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THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

CHALLENGE



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MAY DAY 2007:

FIGHT FOR

COMMUNISM



From the imperialist bloodbath in Iraq to the growing fascism of Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo and "renditions," (secret CIA torture jails), workers need communist revolution. From the crushing racist poverty, the rising infant mortality rate killing black babies in the U.S. deep South due to healthcare cuts, to civil wars and the AIDS plague in Africa to the 98 million homeless in Latin America, workers need communist revolution. From the destruction of 100,000 GM, Delphi and Ford jobs in the U.S. to the closing of hospitals and health clinics to finance the slaughter in Iraq, workers need communist revolution. To smash the mass racist terror that was exposed with Hurricane Katrina and the fascist terror aimed at millions of immigrant workers and youth, workers need communist revolution.

This May 1st, millions around the world will march to commemorate May Day, the holiday of the international working class. Many will be marching in the midst of struggle, like thousands of Airbus workers across Europe striking against the elimination of 10,000 jobs. May Day marches throughout Latin America will see nationalist leaders like Chavez and others try to break the grip of U.S. imperialism, only to make deals with other imperialists. In the United States, various immigrants' rights organizations, and their Democratic Party backers, want to funnel the anger of May Day marchers coming to the demonstrations into nationalist citizenship campaigns and dead-end elections. PLP will be everywhere we can to spread our communist message and reclaim May Day for the workers of the world.

May Day, after all, is the workers' day. It was born in the heroic struggle for the 8-hour day when 350,000 Chicago workers went out on a general strike on May 1, 1886 and shut down the city. On May 3, 1886 the cops murdered six strikers and the next day thousands marched in protest into Chicago's Haymarket Square. A bomb was thrown by a police agent. Four workers were killed, seven cops died and 200 workers were wounded in what became known as the Haymarket Massacre. Nine demonstration leaders were framed for "instigating a riot." Four were hung. A mass protest movement forced the Governor to free those still alive when the government admitted the frame-up.

At the 1889 meeting of the Second International — a working-class organization patterned after the First International led by Karl Marx, — the world's workers decided to honor the Chicago strikers and martyrs by mobilizing as "one army, with one flag." May Day had begun. Ever

since, with communist leadership, it has symbolized workers' demands and class interests, united in the fight against capitalism.

The defeat of the communist revolutions in Russia and China decades ago gave world capitalism a new lease on life. While past revolutionaries certainly made reformist mistakes (such as believing in a gradual transition to communism through socialism and lacking confidence in workers ability to grasp communist ideas), capitalism has not changed and remains deadly for all workers.

We live in a capitalist world where workers and youth, infants and the elderly, are dying in unprecedented numbers from hunger, poverty, curable disease, war, death squads, police terror and a poisoned environment. At the same time, the ruling class makes record profits and the head of ExxonMobil makes \$145,000 a day! What's more, this is all just a warm-up, the opening acts leading to great-

er wars on the horizon.

If poverty, racism and war spontaneously led to communist revolution, the red flag would fly over most of the world. But communist revolution can only come about when millions of workers are politically conscious of how the world works and how to change it. The future is in our hands. This can only be accomplished by the tireless efforts of a mass, international, and revolutionary communist party.

This May Day, PLP is marching in NYC, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City, El Salvador, Karachi, Bogota and other cities to win workers, soldiers and youth to realize our great potential to overthrow the war makers and build a communist world based on serving the needs of the international working class! JOIN PLP!☪

THE RED FLAG OF WORKERS' POWER

The PLP will wave the red flag this May Day, and try to provide as many workers as possible with the flag that belongs to our class. The red flag flew high in Russia and China when workers seized power for themselves and flew over the Reichstag in Germany when the Red Army crushed the Nazis. It is a flag that stands for the elimination of exploi-

tation and the ability of workers to make decisions over our lives. The red flag calls for the unity of the working class as well as defeating the racism and sexism that divide us. It is the flag that belongs to the workers of the world, and stands for communist revolution to smash all the bosses' borders. ☪



LATEST MASS KILLER NOT 'NATURAL BORN' BUT BRED BY PROFIT SYSTEM

As the bosses' media struggle to psychoanalyze Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech mass murderer, they deliberately avoid identifying the main source of his anger, capitalism itself. With its relentless competition, the profit system fosters an outlook of individualism. To the individual, others appear as rivals who must be defeated or wiped out. This process plays out constantly, from dog-eat-dog business dealings to genocidal imperialist turf wars. Cho's horrifying video rant shows a "me-against-the-world" attitude, entirely consistent with the prevailing social system.

RULERS' RACISM HELPED PULL TRIGGER

Other aspects of capitalism helped mold the killer. One was the bosses' absolute disregard for workers' human needs. Cho no doubt suffered a certain emotional deficit because he seldom saw his overworked parents. When Cho lived in South Korea, his father toiled in the oilfields of Saudi Arabia. After moving to Virginia, Cho's parents worked from 8 AM to 10 PM at a dry-cleaning shop.

Another force pulling the trigger was racism, the capitalists' strongest weapon against working-class unity. At school in the U.S., laughing classmates would taunt Cho with dollar bills to get him to utter his Korean-accented English. Racism turned fellow students into bitter foes for Cho.

A third factor was anti-communism. Cho's parents mistakenly equated communism with the dictatorial North Korean regime his mother's family had fled. The parents, though workers themselves, pushed service to U.S. rulers instead of service to their own class. Cho's mother used to boast of her "successful" daughter, a Princeton grad, who now works for the State Department on projects in Iraq.

The Blacksburg massacre exposes capitalism's tendency to create Frankenstein-type monsters. U.S. imperialism needs killers for its wars. So it peddles increasingly anti-

women, violent "entertainment," in the form of movies and video games — Cho was a fan of both — to boys and young men. But rampant individualism spawns lone gunmen like Cho. The rulers want death-dealing soldiers, not disruptions on the campuses where they formulate and spread their deadly ideas.

KILLER'S COLLEGE A LIBERAL INCUBATOR OF DEADLIER MASS MURDERERS

Located in a Bible Belt "red state," Virginia Tech is an outpost of liberal U.S. imperialism. Its corps of military cadets, second largest only to Texas A&M's (besides the service academies), accepted women as early as 1973. It took the rulers more than two decades after that to compel nearby colleges VMI and the Citadel to get with their agenda.

Virginia Tech president Charles Steger has led university collaborations with the liberal imperialist Carnegie Corporation and World Bank. In addition to its ROTC, which churns out officers in all three service branches, VaTech does research and trains engineers for the Pentagon's Space and Naval Warfare weapons project. The college website flaunts a list of alumni generals and admirals as long as your arm. It also shows VaTech grad Army officers in Iraq chalking "Go Hokies" (VaTech's sports nickname) on artillery shells. Hokie ROTC alums who match Cho's death toll in Iraq or Afghanistan receive promotions.

No doubt the rulers will use this incident, much the same way they used 9/11, to increase fascist oppression in the U.S. In the name of "security," they will increasingly create a prison-like atmosphere on campuses and in public schools.



BY SACK FOR THE STAR TRIBUNE

Before killing himself, Seung-Hui Cho slew 32 people in all. But the system that produced him has cut short hundreds of millions of lives worldwide through imperialist wars and its wretched oppression of workers. The U.S. "surge" in Iraq, for example, a desperate grab for oil wealth and a brainchild of the liberal Baker faction, is killing Iraqis by the hundreds per day. Blacksburg is simply another Monday in Baghdad. This bloodshed — senseless to us but immensely profitable to capitalists — will end only when our class destroys the profit system. ☪

Unemployment — The Hidden Massacre

Massacres are endemic to the capitalist system which puts profits first over people's dead bodies. From one million Iraqis dying in 12 years since Gulf War I, plus over 10,000 GI deaths from U.S. depleted uranium weapons used in that war, to 650,000 Iraqis dead in the current U.S. invasion of Iraq (British medical journal Lancet) and now 32 Virginia Tech students (see editorial, above for the real cause). Some are stark, some accumulate over time

One massacre, well hidden, but a massacre nevertheless, is the continuous deaths resulting from unemployment. Does losing a job mean losing one's life? Absolutely.

A study published on Oct. 30, 1976 by the U.S. Congressional Joint Economic Committee, based on 40 years of statistics from the Great Depression until 1973, concluded that every 1.4% rise in unemployment led directly to the death of 30,590 workers in the following five years. Over decades, millions of workers become jobless due to the bosses' drive for maximum profits. Taking each 1.4% increase in unemployment during those decades, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, may very well have been sent to an early grave because of the effects of losing a job. And most laid-off workers who obtain other jobs usually suffer a lower wage and a loss in benefits, contributing to the deteriorating condition of the working class.

Those 30,590 unemployment-caused deaths are composed of: strokes, heart and kidney ailments (26,440); suicides (1,540); homicides (1,740) and cirrhosis of the liver (870). Heart disease peaks three to five years after the start of a recession. The study reported that infant mortality rates show dramatic increases within one to two years after an economic recession. Johns Hopkins professor Harvey Brenner testified to the Committee that, "The national rate of suicide in the U.S. can be viewed as an economic indicator," so close is the link between joblessness and workers' violent deaths. Since black and Latino workers in the U.S. suffer double the average jobless rates, a disproportionate number die as victims of racist unemployment.

The millions of workers who have died "before their time" since the Great Depression as a direct result of being laid off could rival any mass killing anywhere on earth. When Circuit City laid off 3,400 sales clerks recently, denying them relatively decent-paying jobs, health insurance and pensions — in order to hire replacements at much



lower wages — they were not only wiping out their "American Dream" but also contributing to the unemployment that leads to workers' deaths. Every time auto workers, aerospace workers or healthcare workers are thrown on the street, the basis is laid for "unemployment massacre." This is a worldwide phenomenon because capitalist-created unemployment is worldwide.

There has never been full employment under this profit system. Unemployment is built into capitalism. Laying off workers is the first option for bosses looking to reduce costs and increase profits. Coincidentally, when tens of millions of workers were walking the streets during world capitalism's Great Depression, only the communist-led Soviet Union had full employment. While the USSR later reverted back to the full-scale capitalism that exists in Russia today, true communism — abolishing the wage system, eliminating bosses and the profit motive — is the only solution to the mass death and poverty visited on the world's working class by this degenerate system. ☪

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

☆ **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 workers.**

☆ **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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PL'ers Force Racist Minutemen Founder to Flee

SOUTHWEST, April 19 — A conservative student group recently brought Chris Simcox, founder of the anti-immigrant Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, to a university in the Southwest. Many students were outraged and planned to protest. PL members transformed what would have been an unplanned outburst into a militant expression of multi-racial unity and working-class solidarity. Through PL's leadership, the demonstration turned out to be the largest in university history, and we forced Simcox to cut his speech short and flee surrounded by police officers.

The cops tried to arrest at least five people and left one PL member covered in bruises. However, every arrest attempt failed, as the crowd immediately descended on the officer chanting, "Let him go!" or physically removing the cop. Eventually the police gave up, realizing they were vastly outnumbered and their harassment was only increasing the militancy of the protestors.

Before the protest, PL members had a discussion with friends which contrasted the philosophy of Lenin with that of pacifist historian Howard Zinn. We emphasized that fascism must be faced down by the organized resistance of the working class rather than the peaceful protest advocated by pseudo-leftists. As a result, those close to the Party came, ready to face down not only Simcox, but also the police and university officials who protected him.

Minutes before Simcox went on stage, one university official tried to shut our action down. Many were prepared to give up and move to another area when a PL'er confronted the official, insisting, "We are not going anywhere!" The other students then refused to be cowed into moving.

Simcox denounced protestors as a "vigilante lynch

mob" — a label that much more accurately applies to his own group. We passed out leaflets documenting ties between the Minutemen and white power groups like the National Alliance and showing that they are merely a continuation of the Klan Border Watch of the 1970s. We raised signs with slogans like "Smash the Minuteklan!"

Our leaflets explained that the multi-racial worker unity demonstrated recently by the shipbuilder strikers in Pascagoula, Mississippi represents the future, as opposed to the dead-end ideas of the Minutemen. Students were supporting their working-class brothers and sisters in Mississippi by buying our homemade buttons reading "Smash the Minuteklan" and "Workers Unite Against Racism." We will send these donations with letters of support to the workers in Pascagoula.

Some students tried to turn the protest into a celebration of Chicano nationalism. One of these students illustrated the absurdity of such identity politics when he said, "I support the KKK. They're about whites having pride in their racial identity." We responded to the nationalist chants of "Viva la Raza" with "Las Luchas Obreras No Tienen Fronteras" (workers' struggles have no borders). In the end, multi-racial, working-class unity dominated the protest.

We were surprised that some of the most vicious hostility was not from the Minutemen or the conservatives, but from liberals and Democrats in the audience who shouted, "Let him speak!" and leveled insults at us. It was clear proof that alliances with liberals are a dead end.

Our militant politics fired the passions of the protesters. Typically reserved students found themselves in direct confrontation with the police. One conserva-



tive student insisted that our style of protest will not win anyone, but a student immediately told him, "They convinced me!" High school students, invited by a PL teacher, skipped class to attend the protest. Some are currently in training programs to become police officers, but after witnessing the treatment of the protestors by the police, were shocked into realizing that the true role of the police under capitalism is to protect the ruling class.

When Simcox cut his speech short and was escorted out by the police, our crowd chanted triumphantly, feeling that we had accomplished our goal. The effects of the event have since reverberated throughout the entire city and have given us many opportunities to talk with students and workers about the need to fight against racism and capitalism. We plan to hold meetings with those who were at the protest to further develop these points and to continue to advance PL's politics on the campus and around the city. ☪

Black-Latino Students' 'Unity Walk' Fights Racism, Nationalism

LOS ANGELES, CA, Thursday, April 19 — Today students held a Unity/Peace Walk in front of the whole population of their high school. Black and Latino students read poems in English and Spanish about the need for working-class unity against the bosses' racism. Posters promoted unity between black and Latino students. This was a victory in an ongoing struggle against racism and nationalism, for class-conscious, anti-racist, multi-racial unity.

On a school field trip, some teachers had told Spanish-speaking students, "This is America. Speak English on this bus." Suspensions and discipline have been applied disproportionately against Latino students. Even though the school has about 45% Latino students and 55% African American students, at many functions, Latino students have been underrepresented. Also, a small group of gang members harass some Latino students, especially more recent immigrants.

As a result, a small group of Latino teachers began meeting to address these issues. One of the teachers invited asked, "Why weren't other teachers invited?" and was told, "We want to discuss the matter among ourselves first." The teacher replied, "I think the way to respond to prejudice, racism or any form of discrimination is by building unity with the entire staff." One teacher responded to the call for an integrated discussion with nationalism: "The problem is that you have acculturated yourself and don't understand."

While the group was responding to legitimate concerns, some of their proposed solutions, like asking for more Latino administrators and security guards, won't fix anything. Building a united force to take on the racism of the administration is the way to go. Terms like "acculturation" and "assimilation" are pushed in the universities to divert us from looking at things from the point of view of working-class unity against racism and the capitalist system that produces it. It also became clear that in an attempt to fight against racism, often the victims of racism respond in a narrow, isolationist, nationalist way that can become racist itself.

At a faculty meeting after a student stabbing in the school (see CHALLENGE, April 25), a teacher called on colleagues to "not fall for the perceptions being pushed by the media about violence between blacks and Latinos. These stories are not the reality, but they could become the reality and destroy the unity and understanding that a lot of us here have worked so hard to achieve." Most people listened. The comments dis-

continued on page 7

Storm Through Rutgers Campus, Attacking Imus' Racism, Sexism

NEWARK, NJ, April 11 — "IMUS MUST GO — NOW!" rang through the halls of Rutgers University's campus here as students, professors and community residents streamed into campus buildings, blocked traffic and confronted the campus provost. They were demanding that the university administration call for firing "shock jock" Don Imus — not simply express "regret" — over his racist and sexist verbal attack on the Rutgers Women's basketball team. (Imus was later fired by MSNBC-TV and CBS radio).

The multi-racial group of protestors, ages 16 to 60 and beyond, represented a number of different organizations as well as Rutgers students and faculty, students from local high schools and PLP.

The demonstrators were protesting Imus's extremely racist, sexist and homophobic language degrading the Rutgers' women athletes. Imus is paid \$10 million a year for spewing forth his garbage "humor." His "Imus in the Morning" radio-TV show has reached millions of listeners every day and been supported by the many prominent politicians and authors whom he has hosted, as well as by corporate sponsors, from Staples to General Electric. He has helped build the fascistic culture permeating U.S. society.

Although his bosses fired him after corporate sponsors, reacting to the mass outcry, dumped him, Imus can either retire on his millions or go onto satellite radio and TV. But he is just the tip of the reactionary media iceberg.

A spirited rally preceded the campus protest march of about 100 people and contrasted dramatically with a much larger "press conference" called earlier by the Rutgers administration and the Newark political establishment which specialized in hot air. They "deplored" Imus's words which tapped into the deep racism and sexism in U.S. society. But they didn't explain how his show has been part of the ideological apparatus of class rule in the U.S. Instead, they exclaimed racism and sexism are "still" with us! No kidding.

Newark Democratic Party Mayor Corey Booker kept repeating that "America is better than this" — as if Imus violated the "real" principles "the nation" stands for.

But speaker after speaker at the smaller rally afterwards made very different points. An SDS representative expressed her disgust with the Rutgers administration's inaction, saying Imus's words are part and parcel of U.S. society, not "an exception to the rule." A professor stressed that Imus's description of black people helps



rationalize the U.S. government's racist handling of Hurricane Katrina. A community organizer linked the racism Imus fomented with the xenophobia needed to fuel the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; he especially urged students to follow the lead of SDS of the 1960's and 1970's, which organized against the Vietnam War.

The head of NOW-NJ exposed the persistent — and profitable — dehumanization of African-American women in U.S. mass culture since slavery. Two young Rutgers women described how African-American women are continually made to question their self-worth and persuaded to spend billions of dollars a year on hair and skin products designed to change their natural appearance.

Several speakers pointed out that capitalism is the root cause of the "Imus phenomenon," and that only its abolition will free the airwaves of his poison. Two high school students sharply analyzed the mass media and class rule. Applause and cheers greeted their call for the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class. An adjunct professor's speech urging the students to build a mass campus movement to reject "business as usual" inspired the group to march through the campus and confront the administration.

This was an important day for Rutgers. From this acorn may a great oak grow. Wherever we are, we need to continue to organize struggles against racism and sexism and all other anti-working class ideas fueled by capitalism. ☪



workers unite!

Vets Denounce U.S. War Machine

SOUTHERN CAL., April 16 — “I got thrown into a war I didn’t want to fight... Now I get to choose to fight against it.” A young vet back from Iraq related his experiences with courage and anger. He said he and some buddies had consistently refused to carry out racist orders to mistreat Iraqi civilians, and that others refused to run over Iraqi civilians with military vehicles and refused orders to “step on their faces” during apprehension and interrogation.

His comments exhilarated a near-capacity crowd of 250 students, staff, teachers and community members on a college campus.

Having lived with racism in the U.S., one veteran identified with the plight of Iraqi civilians who suffered the terror of U.S. military assaults. Having seen an Iraqi family killed, he declared, “I had nothing to do with the killing, but felt responsible because I belong to the U.S. Army. That’s why I feel [I must]... speak out against the war.”

The forum on the war featured five veterans recently returned from Iraq. Other veterans came to listen and asked to speak. One declared, “Seventy percent of the soldiers in Iraq don’t want to be there and are against the war.” Another said angrily that his unit risked their lives to clear a road of IED’s, “And you know what they used that road for? To bring white vans full of lobsters for the officers.”

Another vet denounced as naïve any well-intentioned but misguided plan to send more money so the troops

could have better body armor. “That money will just go to Halliburton, not to me and my buddies in the field.” He further emphasized that the war was not about more money “to protect the troops” or to stay the course to “protect Iraqi civilians.”

Still another vet urged the audience not to listen to the U.S. government’s claim to be in Iraq to “help the Iraqi people.” He condemned the Clinton Administration for bombing Iraq three times per week when Iraq had no air

‘He [the soldier] said he and some buddies had consistently refused to carry out racist orders to mistreat Iraqi civilians, and that others refused to run over Iraqi civilians with military vehicles and refused orders to “step on their faces” during apprehension and interrogation.’

force. He stressed that supposedly six months of diplomacy preceded the war. However, on March 20, 2003, when the U.S. unleashed its genocidal “shock and awe, a lot of us felt betrayed,” feeling that war had been the plan all along, that “diplomacy” had been a ruse.

He outlined the horrors for the Iraqi people: 50% of families have lost sons; gas lines in this oil-rich country are

a half a day long; the occupation has killed 655,000 Iraqis, with no end in sight; and the one trillion war dollars spent will short-change schools, roads and other essential civilian services.

Several vets described friends’ medical conditions with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and denounced the mistreatment at the VA health facilities.

Afterwards, about 75 people formed separate discussion groups, staying late into the afternoon to discuss the war. Group leaders described the history of imperialism and petroleum economics. They emphasized the critical role active-duty soldiers can play, and have played, in stopping wars and opposing imperialism and racism. The veterans’ understanding, anger and commitment inspired many to think more deeply about this war. Debates ensued between those who favored continuing the war, some who thought the Democratic Party and the electoral system can stop it, others who were unsure, and those who said that soldiers’ actions were crucial to ending this and all wars. Vets and students alike were interested in the history of soldiers’ rebellions’ against the war in Vietnam. The understanding that capitalism is the problem and that soldiers, workers and students fighting for communism is the solution, all were received, along with CHALLENGE, and great interest in several workshops. ☺

Mounting Problems Taxing Reliability of Rulers’ Military

Political problems are undercutting the world’s largest military from within and without. Failure to win quickly in Iraq has exposed fundamental problems in the U.S. ruling class’s effort to maintain a reliable military.

Weakening domestic support for the war has severely hurt the military. Foremost is recruitment. After missing its recruiting goals for several years, the Army has resorted to short-term fixes: raising the enlistment age to 42, lowering recruiting standards and increasing bonuses for enlistment, re-enlistment and combat.

Therefore, the military is inducting more alienated soldiers — those with drug and health problems, high school drop-outs and gang members. Historically the Army avoided such soldiers because they tended to be less committed to the military, with more discipline problems. Newly-recruited older soldiers are dropping out of basic training at twice the rate of those under 35, the previous age limit.

Recruitment problems go beyond the enlisted ranks. West Point failed to meet its officer graduation goal last year. Re-enlistment rates among West Pointers are 25% lower than the other service academies.

The ruling class’s inability to get and keep soldiers is a big problem because their plans for confronting their biggest rivals (China, Iran, Russia, etc.) require several hundred thousand additional troops.

Lack of support for the war also involves the unwillingness of sections of the bosses to sacrifice for the overall good of U.S. capitalism. The profiteering, extravagance and corruption — from Washington to Wall Street to Halliburton — make it difficult for the rulers to demand sacrifice from the working class. This forces them to try to maintain “normality” at home, thus limiting their ability to finance wars.

Soldiers’ morale is also suffering. Although from 2003-2006 re-enlistment rates were higher than normal among soldiers who served in Iraq, this is changing. In the last year, even with increased bonuses, re-enlistment rates have dropped. Through personal accounts and in polls, troop dissatisfaction appears to be growing.

Morale problems also reflect internal political weakness. Soldiers supported the war based (at least partially) on the Army-fed assumption of low casualty rates, reinforced by comforts in the field — bonuses, video game arcades, field posts resembling home bases with gyms and PX’s, and U.S.-style concessions popping up in the middle of the desert. Essentially they’ve been building a mercenary-type army. But politically such an Army is not equal to the hardships and casualty rates of sustained guerrilla-type warfare. It’s now difficult for the rulers to change soldiers’ motivation mid-stream without it appearing as the bait-and-switch that it is.

There is a definite growing anti-war sentiment within the military, along with indications of increased low-level resistance: not following routine orders, desertions and others, even more significant. Two soldiers in Germany have been jailed for refusing to load weapons being shipped to Iraq. The jailing occurred after soldiers in the unit supported the two in the face of administrative punishment.

The ruling class is trying to get out in front of this re-

sistance by promoting its own ideology within the GI anti-war movement. Groups like Iraq Vets Against The War, the Redress Movement and Military Families Speak Out reflect both growing resistance but also ruling-class attempts to limit GI resistance to the current formulation of the Iraq war, rather than an attack on U.S. imperialism.

Morale problems, plus fundamental structural problems, are driving up war costs. Even excluding bonuses, the per-soldier expense of maintaining troops in the field is skyrocketing. The need for armor on humvees and increased personal protection to try to prevent GI rebellion is a new development. The cost of personal equipment per soldier in World War II was \$175 in today’s dollars; in Iraq it’s \$17,000.

Even more than costs, the demand for safety has limited mission capabilities. When a war is not worth dying for, soldiers are reluctant to leave their base without adequate protection.

Division within the ruling class exacerbates many of the military’s internal problems. The daily attacks on Bush and the war by the NY Times, CNN and the bulk of the ruling-class media reflect dissatisfaction with Bush’s handling of the war. In many ways, ruling-class unity was also a victim of the failed quick-win strategy.

The liberal media’s increased focus on Darfur, Iran, North Korea and China seems to reflect a desire to re-group and redeploy some of the military, perhaps to Africa, or to develop a military strategy for attacking Iran. These liberal imperialists realize that currently the U.S. is hard put to counter its biggest rivals. This was evident when U.S. forces sat on their hands while the Iranians seized those British sailors.

There also appears to be a growing realization among some ruling-class sections that as a political strategy to win working-class support for imperialism, Iraq is dead in the water. Building the Darfur movement on college campuses and in religious groups seems like an attempt to re-cast oil-grabbing in Africa as a “humanitarian” war against genocide. This time they want to build political support among the troops and the working class before the next invasion.

To “fix” their military, the bosses will have to change drastically. They will try to create a pro-war patriotism that the majority of workers and students will buy into. They must increase the size of their military and convince those soldiers to die in their oil wars. And they must curb their own corruption and profiteering, and win their own class to sacrifice for the overall good of U.S. imperialism.

Will they succeed? It seems questionable, but past failure hasn’t stopped them. Their efforts will surely wreak havoc on the lives of millions of workers in the U.S. and worldwide. But a future full of dangers is also full of opportunities to win the world’s workers to the only politics capable of confronting and smashing the imperialist butchers: the communist politics of PLP. ☺

El Salvador PLP: ‘Will have May Day bus for every state...’

SAN SALVADOR — “These kinds of meetings have made me feel alive again,” said a veteran of the war in El Salvador. “Of course, it’s urgent to march on May Day. The capitalists say it’s ‘only’ a workers’ day, but it’s much more.”

“It’s the main day for us workers,” said another. “We know that the electoral ‘left’ is not interested in these activities. They’re only thinking of elections.”

“We in the PLP must keep advancing the need to fight for communist revolution worldwide,” said a new Party comrade, concluding the discussion.

For months we’ve been mobilizing workers throughout the country to march on May 1st, in meetings, lunches, dinners and movie showings. The effort is bearing fruit. Hundreds of workers in various zones are now ready to participate in the march in the capital.

“At 2:00 AM we must be ready to leave,” said a comrade. Workers will walk long distances to get to the bus site.”

“While looking for numbers, we should also look for workers interested in our revolutionary politics. That’s what PLP needs to help win the rest,” said an older PLP member.

Since the signing of the “peace accords” between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government, enthusiasm has waned about coming to a May Day March. At a meeting of representatives of the country’s biggest unions, someone said, “We need to urgently organize the unity of the working class as a guarantee of a better future for the workers and not continue believing in politicians who only serve to defend and reform the capitalist system. Only the working class can and must be the guarantee for this future. People should not continue believing that the 2009 elections are the solution to poverty and exploitation. The struggle for revolution doesn’t end in some elections. The struggle is life-long.” After this, many of the workers present agreed that the bosses’ elections don’t change anything, only serving to change the hangman. “We’re going to have a bus for every state,” said one representative emotionally. “We can’t continue to follow passively in the face of the system’s attacks,” said another worker angrily.

PLP comrades’ efforts here and in other parts of the world are beginning to yield fruits, which, while modest, are of the greatest importance; pushing to destroy the capitalist system and the fight to build an international party representing those who have been oppressed by the bosses’ system.

The struggle for communist revolution is a challenge for the international working class. PLP is the vanguard party that has never backed away from the fight to build a workers’ system. Communism is the only solution to resolve the workers’ problems worldwide. PLP mirrors the unity of the working class. Organize in CHALLENGE readers’ groups and be part of the revolutionary communist struggle. ☺

fight for communism!



Spain's Delphi Workers Lead General Strike

CADIZ, SPAIN, April 18 — Delphi workers led a 100%-solid general strike of 200,000 workers shutting down all industries, including shipyards, petrochemical plants, hospitals, public transportation, construction and garbage collection in the 14 municipalities of the Bay of Cadiz region. The Delphi workers were protesting the closing of their Puerto Real plant; over 4,000 jobs will be lost in the province. It was Spain's first general strike in many years against the rash of mass job losses affecting workers, an example the world's workers must follow. Barcelona Delphi workers also struck for several hours and several joined a march outside the plant in solidarity.

On February 22, Delphi announced it will move its Puerto Real plant to Poland where labor costs are lower and workers have fewer rights — these are the fruits of anti-communism. Immediately workers took action, organizing weekly work stoppages, including mass protests along with Airbus workers. On March 1, 50,000 workers marched chanting, "Delphi won't be closed."

Last week, tens of thousands again marched. Two days before the general strike, a general meeting in the plant called for sharpening the struggle, so over 1,000 marched out and shut the bridge connecting the area to the plant for an hour.

Before Delphi announced the closing, the three unions representing the workers told them to remain calm, that there was nothing to rumors of the plant closing. They're still pushing the regional and national governments of Social-Democrat Prime Minister Zapatero to do something against Delphi. Workers should have no illusions that this will happen.

Delphi is on an international rampage attacking workers' wages and jobs. Recently it fired 600 workers at its Tangiers, Morocco plant. Workers were protesting company violations of the already pro-boss Labor Code in that North African country. A 36-year-old, recently-fired worker with four years working at the Tangier plant said: "The company did not obey a single one of the 598 arti-



cles of the Moroccan Labor Code."

Meanwhile, on April 18 night-shift workers struck the Opel-GM plant in Antwerp, Belgium, after GM announced it won't produce its Astra model there. The work stoppage was led by temporary workers who know they'll be the first to laid off. Over 4,000 jobs will be lost, 1,400 blue and white collar GM workers along with 2,800 jobs at 60 subcontractors.

Obviously, the struggle of workers like those at Delphi, GM, VW, Ford, ChryslerDaimler, Peugeot, Renault and Airbus is international. It requires a leadership based on the red May Day slogan, "Workers of the world, unite!" Such a leadership must turn these struggles into schools for communism, showing these industrial workers in these war-making, imperialist companies that capitalism must be destroyed, from Tangiers to Warsaw to Cadiz to Detroit. ☸

Skoda Workers Strike in Czech Republic

Workers in the Czech Republic at Skoda — bought by VW in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet bloc — walked out for several hours on April 17, cutting the daily production of 2,500 cars by about one-third. A threatened April 19 strike was averted when VW agreed to a contract ending in 2008 giving workers an immediate 10% wage increase, plus benefits.

Such strikes are worrying auto companies which have shifted production from France, Germany, Belgium and Spain to former Soviet-bloc countries to take advantage of their cheaper labor costs. Already, VW-Skoda bosses are saying that big pay hikes could risk further investments. Again, we can see how the anti-communist regimes of the former Soviet bloc, united with Nazi-collaborators like VW, GM and Ford, have been a disaster for the international working class. ☸

Russia's Profiteers Murder 108 Miners

West Virginia or Novokuznetsk, Russia or Pasta de Conchos, Mexico — capitalism is always ready to sacrifice miners' lives on the altar of private profit.

The murder last year of nearly 100 coal miners in West Virginia and Northern Mexico because of the utter disregard of safety rules was mirrored in what amounts to the murder of 108 Russian miners on March 19 in the country's deadliest disaster in ten years. A methane gas explosion occurred in an area where, "Automatic equipment showing the methane levels in the mine were deliberately deactivated so that the indicators displayed a lower methane level, but did not switch off the mine's electricity," according to Konstantin Pulikovsky, head of Russia's technical standards watchdog. (RIA Novosti, 4/16)

Functioning monitors would have warned the miners of an accumulation of the deadly gas and probably saved their lives. But to show the true methane gas build-up might have forced the temporary closing of the mine. This would have cost money, costs that eat into profits. Pulikovsky said managers at all levels were involved in the crime.

Associated Press reported (3/20), "The hazardous state of Russia's mining industry fell into disrepair when government subsidies dried up after the Soviet collapse." This situation stands in stark contrast to the high regard accorded to coal miners shortly after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution when their work-day was immediately reduced to six hours, safety was given top priority and the miners themselves enjoyed 6-week vacations.

But now international capitalism is reaping huge profits from the newly-privatized industries in the former Soviet Union, and miners' lives are completely subservient to their bosses' profits. The rate of mining industry deaths in Russia is second only to the other former communist-led country where capitalism now rules the roost: China.

A regional prosecutor told the Interfax news agency that the cause of the "accident" may very well have been "violations of mining work rules." The miners work under a quota system that drives them to work faster for increased productivity on which their wage system is based. It has disaster built into it. Their monthly take-home pay of \$575 comes largely (70%) from such productivity bonuses. "It is well understood," the head of the Miners Union told Reuters, "that if a person...is put in such conditions and adheres to all the rules of technical safety, he won't earn anything." Such conditions of speed-up, netting huge profits, lead to catastrophes.

The same disregard for safety is also killing Russia's elderly and disabled. A fire on March 20 in a nursing home in the village of Kamyshavatskaya killed at least 62 people, caused by "a series of violations, including insufficient fire-fighting equipment...to protect against smoke....an incomplete alarm system....[and] bedrooms' wooden panels...not made flame resistant." (NY Times, 3/21) Last year the building recorded 36 fire-safety violations, for which the owners were fined the grand sum of \$770. "In 2006, 17,065 people died in fires, an average of nearly 47 a day." (NYT)

Under a truly communist system in which the wage system has been abolished, workers' safety would be the first consideration, especially since it is the workers themselves who will control the society and will be determining their working conditions, not some profit-hungry bosses. ☸

Very few workers are mourning the death of Boris Yeltsin.

Even in Moscow, where conditions for some are a bit better than in the rest of Russia, workers shed no tears for Boris. Yeltsin, Gorbachev and now Putin returned full-blown capitalism to the former Soviet Union.

Today, while Moscow boasts as many billionaires as New York, workers' standard of living tells a different story. They're not enjoying the oil and gas bonanza a few CEOs and yuppies are reaping as the Russian bosses try again to become a big player in the sharpening international inter-imperialist rivalry. Racism is rampant in Russia, particularly against workers from the former Soviet republics in Central Asia.

But Yeltsin & Co. were not solely responsible for bringing back capitalism to the former communist-led Soviet Union. For decades, state capitalism ruled the country. Finally, a section of the old state capitalist ruling class decided to go into full-blown market capitalism, and cut out any concessions workers still retained from the past, plunging millions into misery. But the working class will rise again, learning from the achievements and errors of the past. ☸

'Reform' Exploits Immigrant Workers with Poverty Jobs, Youth to War

"If you don't like my proposed bill, look at the White House proposal," threatened Congressman Luis Guterrez. He said if his law wasn't accepted, immigration raids will be more massive than ever. Both the Gutierrez-Flake bill and Bush's bill demand thousands of dollars in fines and up to 15 years to get residency (for which one must leave the U.S. to apply). It also includes "securing the border" and a bracero program. That's the "good" part. It requires undocumented youth to either get a college degree or serve in the military. It establishes a National ID card for all workers and a new Electronic Employment Verification System.

Immigration "reform" for millions of undocumented workers has become a national debate, from churches to factories, in the streets and in Congress. The issue is coming to the fore because one sector of the U.S. ruling class needs to win these immigrants and their native-born children to patriotism, nationalist loyalty to U.S. bosses. They need millions more soldiers in the army, and in factories producing weapons and ships at low cost for their widening wars in the Mid-East and against rivals like Russia and China. The bosses are offering immigration "reform" in exchange for our sweat and blood.

The immigrant rights organizations' and church leaders, along with capitalist politicians, are presenting this patriotic pro-reform movement as the "American Dream." In reality it will become a nightmare. Millions of angry workers, who've been victims of racist immigration laws and raids, are being mobilized to march under the flag of U.S. imperialism, sign petitions to Congress and participate in the capitalist political arena. Of course the politicians don't mention that these same imperialist bosses created poverty and brutal repression, from Mexico and Central America to Haiti, Colombia and Argentina, forcing us to immigrate for a low-wage job.

As one worker said, "The imperialists with their flag (red, white and blue), and the help of the local bosses, took all the value of the mines, rivers and mountains, burned our homes, killed our brothers, sisters and parents, took our land and forced us to go to the big U.S. cities to work in their factories and fields. Now they want us and our children to fight for their bloody profits, to die and kill millions of other workers in their imperialist wars. But we workers will say, "that's ENOUGH — NO MORE!"

Many workers see immigration reform bringing them drivers' licenses, social security, legal exit from and re-entry to the country, plus better jobs or a university education. But the bosses want "reform" to create a controlled group of super-exploited workers and soldiers.

Immigrant workers play a key economic, military and political role, not just for the bosses but for our class as well, for the international working class. That's why our future lies in uniting with — and building — a revolutionary movement of workers, students and soldiers, black, Latin, white, Arab, Asian, citizen and immigrant who are all exploited by the capitalists. It doesn't lie in voting or in relying on bosses' politicians, whether Gutierrez, Villaraigosa, Kennedy or Bush.

United, we have the potential to paralyze the bosses' war industries and organize rebellions against their imperialist wars. Together we can forge the long-term commitment to fight for communism, producing to meet our needs and using to the maximum the creative power of all workers. In a world without borders, every worker will always be welcome in any part of the world. For this, we need the communist ideas in CHALLENGE and to join the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party.

< letters >

When is Terrorism Not Terrorism?

Have you ever tried to figure out what exactly the media demand of mass killing in order to call it "terrorism"? In one 2-page spread of the Arizona Daily Star on April 20, there are six articles: five on the recent killings at Virginia Tech — one of which compares it to Columbine (the high school in Colorado where 2 students killed 13 people in 1999) — and one article on the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. As it turns out, the anniversaries of these three events are all in the same week — VT on April 16, Oklahoma on April 19, and Columbine on April 20.

In all that newsprint the word "terrorist" occurs only once, and that is in a reference to the World Trade Center attack in 2001. In other words, the U.S. media only use the word "terrorism/terrorist" in relation to Muslims. Aside from the inherent racism in that restriction of the terminology, if the word were generalized to all mass murder it would lose the misleading political punch that the government and media squeeze into it to provide an excuse to invade and occupy the oil-rich lands of the earth. And it goes without saying that the word "terrorism" is never applied by the media to the mass killings by the U.S. military of innocent civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan or anywhere else.

But not everyone is so reluctant to use the word correctly. I have a poster on my wall that is a picture of Geronimo (the great Apache fighter against U.S. genocide), his son and two other comrades in arms, all standing there holding rifles, with the caption: "HOMELAND SECURITY — Fighting Terrorism Since 1492."

Saguaro Rojo

Turns Job Site into Political Battleground

Recently, I participated in the PL-led protest against Minuteman Chris Simcox on a southwest campus (see article, p.3).

Because of the short notice of the event, my co-worker and I struggled to get the day off, and our employment was jeopardized. After multiple phone calls with the boss, we stated our final compromise: we would work half the day of the protest, and my wife would volunteer four hours of unpaid labor. On the one hand we didn't want to make our mainly undocumented Latino co-workers bear the burden of the work in our absence. On the other hand, we would be upholding an anti-racist position at our university that would sharpen our communist politics. The boss's final remedy to the situation was that only one of us could go, with serious repercussions if we both left work. After much contemplation and discussion with our fellow workers, we decided together that although the workload would be unevenly shifted onto the backs of our friends, the long-term struggle against racism would be in all of our best interests.

The day after the protest, our co-workers received us with smiles of encouragement. Because of the event's publicity, we could share our political views on immigration, in and outside of the workplace. Co-workers asked, "Do you think this protest will make us all citizens?" My response was that our intention is not to make citizens, but to empower ourselves against the ever-growing racist ideology that is promoted by groups like the Minutemen. That evening we were questioned by a right-wing student who resorted to bullshit arguments about how "alien immigrants" break the law by trespassing on private property. After intense discussion, he was won to the idea that we should fight for the working class, on either side of the border. This struggle went on throughout the week.

Eventually, our boss confronted us about the event, saying, "Because I could not reason with your minds, I am going to bite you in the ass!" He threatened to dock the pay that we earned the day of the protest. We reminded him of our extra-hard work the day before and that our co-workers had reassured us that everything was okay while we were gone. We also brought up our low wages and my wife's four hours of volunteer work. Our boss's reply was, "I admire your political views, but if I didn't show the other workers that there are punishments for what you both did, the workplace would be complete anarchy." This has reconfirmed for us all that the boss will always be forced to retain an illusion of power.

We took what used to be an apolitical workplace and turned it into a political battlefield of bosses vs. the workers. Through this event, my wife and I have been won to PL's line. The effects of the event will continue to help build PLP and crush racism, within the workplace and around the world.

New Reds

Racism Kills Babies from Chiapas to Mississippi

Recent articles in mainstream publication about health illustrate how racism is a universal aspect of capitalism. A front page New York Times (April 22) article reported how health care cuts have raised the death rate among black babies in the Deep South of the U.S. Also on April 22, the Mexican daily La Jornada reported a similar situation in the southernmost state of Mexico: "In Chiapas, extreme poverty has meant that easily curable diseases become epidemics killing the population. Seventy percent of the state's 4.293 million people are indigenous or peasants that live in extreme misery."

More than a million Chiapas residents, mostly indigenous and peasants, have no access to health centers, causing the multiplication of easy-to-cure diseases like tuberculosis, infant malnutrition, diarrhea, trachoma, etc. In the areas where 70% of the population is indigenous, there is only one doctor per 25,000 people.

Some blame immigrants from Central America that daily cross the border for the problem, because they lack even basic vaccinations and spread diseases. But this is only a symptom. The real reason that Chiapas has the highest rate of curable diseases and infant mortality in Mexico is capitalism and its racism. This system only serves the interests of billionaires like Carlos Slim, one of the richest men in the world, and the imperialist and local bosses who pay wages so low that they compete with those of China.

The bosses' racism kills workers and their babies from Chiapas to Mississippi. For the sake of our children, let's get rid of this epidemic.

An Anti-Racist Worker

Black Mayor Backs Troops vs. Urban Rebels

Former Virginia Governor and now Richmond mayor, L. Douglas Wilder just released a statement supporting joint Marine Corps/FBI urban training exercises in Richmond. The exercise simulates urban combat using low-flying helicopters and artillery fire using blank ammunition. Wilder stated, "We are pleased to support the Marine Corps in its efforts to better prepare our soldiers for potential combat in urban areas abroad as well as right here on home soil, if needed."

Better prepare for potential urban combat abroad and on home soil? Wilder, the grandson of former slaves and Civil Rights leader is in support of the continued occupation and slaughter of the work-

U.S. Rulers Free Mass Murderer ('What Terrorist?')

Relatives in Cuba of those murdered when 79-year-old old terrorist Luis Posada Carriles organized the 1976 blowing up of a Cubana Airlines plane after it left Barbados Airport protest his freeing by a Texas judge. Carriles and fellow CIA-operative Orlando Bosch (both rabid anti-communist Cuban exiles) plotted this terrorist act which killed 73 passengers, including the entire young Cuban Olympic fencing team. It was the worst terrorist act involving a plane in the Western Hemisphere before 9/11.



Why was Posada freed from prison and allowed to go to Miami to join his fellow right-wing Cubans? Why was he charged merely with violating immigration laws instead of with terrorism under the Patriot Act? Why isn't he sent to Cuba or Venezuela (where he then operated for the CIA) and is wanted for mass murder? Because he was "a U.S. terrorist," operating under an international anti-communist death-squad ring organized when Bush, Sr. headed the CIA.

If tried for terrorism he might spill the beans on his handlers during his long history of plotting for U.S. imperialism, including planting bombs in Havana hotels in the 1990's, participation in the murder of Chile's former Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier in Washington after the 1973 fascist Chilean coup, and more.

Next time U.S. bosses preach about the "fight against terror," we know they mean the fight FOR terror.

ing class in Iraq/Afghanistan and future imperialist wars of aggression throughout the Middle East in accordance with the Carter doctrine.

His statement supports the military being used on "home soil" in the tradition of the military force against the Bonus Army in the 1930's, the riot control used in the anti-racist urban rebellions in the 1960's and the use of the military to squelch the uprisings in Los Angeles and Cincinnati in the aftermath of police shootings and brutality.

We should not be surprised by Wilder's embrace of fascism. During Labor Day's Greekfest in 1989 in Virginia Beach, police rioted against black students on the holiday, beating and arresting over 500 students. Students at Howard University were organizing a protest when emissaries from the NAACP (who were engaged in Wilder's election team) disrupted the planning meeting, demanded that no action be taken against the police brutality to avoid tarnishing Wilder's electoral chances. (The students threw out the NAACP disrupters, and went on to stage demonstrations during the trials of their fellow students).

Millions of black workers put their faith in politicians such as Wilder to fight for their interests from within the system to fight racism. This example demonstrates that no politician can be trusted to fight for the interest of the working class against their imperialist bosses. Smash the politicians and the bosses' system. The solution is communist revolution! We have a world of workers to win, and exposing misleaders like Wilder can help do this

Virginia Red

U.S. Gov't Killers at Home and Abroad

A Southwestern newspaper recently had two articles that together exposed the disregard the U.S. ruling class has for working-class soldiers. One article was about the use of commercial airlines to transport the bodies of dead soldiers home from Iraq and Afghanistan, rather than private military jets and a military honor guard. The other article was on the

tremendous increase in cases of childhood (and now, adult) leukemia in a small rural town, Sierra Vista, Arizona. Air force jets fly practice runs over the town and shower the town below with fuel exhaust.

The commercial airline scandal only came to light because the father of one dead soldier, himself a military careerist, objected to his son's being shipped home in that humiliating way. The cluster of leukemia cases in Sierra Vista has been known about in the area for almost a decade. But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta has investigated but refuses to acknowledge that the number of cases per population size is different from that of any other place. One father had been battling the CDC's lying cover-up for years until he was diagnosed and shortly thereafter died. His two daughters have leukemia also. He was known to call the CDC: the Cluster Denial Coalition.

How much longer will it take us to realize who our real enemies are? Not the Iraqi people, who the U.S. government and military orders to kill in the hundreds of thousands. The U.S. claims they are protecting us from terrorism at home. They don't even care to cover their tracks when they use U.S. soldiers to fight their wars and treat them like garbage when they are no use to them anymore.

All terrorists are the enemy of the working class in the U.S. and all over the world, but who are the biggest terrorists? Those murderers who set off bombs in crowded market places and kill tens of innocent people, or those bosses and politicians who send hundreds of thousands of working-class soldiers to murder hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis, thereby creating massive terrorism all in the name of fighting terrorism?

Southwestern Red

French Elections: No 'Left' or Right; Only Wrong for Workers

Conservative Nicolas Sarkozy and "Socialist" Ségolène Royal won the first round of France's presidential elections on April 22, eliminating centrist François Bayrou, and fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen. A run-off vote on May 6 will choose between Sarkozy and Royal — but there's no real choice at all!

Sarkozy uses much more openly fascist language. In 2005, he said kindergarten teachers should turn in three-year-olds who "show signs of delinquent behavior." In the March 2007 issue of "Philosophie Magazine," he said people are genetically programmed to become child molesters or to commit suicide.

Given such Nazi ideas, it would be no surprise if a Sarkozy election led to an alliance with the fascist Front National in 2012 in order to remain in power permanently. ("Le Canard enchaîné," 4/11)

But all the French media view the political scene here as moving to the right (as if political ideas dropped from the sky!). All the major candidates — both those still in the running and those who've been eliminated — spout the same proto-fascist ideas. Capitalist elections offer no real choice to the working class. This becomes obvious in examining "obligatory civic service."

As noted previously (CHALLENGE, 4/25), French bosses need a fascist ideology, both to motivate people to make sacrifices in a war and to reintroduce the draft. France began switching to a professional all-volunteer army in 1997. The draft was suspended (not abolished) in January 2001. Many people see obligatory civic service the first step in renewing the draft (as U.S. liberal rulers view "national service").

Front-runner Sarkozy makes the link to military service the clearest. In "Le Monde" (3/4/07), he proposes six-month obligatory civic service as an operational reserve to ease the strain on the French army, already heavily committed abroad. Sarkozy wants a civil defense agency to stimulate the "defensive" (i.e., military) spirit in French society. This agency would not only fight natural or technological catastrophes, but also "terrorism." Sarkozy wants to enable young men and women aged 18 to 30 (!) to choose military service instead of civil defense service. ("Libération," 3/1/07)

"Socialist" presidential candidate Ségolène Royal has been most weasel-like on this issue. Her party's program includes obligatory civic service for all young men and women. But high school and university student union leaders told Royal that youth felt making the service obligatory destroyed the service's "idealistic content," saying young people are extremely wary of re-establishing obligatory conscription.

So she announced a provision for a six-month voluntary service, with 350,000 youth going through the program every six months. This reverses her May, 2006 speech when Royal (daughter of a career officer) said she regretted the abolition of the draft, adding that "at the first sign of juvenile delinquency," young people should be incorporated in "a system that has a military di-

mension and which will take them in charge."

But former minister Bernard Kouchner's February report sneaks obligatory civic service back into Royal's program, eventually involving 500,000 youth annually, two-thirds of the young people born in a given year. The two losing candidates were no better.

Centrist François Bayrou developed the idea of national renewal most. He said, "Young people really need to get out of their ghettos, whether [those]...of poor youths or rich kids. They need to meet young people from other social classes...to get away from a society...wholly focused on consumption, and to give something of themselves to the community."

This condemnation of the rotten morality of the bourgeoisie, of middle-class consumerism and egotism, echoes fascist ideology. It says rich kids in their gilded "ghettos" suffer as much as working-class youth in rat-infested slums, that the rich and the poor "have something in common."

Bayrou's program stressed police work: "The gift of themselves is needed in public transport security in the big cities, watching for forest fires in the heat of the summer, helping the elderly and the handicapped, and helping and protecting fragile people in train stations and airports." Also, Bayrou wanted to require immigrants do civic service before applying for French citizenship.

Only openly fascist candidate Le Pen rejected obligatory civic service, calling it an "economic, social and military aberration" that would reinstate unpaid "corvée" labor (as serfs had to perform for feudal lords).

Le Pen wanted to attract young voters, but his main goal was racist ethnic cleansing of the military. He said conscription wouldn't furnish the military with "quality human material." He proposed voluntary six-month military service and increased military pay to attract more white youth and reduce the proportion of the army's Muslim-origin youth.

Inspired by fascist conspiracy theories, he also played to militarists by denouncing both "socialist" president Francois Mitterrand and conservative Chirac for crippling the French military. He wanted to increase the military budget and the number of soldiers and upgrade their weapons. Le Pen also proposed a racist cradle-to-grave government assistance policy that excluded immigrants until the needs of all "native French people" are met. That means permanent exclusion of immigrants.

French bosses, seeing war on the horizon, are taking measured steps towards building fascist ideology and reintroducing the draft. Both Sarkozy and Royal want some form of obligatory civic service. Communists must denounce this preparation for war and fascism both inside and outside the civic service program, and organize real working-class solidarity to prepare the way for a communist revolution that will destroy capitalism, the real source of workers' and youths' misery. ☺

'Unity Walk' Fights Racism, Nationalism

continued from page 3

suaded some teachers from calling for more Latino administrators and security guards. While a School Board member applauded the call for unity, she only wants students, teachers and parents to back up the bosses' School Board. We need the unity of students, parents and teachers AGAINST the bosses' racist plans!

Afterwards, teachers and students discussed an Op-Ed piece in the L.A. Times that said that of 236 homicides last year in the "highest murder districts" in L.A., only 22 crossed racial lines. It's terrible that so many youth die at the hands of other youth due to the bosses' gang culture. However, the fact that so few were between different groups shows that the "race war" the media is claiming is a myth.

The Unity Walk shows that this struggle is producing results. The PLP May Day contingent at the immigrants' rights march will be an important step forward in calling on the youth and workers of the world to unite as one class to destroy the bosses and their capitalist system of racism, exploitation and war with communist revolution. Let the bosses tremble at the specter of a united working class with communist ideas. The working class has a world to win!



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

Dublin writer looks to Marx

...Do you plan to go on book tour in the U.S.? No. As I get older, I find my visits to the States get shorter because I can't take the general culture very much. I know I am back in the States because at the hotel breakfast they are all talking about money....

...Where do you advise us to look for fulfillment? There's a famous phrase from Karl Marx, in which he says that he wants a society in which the full development of each is the condition of the full development of all. What would it be like to find our fulfillment through each other rather than against each other? (Terry Eagleton, NYT, 4/22)

TV + movies demonize Islamics

Government at every level has stimulated the paranoia....

The entertainment industry has also jumped into the act. Hence the TV serials and films in which the evil characters have recognizable Arab features, sometimes highlighted by religious gestures, which exploit public anxiety and stimulate Islamophobia. Arab facial stereotypes, particularly in newspaper cartoons, have at times been rendered in a manner sadly reminiscent of the Nazi anti-Semitic campaigns. (Z. Brzezinski, LAT, 3/24)

GIs: Deaths are tip of iceberg

...Hundreds of thousands...— at least 30% of the troops who have engaged in active combat for four

months or longer in Iraq and Afghanistan — are at risk of potentially disabling neurological disorders from the blast waves of IEDs and mortars, all without suffering a scratch....

...Sudden and extreme differences in pressures — routinely 1,000 times greater than atmospheric pressure — lead to significant neurological injury. Blast waves....can leave a 19-year-old private who could easily run a six-minute mile unable to stand or even to think....

"Someone should have told us that with these closed-head injuries, things would not really get all that much better.

The Iraq conflict is not a war of death for US troops nearly so much as it is a war of disabilities. The symbol of this battle is not the cemetery but the orthopaedic ward and the neurosurgical unit. The...medical profession and the US are left to play a terrible game of catch-up. (GW, 4/26)

It's more than Imus, Muslims say

To the Editor:

...Muslim Americans are chagrined by the dubious and selective moral fervor demonstrated by the detractors of Don Imus's sexist-racist comments.... When Ann Coulter, speaking about Muslims, opined after 9/11 that America should "invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity," the silence was deaf-



ening.

Ms. Coulter is not alone. Certain...commentators use gutter language with complete impunity in their TV and radio programs or newspaper columns to denounce Muslims Americans for the crime of being Muslims. (NYT, 4/17)

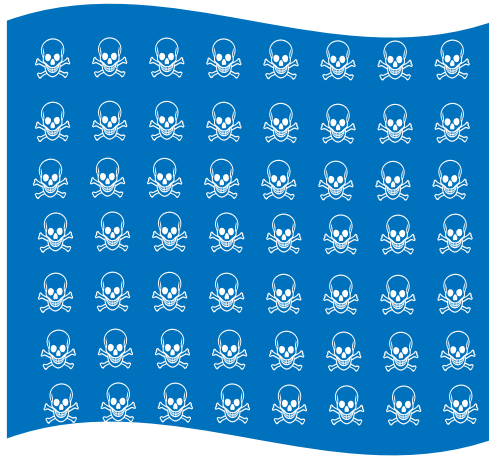
Africans go sour on 'democracies'

Analysts said the Nigerian vote was the starkest example of a worrying trend — even as African countries hold more elections, many of their citizens are steadily losing confidence in their democracies....

Satisfaction with democracy dipped to 45 percent from 58 percent in 2001....in Nigeria according to the Afrobarometer survey....

By 2005 that number had plummeted to 25 percent.... Almost 70 percent of Nigerians did not believe elections would allow them to remove objectionable leaders.... (NYT, 4/23)

THE BLOODY FLAG OF U.S. IMPERIALISM



U.S. atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki kill 250,000 instantly

Two centuries of slavery in U.S. kills and brutalizes millions of black Africans

U.S. genocide against Native Americans wipes out 500,000

Two Million Koreans Killed 1950-1953

Invasion of Vietnam kills 3,000,000 workers and peasants

Abandons over 100,000 New Orleans black residents to Katrina horror

1945 fire-bombing of Tokyo kills 100,000 civilians

Genocide against Native Americans wipes out 500,000

CIA Created Mass Murderers Saddam Hussein, Bin Laden, Pinochet, Trujillo

In two Gulf Wars, U.S. kills 1.75 million Iraqis

US-Trained Death Squads Killed Hundreds of Thousands In Central America

Ford and GM produce for Hitler's war machine during World War II

The U.S. bosses hope immigrant workers will buy into nationalism by waving the American flag on May 1st and proclaiming that they are "part of America". However, no worker has a stake in the capitalist system that the U.S. and its bloody flag represents.

The American flag has flown over Iraq and countless other countries throughout the world, where millions have died because of imperialism. It is the same flag worn by

the racist immigration gestapo and police who terrorize workers every day. It is a flag that represents a country built on slavery and the genocide of indigenous peoples. Like any other nationalist flag, it represents the bosses' attempt to win workers to siding with the rich, instead of their working-class brothers and sisters in other countries.

Women-led General Strike Helped Spark Russian Revolution



This year marks the 90th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution which liberated one-sixth of the world's surface from the yoke of capitalism. The revolution began on Feb. 23 (on the old Russian calendar, now March 8) on International Women's Day. Thousands of women, wives of soldiers at the front in World War I and workers, took to the streets, ignoring the pleas of union leaders to "remain calm."

As one worker at Petrograd's Nobel machine plant recalled: "We could hear the voices of women in the streets from the windows in our department: 'Down with hunger and scarcity! Bread for workers!' Several comrades and I ran to the windows...The gates of mill No. 1 at the Bolshaia Sampsonievskaja had been opened. Masses of women workers in a militant formation filled the streets. Those who saw us began to move their arms and yell 'come down! Stop working!' They threw snowballs at the windows. We decided to join the march."

The next day, 200,000 workers struck in Petrograd (later named Leningrad, now "St. Petersburg"). On Feb. 25, armies of marchers fought the troops. The revolu-

tion had begun. Feb. 27 was climactic when entire regiments of the Petrograd military garrison deserted and joined the insurgency. A few days later, Tsar Nicholas II, "the butcher," abdicated the throne.

Russia was free from the Tsar but not from capitalism. The bourgeoisie had plans to remain in power. But the workers and soldiers, led by the Bolsheviks, had other plans. While the opportunist Menshevik and Social-Revolutionary parties emphasized calling for "peace" instead of ending the war, confusing workers and soldiers, the Bolsheviks, particularly after Lenin's April return from exile, were firm in their call to turn the imperialist war into a revolution against the capitalist rulers. The revolutionary process accelerated. In October, workers and soldiers stormed the Winter Palace and overthrew Kerensky (who had replaced the Tsar as the leader of Russian capitalism).

The women-led general strike that initiated the process was not an easy one. When WWI began in 1914, patriotism reigned over workers and soldiers. But as it dragged on and Russia was losing, the Bolsheviks' firm politics opposing the imperialist war and Russia's own ruling class gained ground among the masses.

By February 1917, strikes had spread. Many women had joined the working class, replacing men sent to the battlefield. By then, 47% of Petrograd's workers were women. They were a majority in textile, leather, rubber and many other jobs which in the past had been limited to men: including streetcar drivers, printing and metal industries; 20,000 were women.

Before heading for work, many had to wait in long lines to buy bread and other food for their children. Sometimes they had to camp overnight in the cold Russian winter, learning then to "curse god and the Tsar, but curse the Tsar much more." The lack of bread made them doubt the government's politics. As a police report said: "They are an inflammable material just waiting for a match."

The double exploitation suffered by these women made them see the limitations of economic demands and they began to think more in political terms. ☪

The Racist Rip-off of Subprime Loans

Lately the bosses' press has had lots of whining about the bankruptcy of mortgage companies specializing in "subprime" home loans, but a big aspect of the story is the racist rip-off of workers buying homes. Subprime loans are supposed to be designed for borrowers with low credit scores, and carry a much higher interest rate — as much as 3% — than conventional loans, and cost tens of thousands of dollars more over the life of the loan. Although smaller lenders specializing in these loans are now going under, the biggest banks also peddle them, and particularly target black and Latin workers.

A recent study by Chicago's Woodstock Institute showed that the seven biggest lenders — Citigroup, Countrywide, GMAC, HSBC, JP Morgan Chase, Washington Mutual and Wells Fargo — made subprime loans to black and Latin borrowers at much higher rates than to whites, even when their credit scores would have qualified them for lower-cost loans. The study, covering six large urban areas, showed that black borrowers were 3.8 times as likely to receive a high-cost loan than whites, and Latin borrowers were 3.6 times as likely.

Racist differentials were largest in New York City, where black borrowers were 12 times as likely to get high-cost loans than whites, and Latin borrowers were eight times as likely. Washington Mutual has separate divisions to handle subprime loans, and 76% of their loans to blacks and 65% to Latins were in the subprime division, while 80% of their loans to whites were in the low-cost loan division.

Whatever their origins, many subprime borrowers get ripped off by variable interest rates, which make the payments skyrocket when interest rates rise. Now that housing prices have fallen in many areas, many subprime borrowers can't refinance into a better loan, so they lose their homes and a lot of money, too.

This is the way capitalism always works: all workers are exploited but some groups (in the U.S., black and Latino workers) are targeted for especially intense exploitation. Another racist aspect of the subprime crisis is that immigrant workers, the last to be hired in the housing construction industry and other related industries, are also the first to be fired. (Wall Street Journal, 4/23) This also creates economic problems in Mexico and Central America. Remittances to Mexico are already down \$600 million.

Communism is the only way for workers to get out from under this racist system. ☪