

WORKSHOPTALKS

The allies SEIU picks

by Htun Lin

In 1997, SEIU, under the direction of John Sweeney and Andy Stern, engineered a partnership with management where I work at Kaiser. That deal undercut the ongoing strike actions by health workers, led by nurses. We wanted a say not only about the day-to-day quality of our work, but also the fundamental meaning of our work, the meaning of healthcare. Instead we were ordered to join the effort to cut costs to enhance the company's bottom line.

Now SEIU has partnered with not only nursing home owners, but also Gov. Schwarzenegger's effort to undermine a genuine universal healthcare plan by manufacturing a fake one written by HMO executives.

Recently Sal Rosselli, our longtime leader in SEIU Local 250 (now called Health Care Workers West), was expressing second thoughts about his boss, SEIU's International President Andy Stern. Stern plans to trade away workers' and patients' interests for a nod by bosses at HMOs and nursing homes to grant him the sole right to conduct membership drives in their shops. On Feb. 9, Rosselli sent a long letter to Stern, detailing Stern's "undemocratic practices" and resigning from the SEIU Executive Committee.

Rosselli now has qualms about Stern's plans to endorse Schwarzenegger's anti-worker healthcare plan, but his approach is still top down, as it was ten years ago, when Rosselli sided with the Labor Management Partnership at Kaiser, without consulting workers on strike fighting the alienation in their work. That action is what brought him to his conflicted state today.

SMALL UNIVERSE

When Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama sparred over healthcare in their debate in Los Angeles, Clinton

Continued on page 3

BLACK/REDVIEW

Obama and Civil Rights?

by John Alan

Barack Obama has generated a lot of excitement over the possibility that racist U.S. capitalist society may elect its first Black president. He has appeal even among conservatives who say this will finally get us past the race question. Some on the Left are calling his campaign an extension of the Civil Rights Movement.

Obama brings a youthful vigor to the campaign and is an articulate orator who speaks as a voice of change and unity for the whole nation. However, what can he do as President but represent the capitalist state and its interests? Aside from this vague notion of unity, his policy proposals, as in healthcare, are not even as good as Hillary Clinton's in achieving universal coverage. Indeed, until recently Clinton had more support in the Black community than Obama.

KING V. LBJ

Then Clinton speculated about the role of politics in the Civil Rights Movement during the South Carolina primary. "Dr. King's dream," she said, "began to be realized when President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964...the power of that dream became real in peoples' lives because we had a president who said we are going to do it, and actually got it accomplished." A debate ensued over what was more important: Dr. King's speeches or LBJ's political skills.

Both points of view missed the perspective of Black masses. Middle-class Black leaders did try to narrow the Civil Rights Movement into the limited goal of gaining political power within capitalism. A few days after many of these leaders lined up behind President Johnson as he signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Watts/Los Angeles exploded in a six-day revolt. As I put it in *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles (DBFS)*, "Watts was declaring: Here is the real reason for our movement and once again the government, as after the

Continued on page 6

Recession haunts election

By Ron Brokmeyer and Htun Lin

While the U.S.'s unending war in Iraq continues, and U.S. soldiers and Iraqis continue to pay with their lives, a new specter looms over capitalism. With fallout from the subprime mortgage crisis, suddenly the economy overshadowed the war as an issue in the 2008 presidential election.

By Feb. 5, news came that, along with continued hemorrhaging of manufacturing jobs, service sector employment dropped sharply in January. Then most economists acknowledged a recession had already begun.

In spite of deep discontent with the war, expressed in the turnover of the Congress to the Democrats in the 2006 election, Bush continued to get Congress to support funding for the war. Aside from the huge supplemental war budget, the Pentagon budget of \$515 billion will bring military spending in real dollar terms to a level not seen since World War II.

President Bush's final budget deficit of over \$400 billion is actually over \$700 billion with \$300 billion of the Social Security surplus being used to finance the bloated military budget. The legacy of Bush's militarized "ownership society" is that workers own only a ballooning national debt.

As gloom spread about the economic future, the President and Congress rushed together a \$168 billion stimulus package of tax rebate checks and business investment tax cuts. For economists and politicians who pushed through this stimulus package, workers are pawns in the crisis, to be thrown a few more dollars to give consumption a temporary boost.

LABOR CREATES VALUE; BUBBLES DON'T

Workers have a different perspective on capitalism and the cost of the war, especially as they experience continuing fallout from the subprime mortgage bombshell. Years of deregulation of the banking industry unleashed a speculative bubble, the collapse of which now threatens to take down the world economy. This follows the dot-com collapse and industry accounting scandals in which paper profits puffed up stock prices.

Each burst bubble brings home the truth that where no value is created by labor in production, none can be conjured up through speculation. Moreover, the end of the housing bubble, which had propped up the economy during these other crises, has much deeper implica-

tions.

Monumental losses at financial giants like Merrill Lynch and Citigroup grew out of aggressive marketing of money to ordinary workers. They were encouraged

to turn their homes into ATMs by borrowing against equity, or to buy new property at low introductory rates. The banks that made the loans took their commissions, then repackaged them as high-yield mortgage-backed securities.

Everything came apart when housing prices started to retreat. Many workers have lost their homes and their life savings in this debacle, and many more will do so in the coming year. Over 250,000 families lost their homes to foreclosures in 2007 in California alone.

The economists who blame the crisis on "over-zealous and irresponsible" consumers are the same economists who pushed overextended consumerism as a national policy. After September 11 Bush had set the tone, telling workers that it was patriotic to go shopping.

Bush pumped up the U.S. economy with huge tax cuts, adding to the national debt. The fruits of economic gains were steered to wealthy investors, not toward expanding consumption by workers. To get out of previous crises through expanding consumption, the managers of the national economy at the Federal Reserve Bank laid the ground for this crisis with low interest rates that encouraged the cycle of predatory lending, and repackaging mortgages as securities in the global capital markets.

Once rated as safe, these mortgage-backed securities have now lost most of their value and have undermined the global capital markets. Lost was any confidence that financial securities of any kind have any value behind them.

The Fed kept cutting interest rates to no avail—then in the early morning before the stock market opened in the U.S. on Jan. 22 it made a dramatic unscheduled move: reducing interest rates by three quarters of a percent.

The Fed was responding to falling global stock markets when U.S. markets were closed for a holiday. Gone was the illusion that fast-growing economies like

Continued on page 3



Delphi workers protest concessions

Monthly Review Zine

Bali 'road map' risks climate future

For two weeks in December, governments of the world met in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, negotiating a "road map" toward a new treaty to succeed the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which expires in 2012. The Bush administration sabotaged the deal, squelching quantitative limits for greenhouse gas emissions. Embodying the spirit of capitalism, Bush showed himself ready to sacrifice the future of humanity for the short-term interests of the oil and coal industries.

The conference came on the heels of the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Even this conservative body of scientists concluded that reductions in greenhouse gases have to start immediately to avert a global climate disaster. From Kenya, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai issued a statement: "For the global South, especially Africa, environmental issues are not a luxury...Arresting the world's warming and protecting and restoring our natural systems are issues of life and death for much of the world's population."

U.S. obstruction in the face of these warnings earned a chorus of boos, unheard of from a diplomatic gathering. Kevin Conrad of the small country Papua New Guinea was cheered when he called on the U.S. to "get out of the way."

The rift is not just political but economic. In competition between the U.S. and developing countries—above all China and India—each points fingers at the other while expanding consumption of fossil fuels and emissions of greenhouse gases. Europe expects to profit from trading of carbon emission credits and from developing more energy-efficient technologies, so its current rift with the U.S. was expressed most sharply at Bali.

But the real challenge to capital's reckless rush toward climate disaster came from below. On Dec. 8, over 150,000 people rallied in 84 countries—including

thousands in Bali—for the third annual Global Day of Action Against Climate Change. A few days earlier, a "Bali Call" was released by a group of activists from every continent, appealing to governments to create a parallel set of negotiations for a "Global Economic and Energy Transition" toward "socially just and ecologically sound economies."

Later, a week-long parallel conference organized by the Indonesian Civil Society Forum drew hundreds of participants—including environmental refugees from Pacific Islands, indigenous peoples endangered by schemes linking forests to carbon credit trading, and farmers. They raised the banner of "climate justice," bringing environmental justice to bear on climate change, for all the world to see.

The official conference's direction was the opposite: everything was tied to market solutions, above all the growing market in carbon credits—that is, a business that wants to exceed its allowed amount of greenhouse gas emissions can buy credits from another business that does not expect to use up its allowance. Added to this is the so-called "Clean Development Mechanism" (CDM), under which businesses and other entities can earn credits by funding emissions-reducing projects in developing countries.

The campaign to slow down deforestation was brought under this umbrella, likely leading to

Continued on page 3

ON THE INSIDE

'WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA'

• To Fromm on the Dialectic p. 4

ESSAY • On 'Philosophic Moment' p. 5

EDITORIAL • Genocide in Congo p. 6

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Congo: women's obliteration

by Terry Moon

What is happening to women in Congo has been expressed as "beyond description," but it must be described as it reveals that the new stage of brutal rape in Bosnia, 1992-1995, rather than the height of women's dehumanization, was but a step in its deepening. In 1993, in *News & Letters*, Mary Holmes wrote: "There is no question that the systematic, organized mass rape of primarily Muslim women in Bosnia is a calculated act of the Serbian government's genocidal policy of 'ethnic cleansing.'" What was new was "the specificity of mass rape in the case of Bosnia where it is being used under Serbian government authorization not only to drive Bosnians from the land, but to eradicate their very existence."

Now, in Congo—where 5.4 million have died since 1996, 50% of them five years old or under, and 45,000 people are still dying every month—rape has become so brutal that not only are women's reproductive organs destroyed, but so are their digestive tracts. Some, lucky enough to find medical care, undergo six operations to repair their injuries; up to 30% of rape victims test positive for HIV/AIDS; and 50% are syphilitic. Doctors Without Borders estimates that one tenth of the population dies each year. They report that "acts of sexual violence accompanying the carnage have been without precedent in their frequency, their systematic nature, their brutality, and the perversity of the way they're planned and staged."

WHERE IS SOLIDARITY?

While *Ms. Magazine* did run articles, and groups like the Feminist Majority are aware of the situation, there is nothing like the mobilization that made the world take notice and protest what was happening to women in Bosnia, which finally led to rape in war being considered a crime against humanity.

The thought and activism that created the new awareness in the 1990s is seen by looking at March 8, 1993, when on International Women's Day (IWD) over 100 women marched through the streets of West Los Angeles in rage at the mass rapes and deaths of mostly Muslim Bosnian women. The demonstration was co-sponsored by The Women's Action Coalition (WAC), the Women's Coalition Against Ethnic Cleansing, members of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women's organizations, as well as independent feminists and peace activists. New York WAC held weekly vigils outside the UN in solidarity with Women in Black Against the War, a group of women in Belgrade, Serbia, demonstrating



Congolese woman fleeing violence

against their own government. Women's groups in New York formed the Ad Hoc Women's Coalition Against War Crimes to provide aid to women in the former Yugoslavia and to demand that rape be prosecuted as a war crime.

Although women have not mounted an effective campaign, the fact is that no group or nation has risen to stop this unprecedented tragedy unfolding in Congo. Perhaps the movement is exhausted fighting the U.S. war in Iraq and the turning of the clock backwards for Iraqi women; perhaps it is not seen as important to the Left because the U.S. government is not an obvious villain. Racism cannot be discounted as so much of the misery in Africa is left to fester, including the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, from which much of the misery in Congo flows.

The silence from Western governments stems from the economics behind the carnage. (See Editorial, page 6.) The "second war" was begun in 1998 as a cover for plundering Congo of diamonds, gold, hardwood, and coltan ore used in electronics. Military commanders, political leaders, the U.S. and other capitalists, and the international mafias combined to plunder Congo and covered their actions by employing armies from all sectors to create chaos and clear the land of human beings.

But this economic reality does not explain the viciousness of the rapes. A Congolese counselor who works with women said: "This (sexual violence) is a whole war within the war—another kind of attack on the Congolese people." Dr. Denis Mukwege, one of two doctors in eastern Congo who perform reconstructive surgeries on raped women, explained how each armed group had its own "trademark manner of violating" women: "The Burundians rape men as well as women. The Mai Mai... rape with branches or bayonets, and mutilate their victims. The Rwandans... set groups of soldiers to rape one woman." A *Chicago Tribune* reporter who conducted interviews with Congolese women wrote that it's "as if a war was being fought against the womb itself."

WOMEN FIGHT BACK

It isn't that women aren't fighting back—they are. In the midst of war, every International Women's Day since 1999, Congolese women's groups have fought against the raping of women and girls. Their leaflet in 2001 read in part: "Women say NO to sexual violence used as a weapon of war... The rape of women and girls, without distinction of age, by armed men in our villages must be punished as a crime against humanity. We have never wished nor planned the war in our country... Why do we have to be the first victims?"

International Women's Day has deep revolutionary roots which we must get back to if we are to join with our courageous Congolese sisters. We must challenge this new stage of brutality and refuse to allow our sisters to suffer crimes that are "beyond description." This year, IWD can be the time to make our voices heard, loud, clear, and demanding: Stop the rape and murder in Congo! End the war against women! Now and forever! Our fight is for new, human, relations in Congo and in the world.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

Government changes in rules for those in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program were announced in February. Welfare recipients going to college can use up to a year of classwork to meet the program's work requirements and will no longer need to have homework supervised. This benefits mothers whose work, study and family schedules make it difficult to find time for supervised homework. While these are positive changes in an oppressive set of rules introduced by Bush in 2006, problems still exist—especially oppressive reporting requirements. The revisions don't go into effect until October.

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In January, 30 nurse practitioners and physician assistants at the University of Michigan sued the university for wage discrimination. The women, who work in the cardiology, oncology and radiology departments, said the university has paid male workers in comparable jobs more over the past three years.

* * *

City officials in Basra, Iraq, announced that 2007 saw 133 women killed and mutilated, their bodies dumped in trash bins with notes warning others against "violating Islamic teachings." However, ambulance drivers hired to collect the bodies say the actual numbers are much higher. Activists from the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), who visited city morgues to determine the scale and pattern of the killings, say most of the murdered women are "professionals, activists and office workers." Their "crime" was opposition to the transformation of Iraq into an Islamist state. Yanar Mohammed, OWFI founder, calls these killings a campaign "to restrain women into the domestic domain and end all female participation in the social and political scene."

—Information from OWFI

'Your best self'

The Institute for the Critical Study of Society in Oakland hosted a meeting on "What is Revolution? A dialogue between California's women prisoners and Marxism." Below are comments from an African-American former prisoner, now a prison advocate and organizer with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners.

Revolution to me is about what you would need to be your best self. The work we would do would be taking care of the whole of society.

In *Critique of the Gotha Program* Marx said, "In a higher phase... can society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his (or her) ability, to each according to his (or her) needs!" That speaks to the type of revolution I have in mind: a world where people are treated as human. Especially when we talk about prisons and the inhumanity that is intrinsic in the prison culture.

I know what it's like to be inside, how human beings treat each other. Inside they want you to doubt you are human. After years and years of this some might come to act in inhuman ways.

In prison everything is arbitrary, one rule applies this day, but not the next. How do you find any balance in a situation like that? These arbitrary abuses take a toll on the guards, too. How can you do this type of work and then come home and be a human being?

That seems impossible. Frantz Fanon talked about this in *Wretched of the Earth*, the sickness works both ways: for those who are inflicting the pain and those who are being oppressed.

Prisons are alienating. Yet some women have the ability to overcome the culture inside, that you don't trust, don't do anything for anybody, just take care of yourself. To be able to overcome that takes courage. To be able to organize, to promote political education, that is basically illegal. You'll get locked up in the Security Housing Unit.

Treating people as human beings is key. Holding onto your principles even in prison, reaching a helping hand to somebody under those circumstances has revolutionary potential.

Once you parole, you face big problems. How are you going to get housed, get a job? People with drug convictions have no access, can't get food stamps, can't get public housing, you certainly don't get any financial aid. Your family may live in public housing, and even if they are willing to take you, you can't go because they will lose that housing. You can't get a job, because you have no job skills. There are too many people in prison for the 3,000 jobs they may have for a population of over 170,000 in California.

A majority of women inside are domestic violence survivors, and have no support. Most likely you have severe medical problems if you've been there long, because there is no medical care inside. And we're talking about the part of the society that holds the highest burden of illness in general. You are trapped, tracked to go back.

I was able to not stay on that track because I was still connected to my family. And it still took a long time. The laws and rules put in place for parolees are not there to give people a chance to get back into society. People do change their lives, but it takes a strong individual to come out and deal with this.

Recently, I had a long discussion about Marx taking the side of the North in the Civil War in the U.S. Marx stood against anyone being enslaved and had a much more inclusive idea of freedom than I thought. We can look at that Marx as a launching pad: that's Marx, now we have to build on the struggles, for example the struggles to access healthcare in prison. The medical advocacy letters all of us write after every visit are frustrating, because you have to write letters for three years for somebody to get a tooth filled.

The self-clarification Marx talked about is what do you stand for, not just what you're against. That's what we need to talk about, what do we stand for and how does that relate to the revolution. What are we doing about what we stand for?

—shawna d.

Give yourself the gift of women's history for
International Women's Day

Abortion is pro-life

How do you get Memphians out of their homes on a freezing evening? Talk about abortion and religion. About 75 people gathered at the Memphis Media Co-Op on Jan. 24 to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. The Memphis Center for Reproductive Health hosted a screening of the documentary *Sacred Choices and Abortion: Ten New Things to Think About*. Following the film, the audience participated in a panel discussion with local faith leaders and activists.

The 57-minute documentary is based on Dr. Daniel Maguire's book *Sacred Choices* and reframes the debate over reproductive rights. Scholars from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions, as well as women and girls whose lives have been forever changed by abortion, are featured in the film.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about the history of various religions, and a 'big lie' out there that all world religions are opposed to a woman's right to choose abortion and that they have just one stance that has never changed," said Jennifer Marshall, community outreach coordinator for the Memphis Center for Reproductive Health. "This film shows that that's not always true."

Interviewing religious leaders, clergy, theologians, and women dealing with unplanned pregnancies, the film presents the conclusion that choosing abortion is a sacred choice; a pro-life choice. Panelist Reverend Casey Thompson, associate pastor of congregational life at Idlewild Presbyterian Church and board member of Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region, stated, "I think the film illustrates what happens when we give priority to being right over our priority to love other people, and the dangers of being too absolutely certain in what we believe. God's thoughts are not our thoughts."

"The more conservative faiths have no problem speaking out from their pulpits against [abortion], and yet I think the biggest challenge facing those who are pro-choice and clergy is to become more comfortable speaking out from the pulpit about abortion and pregnancy," said panelist Reverend Marise Tuttle from Prescott Memorial Baptist Church.

Panelist Betsy Mandel-Carley, who testified during the original trials in Texas that led to the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, said, "In the years since I testified, two things stay absolutely clear. I have not worked with a woman ever who took a problem pregnancy lightly, and ... abortions have always existed and will always exist."

—Memphis Center for Reproductive Health activists

Fears of global recession haunt U.S. election

Continued from page 1

China and India can now be uncoupled from U.S. problems and continue to be engines of global growth. The Fed's only option if it wanted to avoid a depression-style collapse of the world banking system was to flood the system with cheap money.

'END OF AN ERA BASED ON THE DOLLAR'

However, this intervention from the Fed is no solution to an even deeper structural crisis in the global economy which, according to George Soros, "marks the end of an era of credit expansion based on the dollar as the international reserve currency" (Bloomberg, Jan. 24, 2008). Some of the consequences of the U.S. becoming a debtor nation in the 1980s are only now coming home to roost. Ever since, the long-term trend has been a persistent and growing trade imbalance, financed through borrowed money. Even before the Fed's action the U.S. dollar had plummeted to record lows against the world's other currencies.

Super-exploitative Chinese manufacturing had been counted on to keep inflationary pressures in check. Now manufacturers have to pass on large increases in costs for raw materials. Lower interest rates will only push the dollar down further and ignite more global inflation. Thus the dollar's role as the international reserve currency is untenable.

This has called into question the symbiotic relation the U.S. has with China. China's state capitalists have been financing U.S. consumption by buying U.S. treasuries with their mountain of dollars gained through the trade imbalance fueled by China's super-exploited workers. With the declining dollar and low interest rates, these U.S. treasuries can actually have a negative yield.

Other Asian and Middle Eastern states have invested huge sums in U.S. financial firms now threatened with bankruptcy. U.S. capitalists fear the price these state-capitalist entities might extract will not be just financial but political control. These inter-capitalist tensions may spark an even deeper crisis or a brokered restructuring that will come down hard on workers all over the world.

REVOLT IN WORLD'S WORKSHOP

Chinese capitalists got wealthy with backing from an authoritarian state whose economic policies keep uprooting the country's seemingly inexhaustible rural population, adding them to the world's surplus labor pool. This has also been met with unprecedented and persistent labor disturbances among Chinese workers,

WORKSHOPTALKS

Continued from page 1

repeated her intention to make healthcare universal for all. But her plan is not that much different from the kind of insurance industry written "universal healthcare" pushed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in California.

That legislation was meant to force individuals to buy health insurance or else—even if it busts your family's budget. One could be punished for not having health insurance, much the way California punishes drivers who fail to have auto insurance.

Obama, on the other hand, stressed that universal health insurance won't make a difference if people can't afford to buy it. He says affordability is the issue. So his solution is to "make healthcare more affordable by lowering cost." Tell that to my co-workers at the HMO.

We've undergone over ten years of cost-cutting measures imposed by the company, which brought us deep cuts in care-provider staffing and other healthcare resources. Patients' access to care was undermined by the introduction of huge co-pays.

LOWERING CARE

Cost-cutting measures only made things worse for us workers with speed-up and chronically short-changed patients because of inadequate care. The net effect, however, boosts the company's bottom line. In my shop today, what used to be unacceptable standard care when I was first hired two decades ago has become business as usual.

One worker recently became ill and had to use aliases and false addresses in order to get emergency care. He said that the healthcare industry has become the bane in our lives.

The number one cause of destruction and ruin in our personal lives and finances is the healthcare system. Long before the subprime mortgage debacle caused so many individuals to lose their homes, illness in the family would swallow up many people's life savings.

Even when bureaucrats like Rosselli and Stern, and politicians running for high office, are in opposition to the status quo and "for" the workers, what they fail to see is that we workers are not only against what is. They don't engage our efforts on the shop floor to work out what we are for, a new kind of non-alienating labor.

Karl Marx said the ultimate problem, which needs to be confronted in a protracted battle until its destruction, is the individual's enslavement to the division between mental and manual labor. Politicians and labor bureaucrats like Rosselli keep thinking the answer is a new faction. New factions keep emerging as long as the focus of attention is away from the workers' struggle to overcome alienation in production.

especially migratory workers. China became the world's Dickensian authoritarian workhouse, sucking production away not only from the U.S. but from the rest of the world's poor countries.

Pervasive new labor disturbances by Chinese workers put flesh on Marx's idea that the reserve army of the unemployed is the gravedigger of capitalism. (For ongoing news on labor actions in China, especially in workers' own words, see *China Labour Bulletin* at www.clb.org.hk.)

The ongoing reports coming out of China's mines and factories recall Raya Dunayevskaya's view of the world economy of 1986: "What all the bourgeois economists choose to disregard about this stage of robotized production is that unpaid, surplus labor—i.e., profit—comes, and can only come, from the living sweated laborer. The economy's dependence on alienated, sweated, and exploited labor does not stop short of even death and mutilation" (*News & Letters*, Oct. 1986, p. 5).

Today's reserve army of the unemployed is also global and fluid, including all those workers now losing their jobs in the U.S. For half the world's population, nearly three billion people who live on less than two dollars a day, being part of that reserve army means near total deprivation.

The world's poor are especially hard hit by capital's expansionary requirements. Capital's voracious appetite for energy is consuming the world's food supply because of the high price of oil. Even in the U.S. this may signal the end of relatively inexpensive food. Subsidized U.S. ethanol production uses up a third of the country's corn crop.

Vegetable oils that can be used for bio-diesel fuel are being priced out of the reach of the world's poor. The price of palm oil, a staple in the diet of many of the world's poor, rose 70% in a year. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization reports that food riots recently broke out in Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Uzbekistan and Yemen. In Haiti a 50% rise in price of food staples like rice and beans in the last year has left many resorting to "mud cookies" made of dirt, salt and vegetable shortening as a regular meal.

ELECTION OFFERS NO ALTERNATIVE

The candidates in this election don't challenge this anti-humanism and militarism. All embrace globalization—the free trade agreements that enshrine the principle of the free movement of things, commodities and capital. These agreements force poor peasants off the land into sweatshops or migrating for work across borders. In all cases they have few or no rights as workers. Capital flows to places where there is the least restraint on its unsustainable devouring of human beings and nature.

In the U.S. the social safety net has disappeared, resulting in colossal human disasters of neglect of whole cities like New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The 47 million Americans who lack health insurance are one serious illness away from financial ruin. Healthcare proposals coming from Democrats would put a major burden of payment for health insurance on the working poor, while leaving insurance companies

Strike for care

Editor's note: In mid-December California nurses went out on a two-day strike for the second time against Sutter Health. For coverage of the first strike, see December 2007-January 2008 N&L.

OAKLAND, CALIF.—Sutter Health does want to take away our pension and healthcare options. But that is not the only take-away important to us. Ever since they bought up independent stand-alone facilities, they want to close St. Luke's in San Francisco, which is a hospital in a poor neighborhood, and to close a hospital in Santa Rosa. They are proposing to downgrade the hospital in San Leandro to a rehab center. In Marin County, they are proposing to consolidate facilities into only the wealthy areas.

On nurse-patient ratio, they don't even try to pretend that they follow the law mandating that the ratio be 5 to 1—no more than five patients per nurse. That means 5 to 1 at all times. But when you need a break and there is no relief nurse, the one covering for you has a 10 to 1 ratio for the duration of the break. There are fines mandated for such flagrant lawbreaking, but there is no enforcement. They are not held accountable.

There is a new kind of doctor employed by the hospital, a "hospitalist." Those are doctors working as hospital administrators. They have a financial link with the hospital: the quicker patients get out, the better their numbers look. Patients dismissed too early come right back, sicker than they were before.

Their negotiations are not about the money they claim it would cost to give us reasonable pension and healthcare options. They spend more than all of that money on hiring scabs, flying them in, putting them up in hotels, buying them food, etc. It is more about their power to do to us what they want, than it is about money.

—Striking nurse

and pharmaceutical companies free to deepen the crisis of diminishing quality care.

On the housing crisis, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton is proposing a temporary freeze on interest rates and 1930s-style government programs to aid borrowers. Barack Obama, who has gained tremendous popularity as the "change" candidate, proposes even less. The same is true of McCain, the most pro-war candidate, who came from political death to become the Republicans' presumed nominee, once the focus turned away from Bush's war. Huckabee has been able to milk the economic crisis along with his unapologetic demonizing of gay folk.

Once candidates accept the needs of capital for expansion instead of beginning from workers' struggle against the alienation from their own work, it is impossible to propose anything but a band-aid on a serious if not fatal wound. Bailout programs that renegotiate loans are not for the benefit of workers, but to help the financial industry avoid even greater losses from mass defaults and foreclosures.

As we put it in our Perspectives, "the expansionary requirements of capitalist value production [have] eliminated the economic basis of progressive liberalism" on issues like universal healthcare. It is time to engage the new revolts against capitalism with the fullness of Marx's concept of freely associated relations between the world's producers. This is the way to finally challenge capital's logic that puts all life on the planet at risk.

Miners' lives cheap

DETROIT—The Mine Safety and Health Administration has disclosed that over 4,000 mine penalties have not been assessed against hundreds of mining companies since 2000. This revelation underscores the article on miners' deaths in the October-November 2007 *News & Letters*, which noted that criminal negligence by the federal MSHA in its failure to enforce mine safety laws has resulted in needless deaths of miners. This confirms also the collusion between mining companies and the MSHA in avoiding and reducing penalties.

From daily experience, every miner knows of the lack of mine safety enforcement. This disclosure by MSHA gives a glimpse of how pervasive the violations are and the unconscionable degree of negligence of mine safety in the industry. These thousands of violations were "discovered" as a result of a review of a Kentucky mine violation in which a miner had been killed in 2005.

The director of the MSHA, Richard Stickler, said that hundreds more assessments, going as far back as 1996, had not even been issued. This means that violating mine owners have not paid millions of dollars in fines that they owe.

There is no doubt that whatever may be recovered as a result of these revelations, it will be a very small part of the total owed due to the continuing collusion between the mine-friendly MSHA administrators and the mine owners. Most important of all is the continuing threat to the life and health of miners, which will remain as long as this close relationship between mine owners and government exists.

—Andy Phillips

Bali 'road map'

Continued from page 1

takeover of forest lands by private interests and dispossession of forest peoples. This is already happening, as the highly touted biofuels market has greatly increased demand for palm oil, stimulating destruction of forests in Indonesia to make way for palm plantations. The forest clearing contributes more to climate change than the resulting biofuels can make up for.

The "road map" produced at Bali includes an Adaptation Fund to help poorer countries cope with the harm they are just starting to experience. While Oxfam estimated the needed funds at \$50 billion, it is dubious that industrialized nations will contribute even 1% of that amount by 2012—although adaptation work is needed, as residents of New Orleans can attest to. The leading role given to the World Bank in this Fund was met with a demonstration at the conference itself, pointing out the sordid history of its "carbon finance" projects, 80% of whose funds have gone to coal, metal, cement, and gas companies.

What the opposition from below keeps pointing to is the need for "a sustainable and equitable pattern of development," leading to a near carbon-neutral global economy where growth means improvement of human living standards, not capital growth. These environmental justice movements reveal the potential for driving toward fundamental social transformation from a capitalist-imperialist world to a new, human society.

—Franklin Dmitryev



Indonesia's workers fight

Choo Chan Kai / www.infotube.blogspot.com

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

EDITOR'S NOTE

This Nov. 21, 1963, letter to renowned Critical Theorist and psychologist Erich Fromm illustrates Raya Dunayevskaya's preliminary work toward her *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973). It connects the critique of the Enlightenment in the section on "Spirit in Self-Estrangement" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* to that on "Fetishism of Commodities" in Marx's *Capital*. Most of Dunayevskaya's extensive correspondence with Fromm during the years 1959-78 is included in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 9976-10061, and the rest is held by the Erich-Fromm-Archiv in Tübingen, Germany. This excerpt was published in *The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx* (Lexington Books, 2002), edited by Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson. Page references to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are given [in brackets] to the 1931 translation by J.B. Baillie ("PhGB") and to the more recent translation by A.V. Miller ("PhGM"). Footnotes by the author are listed as "RD"; all others are by the editors.

Dear Dr. Fromm:

Two matters of unequal importance prompt this letter. One is purely informational. A paperback edition of my *Marxism and Freedom* will be out early next year with a new chapter ("The Challenge of Mao Zedong"¹) and a new introduction which makes reference to your *Marx's Concept of Man*. In order to make room for the new chapter the publisher has made me sacrifice my translation of Marx's Early Essays.² I therefore refer them to your book... calling attention to the fact that the Moscow translation is marred by footnotes which "interpret" Marx to say the exact opposite of what he is saying, whereas in your work they have both an authentic translation and valuable commentary.

THE SECOND, AND CENTRAL, reason for this correspondence is a sort of an appeal to you for a dialogue on Hegel between us. I believe I once told you that I had for a long time carried on such a written discussion with Herbert Marcuse, especially relating to the "Absolute Idea." With his publication of *Soviet Marxism*,³ this became impossible because, whereas we had never seen eye to eye, until his rationale for Communism the difference in viewpoints only helped the devel-

To Fromm on the Dialectic

opment of ideas, but the gulf widened too much afterward. There are so few—in fact, to be perfectly frank, I know none—Hegelians in this country that are also interested in Marxism that I'm presently very nearly compelled "to talk to myself." Would a Hegelian dialogue interest you?

I should confess at once that I do not have your sympathy for Existentialism, but until Sartre's declaration that he was now a Marxist, our worlds were very far apart. With his *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (the Introduction of which has just been published here under the title, *Search For A Method*) I felt I had to take issue. I enclose my review of it, which is mimeographed for the time being, but I hope to publish it both in English and French.⁴ In any case, it was in the process of my work on this that I reread the section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* which deals with "Spirit in Self-Estrangement—the Discipline of Culture." Not only did I find this a great deal more illuminating than the contemporary works on Sartre, but I suddenly also saw a parallel between this and Marx's "Fetishism of Commodities." With your indulgence, I would like to develop this here, and hope it elicits comments from you...

THE AMAZING HEGELIAN critique of culture relates both to the unusual sight of an intellectual criticizing culture, the culture of the Enlightenment at that; and to the historic period criticized since this form of alienation follows the victory of Reason over self-consciousness. Politically speaking, such a period I would call "What Happens After?" that is to say, what happens after a revolution has succeeded and we still get, not so much a new society, as a new bureaucracy? Now let's follow the dialectic of Hegel's argument:

First of all he establishes that "Spirit in this case, therefore, constructs not merely one world, but a twofold world, divided and self-opposed" [PhGB, p. 510; PhGM, p. 295].

Secondly, it is not only those who aligned with *state power* ("the haughty vassal" [PhGB, p. 528; PhGM, p. 307])—from Louis XIV's "L'état c'est moi" to the Mao's of today—who, now that they identify state power and wealth with themselves, of necessity enter a new stage: "in place of revolt appears arrogance" [PhGB, p. 539; PhGM, p. 315], who feel the potency of his dialectic. It is his own chosen field: knowledge, ranging all the way from a criticism of Bacon's "knowledge is power" [PhGB, p. 515; PhGM, p. 298], to Kant's "pure ego is the absolute

unity of apperception" [PhGB, p. 552; PhGM, p. 323-24]. Here is why he is so critical of thought:

This type of spiritual life is the absolute and universal inversion of reality and thought, their entire estrangement the one from the other; it is pure culture. What is found out in this sphere is that neither the concrete realities, state power and wealth, nor their determinate conceptions, good and bad, nor the consciousness of good and bad (the consciousness that is noble and the consciousness that is base) possess real truth; it is found that all these moments are inverted and transmuted the one into the other, and each is the opposite of itself [PhGB, p. 541; PhGM, p. 316].

NOW THIS INVERSION of thought to reality is exactly what Marx deals with in "The Fetishism of Commodities," and it is the reason for his confidence in the proletariat as Reason as against the bourgeois "false consciousness," or the fall of philosophy to ideology. Marx insists that a commodity, far from being something as simple as it appears, is a "fetish" which makes the conditions of capitalist production appear as self-evident truths of social production. All who look at the appearance, therefore, do not see the duality of the commodity, of the labor incorporated in it, of the whole society based on commodity "culture." It is true that the greater part of his famous section is concerned with showing that the fantastic form of appearance of the relations between men as if it were an exchange of things is the *truth* of relations in the factory itself where the worker has been transformed into an appendage to a machine. But the very crucial footnotes all relate to the fact that even the discoverers of labor as the source of value, Smith and Ricardo, could not escape becoming prisoners of this fetishism because therein they met their historic barrier.

Whether you think of it as "fetishism of commodities" or "the discipline of culture," the "absolute inversion" of thought to reality has a dialectic all its own when it comes to the rootless intellectual. Take Enlightenment. Despite its great fight against superstition, despite its great achievement—"Enlightenment upsets the household arrangements, which spirit carries out in the house of faith, by bringing in the goods and furnishings belonging to the world of the Here and Now. . . ." [PhGB, p.512;

Continued on page 8

HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY TODAY

I have a question about "From the Archives" (Dec.-Jan. *N&L*) in which Dunayevskaya takes up which twilight we are facing. That is meant to evoke an image of a turning point in history and how the dialectic seizes on it and brings out a new stage of cognition. If there are turning points in history where one way of life is dying and a new way of life is emerging, what is the role of someone observing it? Can someone who grasps the dialectic do something about it? Is it possible for a dialectic to create a turning point?
**Reader
Oakland, Calif.**

Dunayevskaya's letter to an Iranian comrade reproduced in "From the Archives" last issue, is amazing. By 1986 the 1979 revolution had gone into horrific counter-revolution and here is Dunayevskaya writing about the *Phenomenology*! I think she is saying that when you're facing a new stage of counter-revolution it is important to

have a vision of the ground you're standing on for the future. Academics who discuss Hegel have no vision. The vision that anchored Marx was developing the movements of his time. I see that same in Dunayevskaya.

**Women's liberationist
California**

Peter Hudis' essay, "Hegel's *Phenomenology* today: a Marxist-Humanist view" (Dec.-Jan. *N&L*), seemed to refer to the question of "the return of thought to itself" only as a pejorative, as a critique of Hegel, in contrast to Marx rooting the dialectic in the whole human being. But Marx's concept of the dialectic in the whole human being—externalization of human capacities and return to self out of that externalization—is also a philosophic moment, a founding concept that demands a return as does Dunayevskaya's philosophic moment of 1953. The absolute is the most concrete. She left us the task of testing *Critique of the Gotha*

Program by absolute method, not only reconstituting the dialectic anew in the face of new phenomena as Hudis puts it at the end. It means going further into that principle that never changes but proves its openness to the new. The dialectic in philosophy is not just about facing new phenomena but is a recollection and reconstituting of the philosophic moment.
**Ron Kelch
Oakland**

Hudis says that Absolute Knowledge is subjected to the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit. Does it mean that history comes to an end, or that the scientific comprehension suffers a Golgotha and needs to be reconstituted? Such a reconstruction is the effort a living organization, News and Letters Committees, is undertaking today.
**Mitch Weerth
Alameda**

IN MEMORIAM TO SHEILA GARDEN

We mourn the death and honor the memory of our New York comrade, Sheila Garden, who died in early February after a long siege of lung disease. Sheila was a spirited and feisty woman throughout the nearly eight decades of her history as a civil rights, feminist and Marxist-Humanist thinker and activist.

She was tireless in her outreach efforts. Even near the end of her life she asked for copies of *News & Letters* to give to her caretakers. She was a lifelong rebel and revolutionary in every fiber of her being. She pulled no punches when it came to religion and other orthodoxies.

As news of her death became known to her comrades and friends, remembrances of her vibrant relationships quickly began coming to us. We want to share one such message that came from one of our Youth columnists,

Brown Douglas:

"Sheila stands out from my memories of the first two national gatherings of News and Letters Committees I attended. I remember being a young newcomer to the ideas of Marxist-Humanism and feeling slightly confused and intimidated. Yet, no matter how incoherent and 'new' my Youth report might sound, Sheila always took extensive notes and approached me afterwards to talk about points she liked and didn't like. She always expressed great energy at any mention of the Women's and Gay Liberation movements. I'll always remember her as what is called a 'free spirit.' We were separated in age by more than half a century but when we were talking the separation simply didn't exist. She taught me a lot about being a human being."

So say we all.

News and Letters comrades

GAY PLAGUE HYSTERIA

All the recent hysteria about a new "Gay Plague"—a new strain of staph linked to gay men—has been proved completely wrong. It is not a sexually transmitted disease and it is not limited to any segment of the population. The lead researchers on USA300 MRSA, the strain of staph involved, stressed that it is a skin to skin infection. A handshake could transmit it. These researchers did note that Gay men had a higher rate of infection in San Francisco. This could be due to higher rates of immunocompromised patients there, which make them more susceptible to more kinds of infections. What needs to be known is that USA300 is a supervirulent strain, which appears to be a result of societal overuse of antibiotics and the bugs of several strains combining to give rise to a super-strain which exploits the most immunocompromised patients.

**Medical worker
San Francisco**

READERS!

I am currently incarcerated, which only strengthens my resolve to bring change to the decadence which seems to permeate this world. Your various articles dealing with the LGBTQ movements, the proletarians at home and abroad, even those who may be considered "middle class," enlighten me about the totality of oppression. Another example of the objectivity of your paper is the way you dealt with the comments by the President of Iran who denied the Holocaust that befell the Jewish people. Most papers expound only on a topic that fits into their agenda. Your objectivity is greatly needed and appreciated.

**Prisoner
Missouri**

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ESSAY On concretizing a 'Philosophic Moment'

by Tom More

A concretization of an alternative to capitalism, an ongoing project as spelled out in News and Letters Perspectives for 2007-2008 (*N&L*, August-September 2007), is different from a program of nationalizing property, or any blueprint. In dialectics, "concrete" is not a synonym of "immediate" or "tangible," as that word is often meant. Rather, the "concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse."¹

In her "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," Raya Dunayevskaya showed that the "determinant," a category of dialectics, was to be sought in "a new philosophic category" she named a "philosophic moment" (p. viii): "In Hegelian dialectics, the philosophic moment is a determinant," and "it remain[s] the element that govern[s] the concretization" (p. 7).²

According to Marxist-Humanism, the philosophic moment that was the determinant for Marx was the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. There were principled philosophical reasons, therefore, why Marx excoriated Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), why he was so relentlessly critical of utopian socialism in *The Communist Manifesto* on the eve of the Revolutions of 1848, and why he kept returning to this question from the *Grundrisse* to his stinging repudiation of the Lassallean program of the Gotha Congress in 1875.

DUNAYEVSKAYA'S OWN PHILOSOPHIC MOMENT in her May 1953 letters on Hegel's Absolutes, was the determinant that governed all of her subsequent theory and practice, from founding News and Letters Committees in 1955 and the publishing of *Marxism and Freedom* 50 years ago this year, to the last words to come from her in 1987.

Death's knock prevented her completion of the book she was writing, provisionally titled "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'Party' and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity." As she put it to her comrades in the 1987 Presentation, the year she never saw, "1988," was to be "the year of the book" (p.18). A reader today of her June 1 Presentation cannot help but sense the urgency of her tone in anticipation. She wrote it as an internal document for an upcoming Plenum of News and Letters Committees. Perhaps it requires a little inside baseball to know that she also wrote it as a critique of her closest comrades, reminiscent in certain respects of Lenin's "Letter to

Congress" (December 1922-January 1923), famously known as his "testament" (including his recommendation to remove Stalin).

For Dunayevskaya, the determinant was a matter of the inseparability of "meaning, i.e. philosophy" from "activity" (p. 18). Concerning "the year of the book," she wrote, "The real point is the meaning that this is not a question of the 'author,' but the whole organization," such that "the context of each person's activity and special point of concentration...will be inseparable from the meaning of that activity" (p. 18). As she emphasized, "I want to repeat, because philosophy has not permeated the paper [*News & Letters*], therefore, it didn't permeate the organization" (p. 19).

The question Dunayevskaya was raising with such provocative urgency in her June 1 Presentation went far beyond the intramural affairs of News and Letters Committees, reaching up to a question of epoch-making world-historical importance, one that might strike us as even more urgent twenty years after "the year of the book," when the need to concretize a philosophically grounded alternative to capitalist society has grown even more desperate.

YET THE PERVASIVE MOOD of our time, despite the excitement aroused by the World Social Forum (which convened in Mexico City in January) and other extraordinary developments across Latin America, is still Thatcher's prophecy: "there is no alternative."

If Stalin's betrayal of the Russian Revolution is obvious even to casual observation, Lenin's own role in the twentieth-century failure of post-Marx Marxism after Marx requires a more discerning eye. If this should prove to be Dunayevskaya's eye in her June 1 Presentation, it is because she fore-grounded the category of a "philosophic moment" as the "determinant, and not just the ground" (p. 8) of the "concrete" itself, which Lenin, so close and yet so far away, had failed to grasp. That is, "for Lenin there was no philosophic moment insofar as organization was concerned" (p. 16).

Dunayevskaya titled the conclusion of her June 1 Presentation, "Untrodden Paths in Organization" (pp. 17-20). It belonged to Marx alone to have discovered "a New Continent of Thought and Revolution" in his *1844 Manuscripts*, his "new humanism" (see p. 4). On this basis, Dunayevskaya asks the question why it was that "the full organizational expression" of this philosophic moment as determinant "came only then [in Marx's last decade], especially the 1875 *Critique of the Gotha*

Program[:] Why only then?" (pp. 3-4).

Her answer can only be hinted at here, and only insofar as it bears on Lenin. She writes that "Marx himself laid the ground [in the *Critique*]," but that "the whole of post-Marx Marxism beginning with Engels has not built on that ground" (also including News and Letters Committees, as she implies by her metaphor of "Untrodden Paths"; p. 17).

SHE WRITES THAT "LENIN did return to Marx's roots in Hegel [in his *Philosophical Notebooks* of 1914-15], and [in *State and Revolution*, he] did see that the *Critique of the Gotha Program* had never really been concretized as the smashing of the bourgeois state, without which you could not have a revolution.... But...he too didn't touch the question of the party. On the contrary, it didn't even go as far as his own varied critiques of *What is to be Done?* once the Bolsheviks gained power" (p. 17).

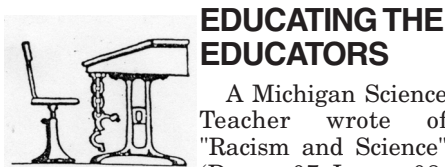
Concerning the subtitle of her unfinished book, she writes that "the party and the forms of organization born from spontaneity are opposites, but they are not absolute opposites....The absolute opposite is philosophy" (p. 15). And that it was "a shock for [her] to have experienced this in this year 1987" (p. 14), that not only the Council Communists and not only Rosa Luxemburg, but "Lenin, too, never raised philosophy directly in relationship to organization" (p. 16).

Marx's organizational document of 1875 established the ground, from within the determinant of his philosophic moment of 1844, yet any reader of Lenin's *State and Revolution* (1917), where he takes up Marx's 1875 *Critique* and projects it organizationally among "the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution," can discover how little he brought these tasks to the Party itself and how far he was from Marx's own "philosophic moment," then tragically unknown to him. "To this day 1844 was the philosophic moment of Marx's discovery...that 'Marxism' certainly lacked, and instead singled out one of the developments—economics—so that we didn't know 'new humanism' until the Depression" (p. 4). And so perhaps still today, the dialectics of philosophy and organization remains the "untrodden path" of our perilous world.

NOTES

- 1 Marx, *Grundrisse*, translated by Martin Nicolaus (NY: Random House, 1973), p.101.
- 2 *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya* (Chicago, IL: News and Letters, 1989).

VIEWS



EDUCATING THE EDUCATORS

A Michigan Science Teacher wrote of "Racism and Science" (Dec. 07-Jan. 08, *N&L*) accusing Nobel Laureate James D. Watson of uttering racist comments, revealing the alienation of brilliant thinking, and contradicting the fundamental concepts of genetics and evolution. Truth be told, Science Teacher was wrong. Watson said he is "inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa": because "all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours—whereas all the testing says not really." "Science Teacher" failed to parse Dr. Watson's comments. At no point did Watson claim that "Caucasians are inherently more intelligent than Blacks." The Teacher embellished Dr. Watson's statements in a fraudulent attempt to inflame and incite those members of the Black community who were unable or unwilling to conduct legitimate research into his remarks. Ironically, Dr. Watson offered no quantitative assessment of the relative intelligence of Caucasians or Africans. To inflate his status as a victim, Science Teacher presumed without proof that Watson's remarks demeaned Blacks and lauded whites.

**Roger Hummel
Gatesville, Texas**

As soon as Detroit Public Schools enrollment drops below 100,000 students, more non-unionized charter schools will open in the city. The negative spiral of public schools with extraordinarily needy students and mismanaged staff assignments and resource allocation continues to accelerate. "Difficult" students need more staff and

resources, not less. They need a safe, clean, caring educational environment that enriches their lives. Instead, because MEAP test scores dropped this year, my school has cut out music, gym, electives and all activities, from spelling bees to holiday dances, to concentrate on remediation. I doubt that a "boot camp" approach will work. I think we should provide as many "fun" educational activities as we can to boost motivation. As it is, they are cheated out of the survival skills and knowledge they need in a capitalist society, let alone one that would allow them to realize their full human potential.

**Teacher
Detroit**

CREATING TERROR

The events in Kenya, Congo, Sudan and Chad show how human beings cease to be seen as having human qualities, and that they're just objects to abuse for whatever purpose. The reason is to create terror. This is a brutal version of the "shock doctrine" Naomi Klein has been writing about, those trying to clear any obstacle in their way. Have there been other wars in the region that have taught the men while they were growing up how to perpetrate this kind of brutality?

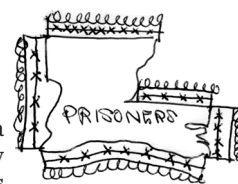
**Allan
Tennessee**

I completely agree with John Alan in the Dec. 07-Jan. 08 *N&L* that "racist terrorism" is rampant in this country and will go him one better in stating that the so-called "War on Terror" is in and of itself racist terrorism. The bottom line is that "no noose is good noose" unless it's a noose around the neck of the capitalist masters. However, this is problematical as Audre Lorde has so succinctly pointed out: "The master's tools can never be used to tear down the master's house" and the noose is most definitely one of the "master's tools."

**Rand Gould
Michigan**

**LOUISIANA:
ONE BIG
PRISON**

I have drawn a cartoon to show how Louisiana is starting to look. It shows this state as one big prison. If the "Jena Six" have to go to prison because their tennis shoes are a "deadly weapon" virtually everyone is guilty of "aggravated battery." Why not the whole state as a prison? The "Jena Six" should at least get probation for time served, and not have to go inside those walls again. Keep paying close attention to that case, as you have been doing.



**DT
Lafayette, LA**

FOR BRENDA HENSON

Brenda Henson, about whom you wrote in the December-January issue, passed away in February at the age of 62, surrounded by her family and friends, including her partner of 24 years, Wanda Henson. Brenda and Wanda founded Camp Sister Spirit in 1990 in Ovett, Miss. and their work there is continued by Brenda's daughter and her partner.

The camp is a feminist educational retreat and folk school where workshops on all social justice issues are available to the community. It hosts womyn's, LGBT, and pagan/multi-religious festivals as well as conferences. There is an advocacy/referral service for people in crisis, a G.E.D./educational service, a lending library, an animal rescue project, and a hurricane shelter. There is also a food and pet food bank that coordinated the distribution of resources after Hurricane Katrina.

The camp is now more accepted by the local community. At first, locals sent death threats, vandalized, and fired shots at the camp until Attorney General Janet Reno sent Department of Justice resources to their defense.

**Adele
Memphis**

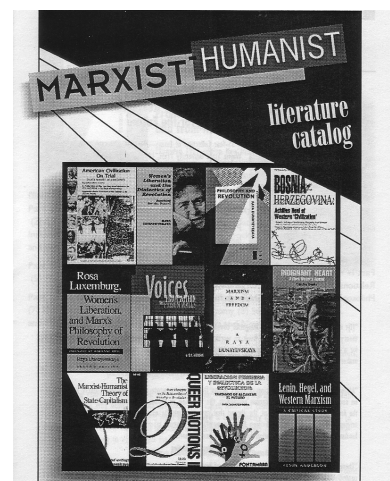
THE BRITISH SCENE

The news from Manchester health workers that their strike was suspended follows a series of anti-union activities and victimization. The latest news is mixed. The strikers have worked hard to maintain militancy and solidarity. But the outcome seems like a sell-out. Employment tribunals were set up in the 1970 strike to reduce solidarity action. The public settlements of large sums of money is an illusion. The employers write off the settlements as small beer to remove militants and destroy basic trade union organization. The cost to the individual is huge, ranging from depression to suicide, the end of marriages, the suffering of families.

In the short term all support and solidarity needs to be offered, but long drawn out campaigns are extremely difficult to win. New ideas and different methods of organization are needed.

**Pat Duffy
England**

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VOICES FROM
THE INSIDE OUT

Capitalization of prisoners

By Robert Taliaferro

Raya Dunayevskaya, in *American Civilization on Trial (ACOT)*, wrote of capitalistic development, "Swallowing up of smaller capital, destruction of cutthroat competition alongside of monopolization, not to mention cheating on top of exploitation—that was the way of all great American fortunes built by means more foul than fair..." Though Dunayevskaya was talking about Andrew Carnegie, her ideas could address today's capitalization of prisoners, their families, and friends.

MONOPOLIES USED AGAINST PRISONERS

Monopolies, illegal in the business world, run rampant when businesses deal with prisoners. In fact, many state governments receive kickbacks and incentives from phone companies for allowing exclusive contracts that charge prisoner families and friends exorbitant fees for using their services. The phone service "Embarq," for instance, charges up to \$9 for a 20-minute call in the same state. Of this \$9, \$3 is charged to connect the calling and receiving parties.

They also decide who can and cannot receive calls. If a phone bill gets too high, even if the bill is not Embarq's, the company will cut off access to their service until the bill is paid. There are much cheaper alternatives to the current system, but Embarq—and similar companies around the country—block all efforts to cut into their profits shared by the company and the states who are in their pocket.

Typewriter ribbons, sheets, toothpaste, soap, and nearly all products, carry the label, "Made in" anyplace but here. The items sold were once manufactured by U.S. prisoners or in small communities. Though prisoners are paid pennies a day (if they are paid at all), they and their families are required to pay premium prices.

With the prison-building frenzy of the 1980s and

Defense Depot

MEMPHIS, TENN.—I got a call from the Department of Defense (DOD) in December saying, "We found two bomb casings on Dunn Field. The good news is that we got the Memphis Police Department to move them!" It's not good news to find more chemical bombs next to our community, which has already suffered so much from the DOD's toxic waste. Dunn Field is the most contaminated part of the old Defense Depot.

It turned out the DOD had found the bombs two days earlier. No one had been notified except the Restoration Advisory Board. It's left up to our group, Defense Depot—Memphis Tennessee Concerned Citizens Committee, to inform people.

We're tired of the government sitting on information and not getting it into the community's hands. We had the same problem years ago, when it took them 21 days to notify us that an accident happened on Dunn Field. After that the government was supposed to notify us within the hour when something was found.

There are certain protocols the government is supposed to follow when something is found. They didn't have a containment tent, which they were supposed to. The police should not be moving these bombs. They are not trained to deal with chemical weapons. The Depot admitted they didn't know what was in the bomb casings.

The police moved it through the community with no sirens or alarms. We had been told in a case like that alarms were supposed to go off, and warnings across the TV set. They never told us where they moved it. The government went against protocol as usual. It's a Black community.

They came to a conclusion in a few hours that the bombs were harmless, but it takes longer to get results from tests for chemicals. We don't know what chemicals they tested for. DOD plays games with us.

Dunn Field is supposed to be cleaned up. And they're still finding bombs. The government has sold part of it already. What's going to happen when they open some business up? They will put employees and the community in harm's way.

What does the government expect from the community? The community doesn't trust them. They prove all the time they can't be trusted.

—Doris Bradshaw

Cease Fire

LOS ANGELES—The Cease Fire Committee, based in South Central Los Angeles, was organized to stop gang warfare and violence in their communities through gang intervention, organizing breakfasts to bring rival gang members together, and community forums and speaking out against the Los Angeles Police Department's suppression-only programs.

Recently, David Cay Johnston, author of *Free Lunch*, spoke of how (under capitalism), the middle class and poor pay—through taxes—for government subsidies including hundreds of millions of dollars for privately owned professional sports stadiums. At the same time organized youth sports programs in the ghettos have been drastically defunded.

He attributed a lack of these programs as a significant reason for the rise of today's massive number of gangs and gang violence. I'm sure the lack of hope for a well-paying job, unemployment, a prospect of ending up in prison, the constant portrayal by the mass media of gang members as incorrigible criminals and today's economic crises are also factors.

—Basho

1990s, many small operations grew exponentially. Companies like Access/Keefe Supply, have a near monopoly on canteen items sold to the majority of prisons around the country. Recently, some states have exacerbated this monopoly by requiring prisoners to purchase personal items exclusively from the "Prison Four" (Access, Walkenhorst, J.L. Marcus, and Union Supply). "Approved" catalog items are often more pricey than the same item in catalogs that are not designated "approved" for prisoners. Families can't shop around for cheaper or better products.

One such catalog offers various reams of typing paper in price from \$9.99 to \$45.99 a ream. Those prices could buy several cases of paper in bulk. Highly consumable items like paper, pens, and envelopes—sold in prison canteens as a staple for generations—now must be bought from the "prison four" at inflated prices.

The biggest fraud in the capitalization of prisoners is money spent for so-called "rehabilitation programs." The scourge of prisoners everywhere, they offer little if any accountability, and are pronounced failures whenever anyone takes the time to conduct an accurate and impartial assessment.

Programs, in essence, are a form of socialized slavery, designed by the white middle class to imbue their values and principles on a population they do not understand: the "Borg-like" mentality of science fiction, that does not allow resistance, not if you want to get paroled, or get a prison job.

Aspects of incarceration that do work to lessen recidivism rates—educational and vocational programs—receive less and less funding each year, while the funding of programs, which require prisoners to quit their education, grows—even though studies have shown that few if any treatment programs have any sustainable success.

In the U.S., the capitalization of prisoners, their families and friends have become a runaway imperative. The country currently incarcerates one out of every 32 persons, and one out of every eight Black males between the ages of 25 to 29 years.

VIOLATION OF FREEDOM

Prison capitalization on any level is a violation of the basic tenets of freedom. We should be reminded from past words why it is imperative that the concept of freedom be reinvestigated and perhaps reinstated in this country:

"Slavery is no more. No more shall the salesman's hammer barter human flesh and blood in your market places, causing humanity to shudder at its cold barbarity..."

"...As injustice to a section of your people has produced dire results, let that cease. Let your citizens of today be declared free and equal without reserve..."

"We warn you then, as brothers in the common cause, to remove every shackle from freedom's limb, and your victory will be complete." (Karl Marx, 1865, letter "To the People of the United States of America") (*ACOT*, 116-117).

EDITORIAL

A genocide is taking place in Congo. Not a normally understood genocide where one group is intent on annihilating another. Rather, an entire nation is being allowed to disintegrate as children, women, and men die in numbers not seen since World War II—5.4 million since 1996. In some places, especially the North Kivu Province, civilians are being killed with weapons of war—guns, knives, and machetes. Millions more are dying from what is called "war-related causes": starvation, cholera, malaria, diarrhea. The conflict has brought into the world a new level of brutality against women (see page 2).

All predictors say the situation is going to get worse. That grim future is forecast in how in the past year over 400,000 Congolese have been forced from their homes. In North Kivu 800,000 have become "displaced persons," and recent fighting in December and January added 60,000 more to the numbers. While, rightly so, today's headlines carry the alarming news of the deteriorating situation in Kenya, where the specter of ethnic cleansing has raised its hideous head and over a thousand have been killed and many thousands more driven from their homes, we still must ask, where is the outcry about Congo?

The fact is that there is no will among the world's rulers to stop the bloodbath in Congo because Western capitalists and governments, as well as others including Russia, are profiting from its disintegration. Congo's lush and beautiful land contains, besides diamonds and gold, 30% of the world's cobalt, 10% of its copper, and, critically, all of 80% of the world's coltan, vital for cell phones and electronics. What Karl Marx wrote over a century ago in *Capital* could, with a few name changes, have been written yesterday about Congo: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skinned, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation."

Capitalism's inhuman momentum is starkly revealed by the situation in Congo. While the country is vastly rich in resources, it remains vastly undeveloped with 80% of the people living on 30 cents a day or

BLACK/RED VIEW

Continued from page 1

Civil War, is allegedly freeing us without permitting real freedom in a world where we can live and work like human beings."

Though Dr. King didn't support the tactics of the ghetto rebellions, his dream was never limited to political participation. His speech pointed to the racism deep within U.S. capitalist society wherein most Blacks experienced the "chains of discrimination... living on a lonely island of poverty in a vast ocean of material prosperity."

DBFS addresses a needed new perspective on the unfolding of the idea of freedom:

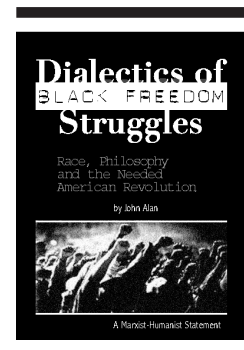
"If King's dream has not materialized after 40 years, to say nothing of centuries of Black opposition to racism, then racism needs to be recognized for what it is—a social manifestation of American capitalism. Racism has been modified by a century of mass movements, the enactment of civil rights laws and Supreme Court decisions, but, like classism, it cannot be uprooted apart from its social origin and development in American capitalist society.

STRUGGLES BY BLACK MASSES

"The limits encountered by efforts at political emancipation do not prove the futility of the struggles by Black masses for freedom... The distinction between the two was integral to Karl Marx's entire new continent of thought and revolution.

"Marx warned as early as his writings on 'The Jewish Question' in 1843 that... political emancipation by itself doesn't change the established order of an existing civil society. He insisted that social relations in our everyday lives have to change, not just political relations. For Marx that meant all social relations, beginning with new social relations at the point of production, as well as between men and women, and between the races. As he put it in 1843, 'All emancipation is a restoration of the human world and human relationships to humanity itself.'"

Marx's view that a human revolution cannot stop at political emancipation but must declare itself to be permanent, speaks to the aspirations and hopes of the Black masses, which run much deeper than any politicians out to maintain American capitalism.



Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles

by John Alan

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Genocide in Congo

less. Even the "hunting of black-skinned" is accurate as all sides—be they the National Council for Defense of the People (CNDP), the Democratic Forces of the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), or the Mai Mai—have kidnapped children to use as child soldiers, taken women and girls to be used as beasts of burden to carry supplies or contraband through the bush, used as domestic labor, all the time raped repeatedly, and kept in bases in the forest for months.

So horrific is the situation, so deep is the corruption, so extensive is the exploitation—and for so long—that the international community has been forced to respond. Congo has the largest UN peacekeeping military force in the world, 16,500, and consequently the biggest expenditure. Yet the country is so huge and the problems so endemic and intractable, the UN Congo initiative has not made a dent.

Raya Dunayevskaya, writing about Africa in *Philosophy and Revolution*, pointed to the problem "that, even in prosperous times, the advanced countries do not have capital sufficient for the development of the underdeveloped economies. So long as the motive force of production continues to be the accumulation of surplus value (or unpaid hours of labor)—whether for private plants or for state spaceships—the straining of the ruling class to appropriate the full twenty-four hours of man's labor still fails to create sufficient capital to industrialize the 'backward' lands."

What is the way out? Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, points to "the enormous energy of the people and their commitment to democracy, [shows] there is hope that we can start a sustained process of improvement." Dunayevskaya concretizes the direction the "enormous energy of the people" can take: "Thus, the law of value, as internal exploitation and external domination, cannot be broken except by those who are the exploited and the dominated. The laws lose their iron grip when, and only when, the greatest of all 'energizing principles,' free creative labor, takes destiny into its own hands."

Capital, with all its wealth, all its guns, all its power, cannot solve the problem of Congo. The solution is a human one and to help unleash its power, we need to extend our deepest revolutionary solidarity to those in Congo who are fighting against war, rape, and the deepest poverty and exploitation. The time is now.

Youth Review

Philosophy and Revolution — 2008

by Brown Douglas

Hegel's philosophy seems to take on new urgency in every historical period. For Hegel himself, it was the new world that emerged from the French Revolution. For Marx it was the discovery of a new continent of thought and revolution in a world where "everything seems pregnant with its opposite." For Lenin it was his shock at organized Marxism allowing World War I to happen and an attempt to create new ground for the Russian Revolution.

Mentioning Raya Dunayevskaya in the historical series will shock some Marxists. It is surely contentious to draw a line from Hegel to Marx to Lenin to Dunayevskaya, instead of a line to thinkers such as Marcuse, Korsch, or Lukács. Yet, it was Dunayevskaya's development of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism for over 30 years that re-created the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic on new ground for our age. *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao* (P&R) should make it clear that her contribution merits a greater discussion and treatment of her ideas.

Dunayevskaya wrote in the Preface that it was difficult not to start writing the book with the practice and theory that came from the freedom movements of the 1960s, what she calls the "new passions and new forces." She advised younger radicals that if they found it easier to start with what seemed more "concrete" to them—referring to the anti-Vietnam War youth, national liberation movements in the Third World, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the Black freedom struggles—that they could start with Chapter 9, which focuses on these movements, and that it wouldn't hurt their understanding of the rest of the book.

What struck me in rereading the newest edition was not the urge to start at the end. Pressing issues such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the urgency of ending global warming made clear Dunayevskaya's point that Hegel "becomes irresistible" because "our hunger for theory arises from the totality of the present global crises." If it is true that these crises engender a digging into a philosophy of liberation, then it is equally true that youth are pulled to this digging by our idealism and our experience of entering a world not made by ourselves. Reading Hegelian language isn't easy, but when dialectics sweep you up, it is hard

Climate teach-ins

MEMPHIS, TENN.—The climate change movement burst onto the scene in the last two years and catapulted a marginal issue into the political spotlight, forcing over 20% of U.S. colleges and universities to sign pacts to promote carbon neutrality. Today, unlike past years, every major Presidential candidate is mentioning and endorsing an aggressive plan—supported by almost all climate scientists, who see it as the baseline for mitigating the worst effects of global warming—to reduce carbon use 80% from 1990 levels by 2050.

This change was largely accomplished by the development of a broad-based student-led movement that include the 1Sky campaign, the Powershift 2007 Conference, and 1,900 Climate Change Teach-ins on Jan. 31. The 1Sky campaign's agenda is 1) the creation of a 5 million-strong Clean Energy Job Corps; 2) the reduction of greenhouse gases to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050; and 3) a moratorium on new coal plants and divestment from fossil fuel and highway subsidies.

While not revolutionary, the agenda is more aggressive and broader in scope than mainstream environmentalism, which has been hesitant to take the petrochemical industrial complex head on and has totally ignored workers working in polluting industries.

At the University of Memphis (U of M) Teach-in, over 40 students and professors attended, first hearing Democratic Representative Steve Cohen. Following his party leaders Cohen might go along with the Green Corps or carbon reduction goals, but not eliminate subsidies for petrochemical and highway consortiums.

The next speakers were Allan Lummus, Adjunct Professor of Sociology at U of M, and Caledonia Allen from the U of M Environmental Action Club. Allan said that the success of climate change as a public/political issue is largely due to the student-led movement that brought it to light; and that it has the potential to change the direction of the less radical environmental movement because of its inclusion of environmental justice and economic justice concerns. He concluded with a quote from Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Demand your dreams. Demand that we all live up to them. Demand it now."

Caledonia reported the student success in creating a green fee (\$10 from their student fees) to go to sustainability issues on campus. U of M now has \$200,000 waiting to be disbursed.

There are more imaginative ways to use those green fees, that over 500 campuses now possess, to reshape campuses. In the process of working them out, we might get a glimpse of what a new, more sustainable world might look like; one that is not only ecologically sustainable, but that is humanly sustainable as well. That kind of vision could help propel a true revolution.

—Environmental Justice Activist

YOUTH

not to hold on tight and try to navigate the waters.

The category that is central to P&R is Absolute Negativity as New Beginning. Far from being an obscurantist theory from academia, Absolute Negativity as New Beginning is Dunayevskaya's way of illuminating the red thread that runs through Hegel that Marx re-created for his time: the dialectic of negativity as the "moving and creating principle."

Absolute Negativity as New Beginning is not only a



Urszula Wislanka / News & Letters photo

2,000 people came to City Hall on Feb. 12 to debate—both pro and con—the Berkeley, Calif., City Council's recent decision to disinvite the Marine officer recruiting station, which targeted youth from Bay Area high school and colleges.

retelling of Hegel's and Marx's philosophies. It is Dunayevskaya's unique contribution to Marxism, which enables her to write a book jamming up a 19th century German philosopher with Third World revolutions and anti-war youth. Negativity is important not only because those of us fighting oppression offer a negative "no" to that oppression, but because negativity, when we don't stop there, can further develop a path forward.

While non-Marxist and Marxist scholars alike have recast the dialectic as a formal and irrelevant "triad" of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, Dunayevskaya shows that it is nothing less than "the ceaseless movement of ideas and of history." What made dialectics important to me was that very relationship between ideas and reality. As a youth, it seemed the options were to either be an abstract theorist or an activist participating in social movements. Dialectics makes no such gap between thinking and doing. Bringing ideas to bear on reality is not only acceptable, but integral to changing the world.

Absolute Negativity as New Beginning is developed through the book, illuminating Marx's new continent of thought and revolution and Lenin's philosophic ambivalence; the alternatives posed by Trotsky, Mao and Sartre; and the world economy, the African revolutions, state-capitalism and revolt in Eastern Europe.

Sartre wrote that there is no going beyond Marx until one has gone beyond the historical moment which Marx expressed. Dunayevskaya knew this and founded a philosophy that is the re-creation of Marxism for our age, Marxist-Humanism. It's up to all who have dedicated ourselves to revolution to move beyond "another world is possible" to grasping a philosophy that can make a new world be. P&R explicitly expresses Marxist-Humanism. It's a vital opportunity for us to journey into this philosophy of liberation and develop it to meet our needs. We invite all of you to join us in this very real and revolutionary adventure.

Philosophy and Revolution
 from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao
 by Raya Dunayevskaya

"The Doctrine of the Notion develops the categories of freedom, of subjectivity, of reason, the logic of a movement by which man makes himself free... Whether or not the Hegelian concept of self-relation is being 'subverted' as revolution in Marx's 'translation,' the point is that to Hegel too it is a constant transformation of reality and of thought which prepares for a 'new world.'"

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Students organize

URBANA, ILL.—As a new Spanish linguistics graduate student at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), I was eager to become involved with the local Graduate Employee Organization (GEO).

In existence since the 1970s, the GEO affiliated with the Illinois Federation of Teachers in 1995 but was not recognized by the university as a bargaining unit until 2004 when the GEO won its first contract. The GEO currently represents over 2,500 graduate teaching assistants in over 130 departments.

Last year the GEO won a three-year contract with the university guaranteeing a 3% yearly raise and ensuring that the administration contributes at least 50% towards health insurance. UIUC, the largest university in Illinois, is also represented by AFSCME and SEIU.

Last fall SEIU local 119, representing food and building service workers, moved to strike if an agreement was not reached between university officials and SEIU representatives. To support those workers, the GEO formed a solidarity committee, pledging money towards a strike fund, distributing SEIU stickers and buttons on campus, and educating its members about relocating classes in order to avoid crossing picket lines in the event of a strike. The SEIU local eventually reached an agreement with the university.

Since that effort, the solidarity committee has grown in membership and scope. They advised UIUC GEO members on how to conduct a solidarity campaign to show their support for building and food service workers on campus. Additionally, the GEO, through its solidarity committee, has established connections with those outside the university and begun working with a neighborhood organization fighting to force Ameren, the local power company, to clean up a toxic site in a low-income neighborhood in the community.

As the GEO continues to organize among grad students and make connections with other labor and community organizations, it looks forward to hosting the Alliance of Graduate Employee locals conference this May. For more information on the UIUC GEO, see www.uigeo.org.

—Grad student union member

Queer Notes

By Elise

From Italy to Uganda, from Estonia to Thailand, from Illinois to Texas, concerts, vigils, workshops and other observances were held Dec. 1 to mark World AIDS Day. Victims of HIV/AIDS were remembered, while many observers also advocated for governments to do more to help the victims of AIDS and find a cure.

— from the World AIDS Campaign

* * *

On Dec. 31, the National Black Justice Coalition held a march in Chicago out of concern over the recent murders of two African-American gay activists. Larry Bland, a security guard, and Donald Young, a church choir director and teacher, were both found dead in their South Side homes. It is feared that the city of Chicago and the police are not doing enough to investigate the murders. New Year's Eve 2007 saw six men shot at a party attended largely by gay men in a private South Side home, a case which is still unsolved.

* * *

Late last year in Ireland, more than 200 protesters demonstrated against the Irish Parliament's narrow rejection of a Labor Party-backed civil union bill. Even though government-backed civil partnership legislation will be considered, protesters insisted, rightly so, on legal equality for same-sex couples.

* * *

When high school student Bethany Laccone wore a lesbian themed T-shirt to school, she didn't think she'd be requested by school officials to cover it up. I.C. Norcom High School Principal Lynn Briley, in Virginia, apologized to Ms. Laccone, and Norcom administrators removed all notes of the incident from her record and said that such censorship will not take place in future. It is heartening to note that Ms. Laccone did not face censorship at nearby Woodrow Wilson High School, where she attends most of her classes.

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OUR LIFE AND TIMES **Mexico today: repression and rebellion**

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO—Three anniversaries of repression and impunity can tell us about the state of human rights in Mexico today:

ACTEAL, CHIAPAS

The left daily newspaper, *La Jornada*, carried a series of articles and commentary on the 10th anniversary of the uprising of the Indigenous people of Acteal when more than 40 unarmed Indigenous were murdered, including 21 women and 15 children. Some of the Tzozile peasants were Zapatista supporters. Many were members of Las Abejas (The Bees), a group active in a movement for peace and reconciliation in Chiapas. The killings were done with government complicity.

A decade after the events, there has been no serious investigation of the role of then President Zedillo and his associates in the massacre. No charges against government agents except at the lowest level have ever been filed. In an effort to muddy the waters in relation to the government's intellectual, if not outright direct, responsibility for the events, certain intellectuals have been playing a game of distortion in recent writing with respect to the massacre at Acteal.

SAN SALVADOR ATENCO

A vicious attack, May 4, 2006, by local authorities against citizens in the community of Atenco resulted in two deaths, the sexual abuse of dozens of women, and some 200 detained. Many of those attacked were members of the Front of Peoples in Defense of the Land, a local activist group that was defending the rights of the community against government abuse, and were as well adherents of the Otra Campaign, the social movement organized from below by the Zapatistas. Because the activists from Atenco were determined to defend their rights and not to be passive victims, they were not only repressed by the government but vilified by the mainstream press and politicians for being "violent." The Zapatistas and the Otra Campaign came to their

defense, exposing government agents as the real source of violence against the local population.

The repression at Atenco did not come out of the blue. The local officials saw a chance to strike out against the people of Atenco and launched their murderous attack with the complicity of high officials when the Front sought to defend the protest of a nearby community. To this day no charges have been filed against the government for the murders and sexual abuse. A number of citizens of Atenco remain in prison on trumped-up charges.

OAXACA, MEXICO

A little over a year ago, at the height of the "Oaxaca Commune" against repression by Governor Ulises Ruiz, the Federal police intervened to suppress the

rebellion with massive arrests and the murder of protesters. More than 20 Oaxaquenos, citizens of Mexico, teachers and activists in the movement were shot down by government authorities or their paramilitary compatriots during the months of the rebellion. Today Oaxaquenos still remain in jail, with new ones joining them as the state represses each new attempt at protest.

These anniversaries and impunity take place in the context of the fraud that stole the election from Lopez Obrador and gave the presidency to Felipe Calderon. Mexico remains a land of authoritarian rule and repression.

But there is an Other Mexico, el Otro Mexico of protest and rebellion. Its most significant manifestations reside in the Indigenous struggles in Chiapas and in Oaxaca. In Chiapas during the last decade, the autonomous Indigenous communities in support of the Zapatistas have constructed a life independent of what they term "the bad government." They have built their own education system, their own healthcare system and their own autonomous government in many villages and regions.

In Oaxaca, the struggle of tens, and indeed hundreds of thousands, of Indigenous citizens, predominantly women—teachers, students, market people, peasant farmers, and some intellectuals—created a form of organization that was at once old and infused with new content, the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO). Despite the repression, it remains in existence, struggling to function.

None of these forms—the Zapatistas, the autonomous Indigenous communities in resistance, the popular assembly in Oaxaca—are in themselves a new society. But they are the seeds of protest and rebellion, new ways of thinking and doing, which, in fusion with other human dimensions for a new society in Mexico, struggle to move toward an emancipatory future.

—Eugene Walker

World in Brief...

IRAN's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his right-wing government have shut down *Zanan*, the country's major women's magazine. Its feminist managing director, Shahla Sherkat, had kept *Zanan* open for 16 years and 152 issues despite financial and political pressures. Authorities called the magazine a "threat to the psychological security of the society." The magazine offered articles on health, legal issues, literature, women's achievements and, recently, a discussion that laws codifying unequal treatment of women in Islamic countries lacked justification under Islamic law and could be changed.

The **EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS** has ruled that it is discriminatory to exclude individuals from adopting solely because of their sexual orientation. Earlier, E.B., a woman in France, had been denied the right to adopt by both the French government and the highest administrative court in France.

FROM RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Continued from page 4

PhGM, p.296]—it remains "an alienated type of mind": "Enlightenment itself, however, which reminds belief of the opposite of its various separate moments, is just as little enlightened regarding its own nature. It takes up a purely negative attitude to belief. . ." [PhGB, pp. 610, 582; PhGM, pp. 363, 344].

In a word, because no new universal—Marx too speaks that only true negativity can produce the "quest for universal" and hence a new society—was born to counterpose to superstition or the unhappy consciousness, we remain within the narrow confines of "the discipline of culture"—and this even when Enlightenment has found its truth in Materialism, or Agnosticism, or Utilitarianism. For unless it has found it in freedom, there is no movement forward either of humanity or "the spirit." And what is freedom in this inverted world where the individual will is still struggling with the universal will? Well, it is nothing but—terror. The forms of alienation in "Absolute Freedom and Terror" are so bound up with "pure personality" that I could hardly keep myself, when reading, from "asking" Hegel: how did you meet Sartre? "It is conscious of its pure personality and with that of all spiritual reality; and all reality is solely spirituality; the world is for it absolutely its own will" [PhGB, p. 600; PhGM, pp. 356-57]. And further:

What that freedom contained was the world absolutely in the form of consciousness, as a universal will. . . . The form of culture, which it attains in interaction with that essential nature, is, therefore, the grandest and the last, is that of seeing its pure and simple reality immediately disappear and pass away into empty nothingness. . . . All these determinate elements disappear with the disaster and ruin

To Fromm on the Dialectic

that overtake the self in the state of absolute freedom; its negation is meaningless death, sheer horror of the negative which has nothing positive in it, nothing that gives a filling [PhGB, p. 608; PhGM, p. 362].

This was the result of getting itself ("the pure personality") in "the rage and fury of destruction"—only to find "isolated singleness": "Now that it is done with destroying the organization of the actual world, and subsists in isolated singleness, this is its sole object, an object that has no other content left, no other possession, existence and external extension, but is merely this knowledge of itself as absolutely pure and free individual self" [PhGB, p. 605; PhGM, pp. 359-60].

I wish also that all the believers in the "vanguard party to lead" studied hard—and not as an "idealist," but as the most far-seeing realist—the manner in which Hegel arrives at his conclusions through a study that the state, far from representing the "universal will," represents not even a party, but only a "faction" [PhGB, p. 605; PhGM, pp. 360] (Hegel's emphasis). But then it really wouldn't be "the self-alienated type of mind" Hegel is tracing through development of the various stages of alienation in consciousness, and Marx does it in production and the intellectual spheres that correspond to these relations.

It happens that I take seriously Marx's statement that "all elements of criticism lie hidden in it [*The Phenomenology*] and are often already prepared and worked out in a manner extending far beyond the Hegelian standpoint. The sections on 'Unhappy Consciousness,' the 'Honorable Consciousness,' the fight of the noble and downtrodden consciousness, etc., etc., contain the critical elements—although still in an alienated form—of whole

spheres like Religion, the State, Civic Life, etc."⁵ Furthermore, I believe that the unfinished state of Marx's Humanist Essays makes imperative that we delve into Hegel, not for any scholastic reasons, but because it is of the essence for the understanding of today. Well, I will not go on until I hear from you.

Yours sincerely, Raya

NOTES

- 1 In 1961 I first analyzed "Mao Zedong: From the Beginning of Power to the Sino-Soviet Conflict." It is this which I brought up to date as the new chapter in my book. I do not have a copy of this, but I do have a copy of the original article and will be glad to send it to you, should you be interested—RD.
- 2 *Marxism and Freedom* (NY: Bookman, 1958) included as appendix the first English translation of selections from Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.
- 3 Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). Dunayevskaya's critique, "Intellectuals in the Age of State Capitalism," appeared in *News & Letters*, June-July, August-September 1961, and was reprinted in *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism* (1992).
- 4 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London: NLB, 1976, orig. 1960); *Search For a Method* (New York: Knopf, 1963). For Dunayevskaya's critique see "Jean-Paul Sartre: Outsider Looking In," chapter 6 of *Philosophy and Revolution*.
- 5 From Marx's 1844 "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic", Marx and Engels *Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (NY: International Publishers, 1975), p. 332.

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NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907-83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject

what is, but to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough and her final 1987

Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our **Constitution** states: "It is our aim... to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the Constitution of News and Letters Committees.