered the worst recession since the Great Depression. A crash in stock market prices proved larger than that of 1929. Industrial production and the rate of profit plummeted. Both unemployment and inflation soared into double digits. "Stagflation" was a form of capitalist crisis never seen before, and ultimately the "solution" to it produced the bank failures of the 1980s.

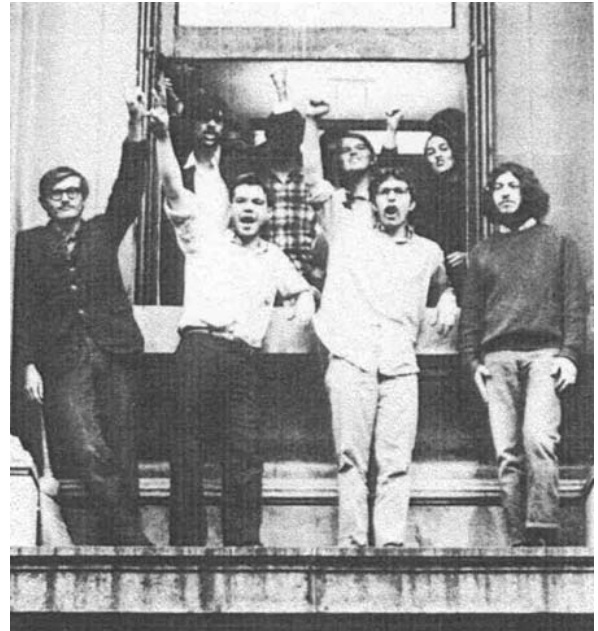
Yet in 1969, even as they stepped up their attacks on the working class at home and abroad, U.S. imperialists began negotiations to start trade with China. In 1972, the racist, mass murderer Nixon was feted in Peking as the deals were sealed. New markets for goods and investments were opened up. They helped cushion the crisis of the 1970s, even as the restoration of capitalism in China and Russia prepared the way for the renewed inter-imperialist rivalries of the current period.

At the height of the Vietnam War, capitalists around the world faced massive insurgencies by workers, students, and soldiers. Large sections of the US military were in open mutiny; rebellions led by black workers rocked every US city; the campuses were cauldrons of revolt; and a strike wave suggested that the working class could become unbeatable when led by revolutionary communist politics.

From 1968 to 1971, worker and student strikes rocked Europe, the United States and Latin America. In France, a student strike in May 1968 sparked a general strike that involved 10 million workers (two-thirds of the French working class) and halted all air traffic, railroads and ports. Workers and students marched through the streets of Paris singing the "Internationale." This worker-student strike paralyzed a modern imperialist economy and proved that the profit system's contradictions still have the potential to explode into revolutionary opportunity for a communist party with the correct line.

In Mexico, a June 1968 protest of high school students spread to the universities and to workers in the electrical, railroad, and petroleum industries and threatened to shut down the Olympics.

In November 1969, 143,000 General Electric workers were on strike as 500,000 anti-war demonstrators packed Washington, DC. PLP led thousands in a breakaway demonstration to the Labor Department to



1968. Students take over Low Library at Columbia University

build an anti-imperialist, worker-student alliance. Thousands took up the chant: "War-Maker, Strikebreaker—Smash GE!" In 1971, a wildcat strike by postal workers in New York City spread throughout the U.S. The entire postal system was crippled for a week. The strike was soon sold out, but it shook the bosses and gave the world a glimpse of workers' power.

These rebellions reflected 60 years of revolutionary practice, good and bad, inspired first by the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions, and more recently by the Vietnamese resistance and the Cultural Revolution in China. Hundreds of millions of people were involved.

If the Party is going to further the historical struggle for communism, we must make a balanced, objective evaluation of the old movement's strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths enabled the working class to achieve monumental advances. The first proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union, the Soviet-led fight against fascism in World War II, the Chinese Revolution, and the GPCR, along with the great anti-imperialist struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, gave hope to workers everywhere and showed that the oppressed could throw off the chains of their oppression. Failure to recognize the old movement's achievements is a dangerous error. Failure to learn from its errors and to correct them is equally grave.

Revisionism restored the profit system to the former Soviet Union and China. It turned Vietnam into a haven for capitalist investment. Nationalism transformed ghetto rebellions into electoral campaigns for black mayors. These campaigns became breeding grounds for black cops and corporate executives. Pro-capitalist union leaders and patriotic class collaboration destroyed the

once-mighty strike movement.

Reagan ushered in the modern period of fascism when he fired striking air traffic controllers in 1981 and replaced them with scabs. Clinton picked up where Reagan left off by abolishing welfare, instituting "Workfare" as a form of slave labor, forcing former welfare recipients to replace unionized workers and "earn" their old welfare checks.

The damage to workers' struggles appears even greater when viewed in a global context. Inter-imperialist rivalry is currently the main source of international conflict. From the European Union to the Middle East to China, the main opposition to U.S. imperialism has a reactionary, nationalist, and/or religious character.

The resistance to the U.S. rulers' occupation of Iraq is a case in point. There is no "good" side here, only a choice among thieves and murderers: Sunni bosses loyal to Saddam Hussein's old state apparatus; Shia clerics who want their cut of Iraqi oil profits and are more or less in league with Iranian oil mullahs; the U.S. itself; or its Russian, French, German, and Chinese capitalist rivals.

Media polls suggest that Osama bin Laden enjoys some support among oppressed people around the world. But as CHALLENGE-DESAFIO has pointed out from the beginning, this former CIA agent represents a wing of Saudi bosses who want to oust Exxon-Mobil and grab Saudi oil profits for themselves. A bin Laden-led Persian Gulf would only give the oppressed Arab masses a new master to enslave them in the same old chains.

This is fundamentally different from the situation in Vietnam, when communists led the resistance to U.S. imperialism. For all the revisionist weaknesses that eventually defeated them, they rightly inspired millions around the world. The same cannot be said of the current war in Iraq or of bin Laden. The old movement's fatal mistake of promoting "the lesser of two evils" has proven more deadly than ever.

Our seriously flawed estimate of the consequences resulting from the old movement's collapse led to economism¹ and reformism in our press and internal documents. Throughout the 1990s, we frequently wrote about economic upheavals like the collapse of the "Asian Tigers" and the increasing dilemma of capitalist overproduction. Even though we paid lip service to the primacy of politics over economics, these articles emphasized the growing crisis faced by U.S. imperialism

and implied that the U.S. economy might collapse of its own accord. We suggested that the Asian economies were doomed and that the U.S. economy could soon follow them. We were wrong. We placed mechanical economic relations above political relations between classes.

Overproduction is an absolute, inevitable characteristic of the profit system. But our suggestion that overproduction by itself would lead to an irreversible crisis was far off the mark.

As has been shown many times, the bosses can survive any crisis, war, depression, nuclear "holocaust," and more. What they cannot survive is communist revolution. Absent an imperialist rival that can challenge them militarily, or an aroused communist-led working class, U.S. imperialists have managed to contain all of their economic problems and stay on top. This doesn't mean that their problems aren't serious and that they won't ultimately become unmanageable. But the rulers are managing them at the moment, and they are able to do so mainly off the backs of a politically weakened

working class. In *What Is To Be Done*, Lenin exposes the bankruptcy of the idea that the economic struggle will "spontaneously" assume a political character. In other words, worsening economic conditions do not "spontaneously" generate revolutionary consciousness among workers. That requires a

'The life-and-death struggle against reformism/revisionism will be with us as long as social classes continue to exist.'

revolutionary Party with a mass base. If it were otherwise, most of the world would already be in the throes of revolution.

While we have always opposed this deviation in theory, opposing it in practice isn't so easy. In our press, this deviation frequently takes the form of one-sided articles emphasizing the immediate economic or reform struggle, with the ever-present paragraph at the end calling for communist revolution. If only things were so simple!

Both the deviation and the correction begin with the Party leadership. The mere existence of *Road to Revolution IV*, however vital it may be, doesn't guarantee immunity from reformism. In fact, seen with 20-plus years of hindsight, *RRIV* only scratched the surface in helping us understand and prepare ideologically for the consequences of the old movement's defeat.

Reality always outstrips consciousness. As we have

said many times, we can't cry over spilt milk. The life-and-death struggle against reformism/revisionism will be with us as long as social classes continue to exist. Mao's prediction about "10,000 years" of struggle after the seizure of power doesn't seem so far-fetched.

The struggle to sharpen CHALLENGE articles, so that the relevant communist points emerge clearly from the start, is only a first step. It's essential to draw correct revolutionary lessons about battles over wages, schools, police brutality, rotten medical care, the bosses' electoral circus, cultural questions, or any other issue that affects workers. But we're after something even more profound.

The fight for communism is, more than anything, a fight to make politics primary. This was the main lesson of the Cultural Revolution in China. Although the Chinese communists ended up with the wrong politics, their insight represented a vital advance, which we are still struggling to absorb. Making politics primary is much more than pointing out that the police can never serve the working class under capitalism, or that imperialism makes war inevitable, or that the profit system couldn't exist without racism. These are all crucial points, and we must struggle in our press and our daily political work to make them skillfully and persuasively.

But the fight to make communist politics primary has another, deeper level. It lies at the crossroads of ideology, philosophy, and psychology. It is a fight against idealism, subjectivity, mechanical thinking, and one-sidedness—in other words, a fight for militant, revolutionary dialectics. Understanding dialectics requires practice, class struggle, and a simultaneous battle against all of the system's rotten "isms." Chief among these is individualism. As Jailbreak, the Party's attempt to popularize dialectics, says from the start, "The worst jail is the mental one you don't recognize."

Individualism is the antithesis of objectivity and working class consciousness. The rulers promote it from the time children are in the womb. The communist principle of Democratic Centralism reflects the need to destroy and replace individualism with a completely different world outlook. The working class needs to develop a sophisticated understanding of grand political questions. Lenin wrote that a baker should be able to analyze the affairs of state. But this knowledge is useless if workers aren't won to replace individualism with commitment to their class.

Veteran PLPers have a certain advantage. They joined the movement when hundreds of millions of people worldwide were engaged in militant class struggle. At the height of the Vietnam War and the GPCR, the contrast between capitalist individualism and communist theory and practice was far clearer than it is today.

Those who participated in these movements learned

that the working class can accomplish monumental tasks, but only when people overcome the individualist, selfish attitudes and habits we are taught under capitalism. In the USSR of the '30s and 40's millions learned the collectivism which is part of working-class consciousness, learned it from political struggle, from collective labor, and from an educational system that taught these ideas.

In *The Soviet Power*, Hewlett Johnson, the "Red" Dean of Canterbury, wrote about the U.S.S.R. prior to World War II: "From the tenderest years the Soviet child is taught to work with others at useful and corporate tasks. Soviet children, like English children, for instance, will play with cubes. But Soviet cubes or bricks will often and purposefully be too large for a single child to handle. He will call a companion, and together they will build their house of cubes. Co-operation becomes instinctive" (P.p. 198-9). The power of this collectivism showed up in the huge relocation of Soviet industry behind the Ural Mountains that was carried out to keep it from falling into the hands of the Nazis in 1941. While the Nazi armies advanced, 1500 complete factories and over 2 million workers were packed onto trains and boats, moved 1000 miles, and started making tanks and planes again in less than three months, while workers lived in tents and dugouts. This enormous job, carried out under horrendous conditions but essential for the Soviet victory over the Nazis, could not have been carried out by people whose outlook was "me first."

In this seemingly insignificant detail of children carrying cubes, one can measure the impact of the defeat our class has suffered. Our Party believes in making class-consciousness "instinctive," but wishful thinking won't make it so. Class-consciousness can replace individualism only after generations of the sharpest class struggle and communist state power. Regardless of its political shortcomings, Soviet education in the 1930s was on to something crucial with those cubes and bricks. State power is a powerful trump.

While we lack that trump, we shouldn't bemoan our fate. Our job is to play the hand we've been dealt and improve it for those who will follow us. We live in a culture infested with reformism, subjectivity, and individualism. Every member and leader of our Party suffers from these diseases. On the other hand, we have powerful tools at our disposal, which, if used correctly, can help us advance.

First, we have the Party and its line. The Party stands for communist revolution. The Party stands for class-consciousness, objectivity, and dialectics. The Party teaches us to serve the working class rather than ourselves. To act on this line, to overcome our errors and bourgeois tendencies, represents the work of several



**'Hating Bush is good.
But it's not enough, and if it
leads only to supporting the
liberal Democrats, then U.S.
capitalism will still have a
vigorous future.'**

lifetimes, especially in an era with a low level of class struggle. But the line remains a beacon to keep in sight at all times.

Second, we have the strategy of building a base in the industrial working class and among working-class soldiers and sailors. We have a lot to offer the workers in terms of political understanding. The tireless struggle to build unbreakable personal and political ties with workers and others is more crucial than ever in the present period. Even when the relationship of forces in class struggle tilts to favor communists, the Party will always need these ties. However, in today's political climate, where rotten capitalist ideas hold sway 24/7 and 365 days a year, they constitute our highest priority. If we are to convince workers that we have the answer, then we must prove to them that communists are on their side. Only deep personal friendships developed over a long time and tested in all kinds of struggle, both among friends and against the class enemy, can get the job done. This is a demanding, labor-intensive process. But it is feasible.

At the same time, we need to understand that it's a

two-way street—that the workers have a lot to offer us, sometimes more than we have to offer them. By having confidence in the working class, and the patience to eventually win masses to the Party, we can build unbreakable ties with many workers, on many levels. Those ties will not only sustain us through hard times, but will also secure the Party against fascist terror. Ultimately, they will destroy imperialism and the old capitalist order. Relying on the workers—and organizing our lives around those we are trying to win—will make us a stronger Party. We can't hope to win any other way.

Despite everything now stacked against us, we can see glimmers of real hope every day. Many of our members try hard to carry out the line and have earned the trust and confidence of their co-workers. One comrade in a school manages to distribute 300 CHALLENGES per issue and has also earned a well-deserved reputation as an excellent teacher. This example and others like it serve as models of communist cadre. And among the masses, we all know people who in their daily lives are communists at heart in search of a Party.

Toward the end of Michael Moore's movie *Fahrenheit 9/11*, a wounded U.S. soldier recuperating in a Veterans' hospital comments about his disillusionment with aspects of the political system. He had been a Republican all his life. Now he hates Bush and plans to make a lifetime commitment to the Democratic Party, which was the filmmaker's goal all along. Moore is a creature of the liberal imperialist establishment.

The Progressive Labor Party has a different goal. There are millions of people like this wounded soldier. They represent both an opportunity and a challenge for us, and they show why what we do—and what we don't do—will determine the future. As the Iraq war drags on with its horrific civilian casualties, many U.S. soldiers are beginning to question its motives. Some have begun to disobey orders. This is an important, positive development and an opportunity for our side. These disgruntled soldiers are potential Party members.

Hating Bush is good. But it's not enough, and if it leads only to supporting the liberal Democrats, then U.S. capitalism will still have a vigorous future. There's another scenario. The soldier in *Fahrenheit 9/11* and the millions he symbolizes can be won away from the prison of capitalist thinking, which limits workers' choice to the Democrats and their "lesser-evil" lies and genocide. Only our Party's practice in word and deed can bring about this development.

Recognizing the general existence of opportunity is one thing. Acting on it in specific instances is another. On this front, serious self-criticism is in order. In the spring of 2004, when "revelations" about U.S. military personnel's torture of Iraqi prisoners were making headlines, the rulers handed us a magnificent opportunity to organize

for our line. Only the PLP could show that torture and atrocity are synonymous with imperialist war, that they have always occurred in bosses' wars, that mass terror of civilian populations is a strategic goal of imperialist war makers, and that torture and terror have accompanied U.S. capitalism since its inception.

How would we grade our response to this opportunity? Well, we wrote some articles about torture in CHALLENGE. The Party leadership tried to stimulate some action and struggle, linking torture in Iraq to the systematic racist torture of working class prisoners in U.S. jails. A few comrades responded, some in an exemplary manner. But on the whole, the effort and results fell far short of our potential. Even if we are limited by objective conditions, we didn't approach our potential in this case.

Communist criticism and self-criticism looks for correction, not confession or revenge. We must take the same clear-headed, objective approach to our own shortcomings that we take toward the difficult situation we will face for the foreseeable future. The situation is hard, but it offers opportunity for us to grow in numbers and strength. We are trying to do the right thing, but we have serious weaknesses, and we must struggle constructively with each other to recognize and rectify them.

Industrial workers, in and out of uniform, remain the cornerstone of our revolutionary strategy. Throughout our Party's history, we have seen the correctness of this strategy confirmed, even in the bleakest periods. Our comrade's recent success in the D.C. bus drivers' union struggle is the latest case in point. In a microcosm, it contains all the lessons we must absorb to move forward. This success required decades of day-to-day struggle and basebuilding. It involved the consistent mass sale of CHALLENGE. It included the patient, principled fight against reformism, both among the workers and within us. And it's far from over. New opportunities and dangers—new realities and new possibilities—are already arising out of the present situation. The general lesson of this experience is that we must continue to fight for more revolutionary practice in all mass organizations where we have members, particularly in the shops and military.

The Party press is another area in which we need to

make significant improvement. As conditions sharpen and the Liberal Establishment implements its plans for police state fascism, the importance of CHALLENGE will increase, both as a mass organizer and as a vehicle for internal Party communication.² At the moment, sales are modest. The hand-to-hand distribution of CHALLENGE and the development of networks of CHALLENGE reader-sellers, the so-called "concentric circles" of PLP loyalists, remain crucial to our basebuilding strategy. Increasing these sales and improving the quality and communist content of CHALLENGE articles are intimately related.

The presently dormant state of class struggle won't last forever. World War I gave birth to the Bolshevik Revolution; World War II gave rise to the Chinese revolution. If war is a prerequisite for communist revolution, there's plenty of it coming our way, with each one looming bigger and deadlier than the last. The capitalists will do their part.

In particular, U.S. imperialism must continue its military adventures. Other imperialists will find a way to challenge it. Rebellion within the rulers' armed forces will increase. Workers on the home front will not sit still indefinitely while the rulers fortify their fascist police state. These contradictions may take many years to reach a full head of steam. But at some stage, the pace will quicken qualitatively.

Opportunities abound, even today. The rulers are rightly

worried about motivating impoverished and oppressed workers to join the military and die for U.S. imperialism. Winning black and latin soldiers to sacrifice their lives for this rotten system remains as big a contradiction as ever, especially in the wake of Bush's Iraq fiasco, which has demoralized the military. Perhaps more time will be necessary before the military erupts into open rebellion, but this demoralization doesn't favor the imperialists. It represents another opportunity for us.

The economy gives us further opportunity. "Recovery" is a relative term.

The present "recovery," if it deserves the name, is occurring on the collective back of the working class. The liberal agenda for fascism and war will further grind down workers' living conditions. As retirements vanish, medical care worsens, schools deteriorate, housing collapses, and racist police atrocities mount, workers will eventually become more militant. Cynicism and passivity will give way to anger. Once this transformation occurs,

**Opportunities abound, even today.
The rulers are rightly worried
about motivating impoverished
and oppressed workers to join the
military and die for U.S.
imperialism.**

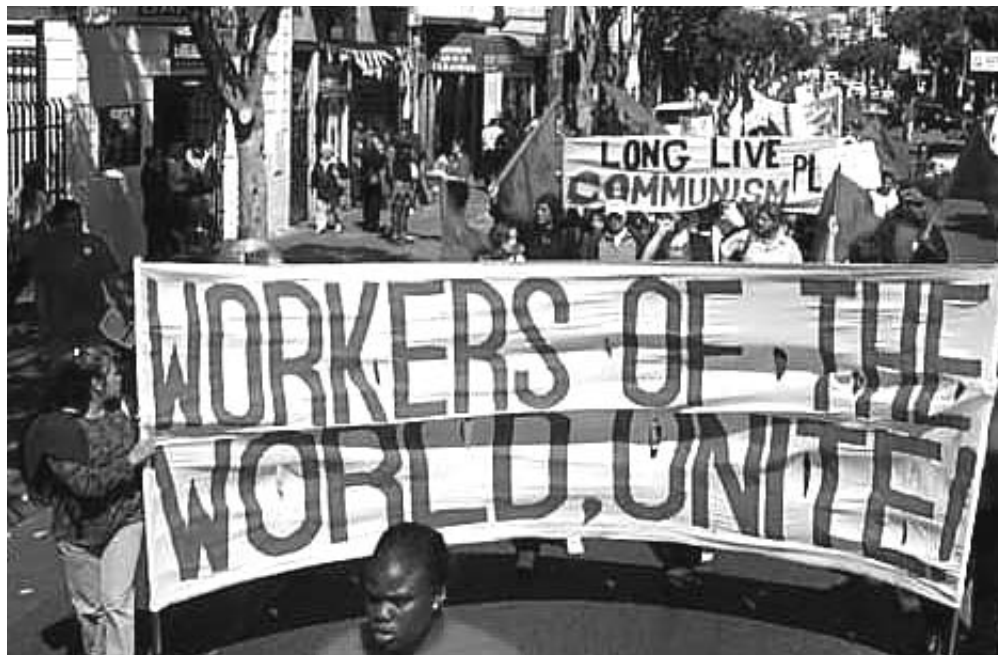
our communist practice today will determine our potential.

We have an immense responsibility. The future of class struggle and hence of humanity depends on workers' political activity, both in the shop and on the battlefield. The political line of the working class will come from one of two sources: capitalists or communists. The torture of Iraqi prisoners offers a case in point. The liberal-capitalist line points to Bush as the enemy and offers liberal Democrats as Plan B. The communist line takes a class position on imperialist war and calls for revolution. There is a world of difference, just as there is a world of difference between lines on the most modest of reform struggles.

Our responsibility is to make this difference. If we don't, workers will remain imprisoned in the enemy's fortress. If we do, the working class will finally break out to create a communist society, no matter how long or arduous the road to it may be.

The international mass protests in 2003 against the invasion of Iraq should be viewed as straws in the wind showing the potential for a mass movement. They died out because the protestors couldn't see a political alternative beyond the immediate protest. When the war began despite their efforts, they were demoralized. Even so, we should view this unrest and the mounting worldwide turmoil that will accompany U.S. rulers' coming wars as a challenge. With a sharpened internal struggle against reformism, we can train ourselves to carry out this all-important assignment.

The international character of these protests should confirm the correctness of our commitment to build an international PLP. The profit system's essential contradictions are universal and absolute in every corner of the world. The Party's ability to grow flows from these contradictions and from our practice. Inter-imperialist rivalries and wars will increase our potential for growth in every country where we function, and will generate new possibilities for building the PLP in countries where our organization doesn't yet exist.



Each Party member is capable of building a base and becoming a leader, both in the Party and within the mass movement. Each Party club can recruit members, spread CHALLENGE and our ideas, and pick a fight against the racist bosses. No amount of fascist repression, imperialist war, or reformism within our own ranks can erase the historic need of the international working class to make communist revolution. Marx wrote that every problem creates at least the elements of its solution.

The "Dark Age" won't last forever. PLP represents the future. For all our shortcomings, despite the very difficult period we are facing, many opportunities exist. We can do a lot better. By learning to diagnose the disease of reformism and the extent to which we still suffer from it, we can also learn to cure it. The task is arduous and will remain all-consuming through generations of struggle, but history and the working class demand nothing less of us. PLP retains the potential to become the midwife of a new humanity.

1 The opportunist belief that economic conditions spontaneously generate revolutionary political consciousness.

2 See *What Is To Be Done?* on the role of the Party press in periods of intense repression.