

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Acting human not cost-effective

by Htun Lin

Vanessa O'Connell reported in the *Wall Street Journal* ("Stores Count Seconds to Trim Labor Costs," Nov. 13, 2008) that "Taylorism," used by capitalists in manufacturing to speed up production by breaking down each one's work into mindless repeatable tasks, is now big in service industry jobs, especially chain stores. Ironically, the story focused on stores in Detroit, home of the U.S. auto industry that is now threatened with bankruptcy.

Henry Ford's assembly line was the epitome of Taylorism early in the twentieth century. Stores are now conducting Taylor's time-and-motion studies, using computer software for surveillance on their employees. The effort is to shave every last second from retail labor to squeeze out every last penny of profit. Those who do not perform within the guidelines are given "alternatives," demotion or even termination.

While workers feel like it is their duty to be customer-service minded, the new down-to-the-second time-study intimidation has left many of us with no choice but to be anti-social. Retail workers who used to enjoy taking extra time to help elderly customers now see them as customers from hell, taking too long and negatively impacting a worker's time-study stats.

We have the same problem at the HMO where I work. It is standard practice to redline health-insurance customers, rejecting those who already have an illness

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BLACK/REDFIELD

Obama and the future

Mel Vapour, of the East Bay Media Center, interviewed Black/Red View columnist John Alan on Nov. 17, 2008. A video of the interview will be available at the EBMC's website, <http://www.eastbaymediacenter.com>—Editors.

Mel: We're here to talk with John Alan, African-American filmmaker and writer, commentator for News & Letters for the past 35-40 years. We're here with the person who broke the color barrier back in the 1950s and 1960s with *KQED*, the first Black broadcast journalist in the state of California, to ask his thoughts on the mandate of the people of the U.S. to elect Barack Obama, America's first African-American president.

Alan: I think it is high time that America did get an African-American president. But can this Black president be more than all the presidents? The prime duty of a U.S. president is to protect and preserve U.S. capitalism. No president has gone beyond that. I don't know whether President Obama can go beyond that and become a totally different type of president. Not just because he is the first Black president, but because he is the first president to face all the problems now facing U.S. capitalism: the inequalities that exist, the racism that exists, and all the things we have suffered through over centuries of presidents. We have gone through some bad wars during the period of non-Black presidents. We have to wait and look very closely to find out whether this will be a revolutionary change in what a U.S. president is.

Mel: Obama is being likened to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose era you lived through in the 1930s. What are your thoughts on comparisons between

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Israel's war on Gaza shows need for a total uprooting

by Gerry Emmett

The tentative "cease-fire," already interrupted by grenade, mortar and missile strikes, between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, of Jan. 18 following 22 days of war, was ushered in with a scene of pure modern horror.

Palestinian doctor Izz el-Deen Aboul Aish, who works at an Israeli hospital and has reported on Gaza for Israeli television, announced live on the air that his home had just been bombed by Israeli warplanes. Three of his daughters were killed, and two seriously injured. Dr. Aboul Aish said truthfully, "All that was ever fired out of our house was love, hugs and acts of peace, nothing else, ever."

Shocked viewers caught an unexpected look at the barbarity of the Gaza war as the Israeli news anchor broke down into tears along with the Palestinian doctor. A Gazan described the experience of life under attack this way: "In my home we can't get basic needs. There is no safe place we can go. We cannot communicate with our relatives or friends—networks are down as missiles rain on our homes, mosques, and even hospitals..."

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

As Palestinians began to dig out thousands of destroyed buildings, the horrific toll of innocent life from weeks of air and ground war became even clearer. As of this writing, of 1,259 Palestinians dead, well over half are civilians. Many are children. An estimated 4,100 homes were destroyed, along with 1,500 factories and workshops.

There were also attacks upon buildings housing emergency humanitarian aid, like the UN Relief and Works Agency. "International law unequivocally forbids attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance mission," said UNRWA spokesman Malcolm Smart. "Deliberate attacks on humanitarian assistance facilities or personnel may constitute a war crime."

All this could hardly have been otherwise, fighting in crowded Gaza. It could not have been otherwise

considering the cynical effort by Israel's government to use its battle with Hamas to make some statements.

One statement was directed to Israeli voters by the current ruling Labor-Kadima coalition. Israeli peace protestors were quick to point out the timing of

the war in relation to the February national elections, naming it the "6-Seat War," the number of Knesset seats that the Labor Party expects to pick up. It likely won't have stopped the right-wing Netanyahu of Likud from being elected Prime Minister.

The other statement was directed to Iran, the biggest regional supporter of Hamas. It was meant to say that Israel had "learned the lessons" of its destructive war

in Lebanon in 2006, which was claimed as a "victory" by Iran's Lebanese client Hezbollah—if hardly by the suffering people of southern Lebanon or Beirut. Thus even greater destruction was visited upon Gaza.

What the Israeli government hasn't learned, though, is the futility of its attempts to control the Palestinians, or to crush their desire for self-determination. In this, Israel shows itself as one more state-capitalist power wedded to its ignoble imperial ambitions.

The U. S. government has shown nothing but complicity in this regard. This is true of both the outgoing Bush regime and the incoming Obama administration, with his appointment of Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State. Certainly Israel wouldn't have proceeded without an understanding with the U.S. The careful timing of the war around the U.S. election shows this, with one Israeli government figure claiming that the cease-fire was implemented to avoid embarrassing Barack Obama in his first days in office. Future U.S. policy is unclear—though Obama's first phone call to a foreign leader went to Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority.

Now, despite the cease-fire, thousands of Israeli troops remain poised to re-enter Gaza, and Hamas retains the ability to launch rocket strikes into Israel

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One of the many world-wide demonstrations against Israel's war on Gaza

EDITORIAL

State of world in crisis

More historic than President Barack Hussein Obama's Jan. 20 Inaugural Address was the mammoth, spontaneous and joyful celebration by millions assembled on the frozen mall in Washington, D.C., and around TVs in gatherings from Times Square to countless homes. The emotional celebration of the swearing in of the first Black man to the presidency of the U.S. swept up tearful celebrants of all races and ages—from World War II veterans, to those who had fought the battles of the Civil Rights Movement, to youth who had known none of that history—many who had never even voted before.

Not designed to be a "State of the Union" speech, the Address established at the beginning "that we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood"—a great understatement of the situation everyone knew from their own lives before it was itemized: a war massively opposed from its beginning; an economy on the way to outright Depression; "homes lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered"; "health care too costly, schools failing too many"; and every day bringing evidence of the ways the very existence of the planet is being environmentally threatened.

The emergency nature of the "state of the union" that demanded immediate action was the mammoth problem of ever-escalating unemployment. That it had soared to 7.2% by December is not a question of statistics, but of human lives. More than 11 million men and women were looking for work in vain, and another

eight million were settling for part-time work. And if you included another 1.9 million who had given up looking, you confronted an actual figure of 14.5%.

Yet a week after inauguration, companies announced a shocking 55,000 more jobs gone in a single day—20,000 cut at Caterpillar, 8,000 at Sprint Nextel, 7,000 at Home Depot, and 18,000 if Pfizer completes its purchase of Wyeth. Only a few days later another 20,000 were gone at Caterpillar. And none believed this would be the end of the acceleration.

TODAY'S MYRIAD CRISES

The myriad nature of today's global crises was reflected in what Obama chose to address the very first day after his swearing in—from freezing Bush's executive orders on the environment and labor relations, to meeting with military leaders to discuss the speed of withdrawal from Iraq. Perhaps considered the most newsworthy was the notice he finally paid to the horrendous war Israel had been waging with tremendous human destruction in Gaza. His calling of four Middle Eastern leaders was immediately critiqued for its disregard of the nearly universal condemnation of the Israeli government's attacks on the people of Gaza, attacks so brutal that they could be called crimes against humanity. (See Lead, this page.) It is not only the "State of the Nation," but of the world that is in need of emergency care.

What becomes clear is that the crises are so deep

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Leading drive for peace in Middle East

by Terry Moon

Women—Palestinian and Jewish—have always been in the forefront of the peace movement in Israel/Palestine. They were the first to do one amazing thing: work together in the same organizations for peace.

WOMAN AS REASON

Their demands often transcend a call for peace and put forward ideas for Palestinians and Jews to live together; for women to be involved in leadership in all areas, not only creating peace and reconciliation; and for recognizing, and then working to end, the militarization of Israeli society, no matter how unpopular a stance it may be.

In the recent brutal war that Israel waged against the people of Gaza (see Lead p. 1)—for it was a war against the civilians of Gaza, not alone Hamas soldiers—women's groups were the first to call for demonstrations. On Dec. 27, the Coalition of Women for Peace, a group of seven different women's organizations, in four hours mobilized 1,500 people to march through Tel Aviv, stopping to chant at the Ministry of Defense where the outgoing Israeli Prime Minister, who is also the Defense Minister, was giving a press conference justifying the war. The women wrote: "Our voices were heard loud and clear by the government, the public and the Israeli media."

By Jan. 3, 10,000 marched against the war, including over 1,000 Arabs. The chants put succinctly a commitment to the kind of peace that means a completely different society than exists now in the region: "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies"; "Stop the Killing! No to the siege"; "In Gaza and Sderot, kids want to live"; "Yes to life for both peoples!"; "The war belongs to Olmert—The victims belong to us!" The march was so large it surprised the organizers, who had mobilized only 1,000 demonstrators against the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon.

'WE REFUSE TO BE ENEMIES'

And while Arabs came to demonstrations organized by predominantly Jewish groups, Jews also joined those demonstrations called by Arabs. Thus only a few days later, Jewish protesters, including those from the Women's Coalition for Peace, joined with hundreds of Arab Israeli citizens where one of the most popular posters showed the Israel and Palestine flags next to each other; another was "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies." The difference in the size of the demonstrations as well as the speed of their mobilizations reveals that 2009 is not 2006, and that more of the Israeli population is refusing to believe the lie that the government told again and again: that this was a "war of no choice"; "no choice" but to bomb Gaza into oblivion and willfully kill over 1,000 civilians.

Even a woman from Sderot, one of the towns most frequently hit by Hamas missiles, insisted on making her voice heard by writing on the internet. In answer to

Stop prison sex assaults

Detroit—The first two trials in a class-action lawsuit filed in 1996 against the Michigan Dept. of Corrections yielded verdicts awarding the first 18 women—out of over 500—an estimated \$50 million. None have been paid as the state appeals the verdict. Prisons and correctional facilities all over the state are accused of failing to prevent sexual assaults by male guards on women prisoners. These assaults routinely included rapes, molestation during pat-downs, and forced sex.

The Michigan Women's Commission (a state agency) in 1993, the U.S. Dept. of Justice in 1995, and Human Rights Watch in 1996 all released reports of the "highly sexualized and excessively hostile" environment in Michigan's prisons. The state made changes such as requiring women correctional officers, rather than men, to pat down women prisoners, removal of male guards from women's housing units, and a requirement to report allegations of sexual abuse to the Michigan State Police as well as the Corrections Dept. Internal Affairs unit.

One of the plaintiffs, Toni Bunton, told the *Detroit Free Press* (1/4/09): "I want people to know this is going on in your backyard, and you might not care because it might not affect you, but you should care. This is about civil rights, basic fundamental rights of human beings."

Why did it take 12 years for the case to come to trial? And who is protesting sexual abuse in male prisons? Deborah LaBelle, the Michigan attorney who filed the lawsuit said, "No one, no one in this country, no one in a civilized society is sentenced to be raped and assaulted in prison." We can only hope that any victories won by women will be extended to men prisoners too.

—Susan Van Gelder

Labor Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer, known as Fuad, who said, "The heavier the blow we deliver, the more our hearts widen," this woman of Sderot, Nomika Zion, said: "Hey Fuad, not everyone. Even if I was the only one around Sderot feeling differently—and I am not—my voice should be heard. Not in my name and not for me you went to war. The current bloodbath in Gaza is not in my name and not for my security. Destroyed homes, bombed schools, thousands of new refugees—are not in my name and not for my security."

THE OTHER ISRAEL

The statement of Isha L'Isha, a grassroots feminist organization fighting for women's rights in Israel, puts it plainly. This war is against our sisters: "The attacks of the air force are perpetrated against high-density population, including our sisters, the women and daughters of Gaza, who are imprisoned without an option to flee..." They make explicit the profound changes that war brings to society: "Deepening of violence acts to undermine the very basis of democracy as it throws society to the management of military persons. It acts to deepen societal gaps as economic life in the periphery is brought to a halt. Moreover, it causes devastating damage to the freedom struggle of women in Gaza, in Israel

and everywhere violence claims governance."

We write often of the women's peace movement in Israel/Palestine because so few know that there is a second Israel, one that opposes its government,

that is fighting to change society. Israeli papers and TV news refuse to report on the carnage in Gaza—for example one two-hour weekend state TV news program showed not one picture from Gaza—and too often papers in the U.S. follow suit. But delving into the specifics about the Israeli/Palestinian women's peace movement is important for all of us—not only to understand that there are two worlds in every country, the rulers and the ruled who fight against them—but because it is in the struggle to end war and to create something new that the beginnings of a new, human, society can be found.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

As U.S. women, for the first time in eight years, may have barriers to reproductive justice lifted with the arrival of the Obama administration, young women are raising their voices to fight for women's reproductive rights around the world. The National Young Women's Leadership Conference, set for March 21-23 in Washington, D.C., will discuss international family planning, the struggle for reproductive justice, and what students can do to provide accessible and adequate healthcare for women and girls. Contact www.feministcampus.org/know/global.

International Human Rights Day (Dec. 10) saw the launch of the One Law for All campaign against Sharia Law in Britain. With widespread international support, the campaign calls on the government to recognize that Sharia and all religious laws: discriminate against women and children in particular, work against equality and human rights, should be banned from operating within and outside of the legal system. They plan a demonstration and march, March 7, commemorating International Women's Day. It will end with a public meeting titled "Sharia Law, Sexual Apartheid and Women's Rights." For information contact www.onelawforall.org.uk.

—Information from Maryam Namazie

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is challenging U.S. policy limiting teenage refugees' access to reproductive care. The Administration for Children and Family initiated a policy limiting reproductive health services for undocumented teenagers, including access to contraception and abortion. The ACLU stated the U.S. cannot deny, by law, reproductive healthcare to these teens, and should do everything to ensure their well-being when they have nowhere else to turn.

The Mexican Supreme Court delivered an emphatic decision upholding the law protecting the right of all women to choose safe, legal, first-trimester abortion. Many doctors in public hospitals refused to perform abortions for any reason after it was legalized in 2007.

Sex workers network

The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers was started in 2003 by the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP-USA), a national network of sex workers and their allies. It was started in response to the murders of over 60 prostitutes in 21 days committed by Gary Leon Ridgeway, the "Green River Killer." Ridgeway, convicted of 48 of the murders, stated, "I thought I could get away with killing hookers because nobody cares about them. I was doing the cops a favor by cleaning the trash up off the street."

This year, in Washington, D.C., the march started with a rally in Franklin Square Park and ended with a vigil at the Justice Department, where the names were read of sex workers who had been murdered and assaulted worldwide that year. They included Deborah Jeanne Palfrey, the "D.C. Madam," and Brandy Britton. They both committed suicide under suspicious circumstances.

MARCHERS CHANTED "Sex Workers' Rights are Human Rights" and carried signs saying "End Violence Against Women, Decriminalize Prostitutes!" "Outlaw Poverty, Not Prostitutes!" "Stop Shaming Us To Death!" and "Nothing About Us Without Us!" Speakers discussed the attitude of society and police that sex workers are expendable, not even human. This attitude is reinforced by sexual shame, which, along with the illegal status of prostitution, keeps sex workers and their allies from speaking out against violence and reporting assaults and rapes, which are sometimes committed by the police.

Speakers made the point that this march was one step towards dispelling that shame. They made the connection between violence against sex workers and violence against all women, LGBT people, and people of color, also stating that attackers especially target sex workers who are Transgender and people of color. Speakers stated that sex work is usually done for the purpose of survival and that Transgender people sometimes resort to it because they face massive discrimination in employment and educational opportunities.

SWOP SENT A LETTER to President-elect Obama and select cabinet appointees demanding policy changes including decriminalization and the classification of violence against sex workers as a hate crime. The letter states that listening to sex workers is important because they are at the forefront of the struggle against human trafficking and have been recognized by the Commission on AIDS in Asia as being important in the fight against the disease.

Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary General, has called for an end to discrimination against sex workers, stating that this would give them access to resources to help prevent the spread of AIDS. Their letter also calls for a repeal of the Anti-Prostitution Pledge in PEPFAR (President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) that forbids funding to any international organization that does not condemn prostitution.

The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers was observed by other groups in the U.S. and worldwide. It is a time to force the public to acknowledge as a tragedy the violence it would rather ignore or trivialize. It is also a time to affirm that the solutions to the problems surrounding sex work can only come from the sex workers themselves.

—Adele

Pro-choice rally



San Francisco—On the 36th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* the Right organized a so-called "walk for life" here among other cities. As in every year, there was a spirited counter-demonstration. Perhaps because many feel we "won" with Obama's election—after all, just the day before he struck down Bush's "global gag-rule" forbidding international family health providers to even mention abortion as a choice—there were not the usual thousands, but hundreds of young and old, women and men. One participant, referring to the "lifers" gathering on a nearby field, said, "We are now next to occupied territory. One day a year for the past five years thousands are bused into San Francisco to tell us that we are wrong. And we can say it is not working."

What was pronounced in this year's event was the attempt to not separate a woman's right to choose from all the other challenges facing the world. Thus one speaker called explicitly to "unite across false lines of single-issue." Francis, a young organizer for justice for Oscar Grant (see article p. 8) stated that Oscar Grant's killing is a part of a larger problem.

—Urszula Wislanka

Labor targeted as UFCW wins in N.C.

Detroit—A national propaganda campaign is underway by the Republican Party and business interests to defeat the proposed Employee Free Choice Act. This would give employees the right to union recognition if a majority of workers at a workplace signed a card indicating they wanted to join a union. Called card check, this could eliminate roadblocks to the unionization of employees.

This legislation, supported by President Obama and his Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, is a key demand of organized labor, which had thrown its support to Obama's presidential campaign. While many expect the legislation to be passed, it is anything but a done deal.

WAR CHEST TO DESTROY LABOR

The forces opposed are formidable and well-financed, including the Center for Union Facts, and other groups with misleading names like the Workforce Fairness Institute and the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, which is a federation of 500 business groups. They have millions of dollars at their disposal and have launched media attack ads aimed at Congress, other businesses and the public to block the legislation.

They hope to maintain present employee-employer relationships that allow employers to require elections for union recognition. While this sounds reasonable, in practice it is heavily skewed in favor of management.



Boycott Smithfield march before the UFCW was voted in

Word and World

refuse to recognize it and delay union representation for years through legal maneuvers. These practices were often ignored by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), staffed by corporate-friendly administrators in the Bush Administration. The NLRB, an agency designed to support unionization, became a powerful arm to attack and defeat the formation of unions.

A case in point is the history of the largest hog slaughterhouse in the nation, the Smithfield plant in Tar Heel, N.C., with about 5,000 workers. For 16 years efforts have been underway by the United Food and Commercial Workers union to gain recognition, including two elections that failed in 1994 and 1997. The company's violations of labor election laws were so blatant, including spying on and firing workers and beating union sympathizers on election day, that the NLRB was forced to bring charges against Smithfield.

It was not until 2006 that an appeals court upheld the charges and fined Smithfield \$1.5 million for its violations. The union recognition election, however, was not held until last December. Its success marked a milestone in labor organization in the notoriously anti-union South and will inspire further union organizing efforts in Southern states.

This success might not have been possible without heavy constraints imposed on the company because of past violations. Union organizers were free to talk to workers in the plant and a monitor could check every piece of campaign literature to guard against false claims. A coalition of the union, Jobs for Justice, and community groups launched a campaign that included boycotts of Smithfield products, demonstrations at shareholders' meetings and daily leafleting at the plant.

WORKERS GAIN CONFIDENCE

Many Latino workers were no longer in the plant. They had undoubtedly been intimidated by company threats to expose those illegally in the U.S.—especially if they supported the union—or had left in fear because of increasing immigrant raids by the government. Obama's win in North Carolina gave the workers, two-thirds of whom are Black, the conviction that they could change their exploitative conditions at Smithfield.

Card check organizing did not play a role in the Smithfield union victory. Data from the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Quebec, where they do have card check approval, indicates that the success rate is limited, since employers there have learned union-blocking tactics from U.S. employers who have permitted card check organizing.

The limited experience in the U.S. discloses that the union organizing success rate with card check is 70%, compared with 55-60% with NLRB elections. If the card check legislation is approved by Congress, corporate lawyers will be working overtime to find loopholes to block or delay unionization of workers.

—Andy Phillips

Some workers less equal than others

Detroit—Workplace issues, injuries, detentions, police brutality, you name it. Immigrants are catching hell. I am a lifelong Detroit, descended from auto-workers since our arrival in this Promised Land. I am 51 years old and have been active in labor and community grassroots issues from childhood to the present. My father is a retiree from Chrysler as was my grandfather, who came here in 1919. My family is hard-core working class and I am the single mother of four daughters. Together with a group of wonderful comrades, we formed the Centro Obrero after the big Immigrant Rights marches in March of 2006.

A few months back, a fight between neighbors broke out, which is not unusual in Southwest Detroit. A friend explained that she is the owner of a duplex, one part of which five young men rent. Three brothers and two cousins live quietly, only going to work and back. The next-door neighbors got into a conflict with these young men while they were sitting on the porch. They began to brawl in the street, a bottle was thrown, and the police were called. The police brought no interpreter and only listened to the white people tell what happened. The police arrested only the Mexicans and took three to jail.

When my friend insisted on interpreting, they threatened to arrest her. The young Mexican men are

Student jobs at stake at Univ. of Illinois

Champaign, Ill.—As graduate student employees at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign plan for bargaining this spring, the university administration is clearly taking advantage of the recession and its own "fiscal crisis" in order to create a climate of fear and uncertainty on campus. A hiring freeze has already been instituted, and several mass emails have been sent out to students and faculty warning of hard times to come.

THE LATEST ATTEMPT to scaremonger while feigning transparency came last week when Chancellor Richard Hermann held a town hall meeting to discuss the potentially drastic measures the university may have to take. He started his presentation by showing a map of the U.S. with 44 states in red to represent the state universities that are currently making cuts.

He and his hand-picked panelists spent the next 45 minutes discussing the situation in vague terms: "Core programs must be protected." "Layoffs and furloughs may be necessary." "At this stage we don't know what will happen." This was followed by questions from those in attendance, many of them union members and leaders from AFSCME representing the campus clerical workers, the Association of Academic Professionals and the Graduate Employees Organization (GEO).

The administration was forced to answer hard questions: "Are you considering pay freezes for those in the administration making the most?" "Would you be willing to commit to protecting the jobs of those lowest-paid workers on campus?" The answers to these questions involved a lot of sidestepping and avoidance of specifics.

As part of its plan for generating income, the university presented a proposal in January for reducing appointments that generate tuition waivers for some graduate students. This means that those students who are only able to attend the university because their teaching appointment waives their tuition will now be forced out.

The plan would eliminate positions in departments that only offer terminal masters degrees, not doctorates, as well as positions in any department for teaching assistants assigned 10 hours or less of work. At present that will affect roughly a quarter of GEO members, but all members are concerned.

If the administration is allowed to do this, then it could certainly spread to those with larger appointments as well as encourage departments to change the way they offer assistantships. All positions could be reduced to ten hours if it proves to be income-generating for departments.

IN LIGHT OF UPCOMING bargaining, the GEO is in a tough spot. Many ask what good will it do to ask for a measly \$2,000 raise if the university can yank our tuition waivers—that would force us to pay \$15,000 in tuition when we only make \$13,000 through our stipend. But is it possible to protect tuition waivers through the bargaining table? The university has always preserved its power to dictate the terms of defining appointments. Incorporating language into the contract that protects the definition of tuition waiver generating appointments will be unprecedented.

But GEO members are in it for the long haul. In its first general membership meeting of the semester, GEO members reviewed a draft of our proposed bargaining platform. It includes asking for a living wage, improving healthcare, and insuring equality for all graduate student employees. Given the current climate and the stance the university has taken, it is clear that we are in for a tough fight.

—Grad Student Union member

WORKSHOPTALKS

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or a family history of illness. Since elderly patients take more care than the average patient, and make us look bad on the boss's time-study ledger, many of us shave time off our ledgers either by avoiding being assigned to very old and very sick patients, or by putting pressure on them to hurry—or sometimes even commit fraud.

Some Certified Nurses' Aides feel forced to doctor their patient-care documents—making up vital statistics without having seen the patient. They enlist the RN supervisor to get permission to tie up demented patients just to cut the time it takes to deal with them. There are really ugly fights with co-workers about who is going to take the next older and sicker patient.

Falsifying forms is done, I feel, with a nod and a wink from management. I've reported some of these falsifications. My bosses didn't do anything. I think they figure if it helps their bottom line and keeps their departmental budget in line, then why not turn a gaze away from employees doing these fraudulent things.

HEALTHCARE ON PAPER

People are judged by what is on the ledger, not by what actually gets done. As long as no one is caught, the boss will be promoted because they are under budget. That a few patients might be harmed here and there does not come into the calculations until they get caught. Then they put on a big show for the state authorities.

That's what happened a month ago when the California State Dept. of Health and Medicare regulators did a surprise inspection, on a tip from an anonymous caller, probably a worker or a patient. The surprise inspection uncovered a myriad of violations on the part of management. Violations included delays in patient care and poor documentation. Medicare regulators had threatened to pull federal funding.

Now top administrators are scrambling for cover. They called all managers and supervisors to a mandatory emergency meeting to try to get everyone "within federal guidelines," and to abide by state regulations. All managers are lecturing their workers daily on the top priority of preserving Medicare funding.

HMO GOAL: HEALTH OF BOTTOM LINE

Some of us noticed how they forgot to add that the point of any remedy ought to be to improve patient care, not just to preserve funding. Other workers dismissed the whole charade as a dog and pony show, knowing that a few heads might roll, but every incentive in our alienating workplace is to let things slip again once the inspectors leave.

Denying healthcare is no longer restricted to insurance adjusters. It is the way healthcare is practiced on those who have insurance. It is capitalism, and its drive to self-expand, that forces everyone who works under it to behave according to the dictates of its anti-human values.

HMO practice, based on the objectivity of labor time under capitalism, separates us healthcare workers from our patients and fellow workers. Rather than regulations, we need a new concept of labor that will confront this false objectivity head-on.

being charged with assault with intent to commit murder—there are no injured parties. They remain in jail. I will go to the Mexican Consul in Detroit and ask him to help them get immediately deported to Mexico instead of waiting to go to a hearing or remain in a justice system where they have no rights and could easily go to prison.

It is strange to hope for deportation, but we find ourselves in that position more and more these days. One of the people detained by immigration after being injured at work (and because he was injured at work) ended up getting his arm amputated because he never received treatment.

We are going to meet with the mayor, Ken Cockrel, and confront the administration over the violations of human rights going on in our city, particularly with regard to the No Profiling and Sanctuary City ordinances. If we don't make this the Promised Land, no one else will, either. These are the hardest times I have ever seen.

Now that we have national and international contacts, we can communicate better and find missing persons. I am hoping Centro Obrero gets a website for this purpose. People can let us know where they end up, what the journey was like, and how their loved ones can find them.

—Elena M. Herrada

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: To mark 50 years since the Cuban revolution, we print Raya Dunayevskaya's *Two Worlds* column from the December 1960 issue of *News & Letters*, originally titled, "The Cuban Revolution: The Year After."

In a few weeks the Cuban Revolution will mark [the second anniversary of] its victory. It is no accident that its enthusiastic and uncritical alliance with the Russian orbit of power is almost as old. Contrary to the claims of the old radicals, who can no longer remember what constitutes principled working-class politics, this was not the only path open to it when it shook off the American imperialist yoke. The revolutions that preceded it—in the Middle East and in Africa—took advantage of the global division into two nuclearly-armed blocs fighting for world power, to play off one against the other to their own national advantage. If Cuba chose to disregard this precedent and align itself with but one of these power blocs, the answer cannot lie outside of itself.

FIDELISMO

Forget Russia for a moment—it was nowhere around when Fidel Castro marched into Havana at the head of the July 26th guerilla movement. Neither it nor the native Cuban Communists supported that movement during the seven years it hid out in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. The revolutionary petty-bourgeois lawyer who led this movement had been so little concerned with Communist theory that he gained financial help from many a Cuban, and even some American, liberal bourgeois who had had their fill of the corrupt Batista.

The guerilla fighters from the mountains, the peasants in the Oriente province, the proletariat and students of Havana merged to bring the greatest revolution Latin America had ever witnessed. There is no doubt that with the overthrow of the bloody Batista dictatorship, the revolution broke decisively with U. S. imperialism, which had plundered the Cuban economy. In expropriating the American capitalistic owners, it achieved an agricultural revolution and put an end to the feudal relations between the Cuban peasants and the Cuban-American plantation owners. At the same time, however, the power lay not in peasant committees, but in the state who was the new owner.

STATE-ISM

As for Castro's attitude to the industrial workers, from the very start his bossist, administrative mentality stuck out from the day of victorious entry into Havana when he demanded that the revolutionary students and workers there put down their arms. He proclaimed his movement alone to be the government, his army alone the army. Nevertheless, the overwhelming enthusiasm for the revolution made the proletariat, despite its reservations, lay down its arms, and willingly tighten its belt even as the unemployed continued to be silent. When it did, in due course, at the first trade union congress, question some economic policies of the

On the 50th anniversary of Batista's overthrow

Fidelismo, statism, and the tragedy of the Cuban Revolution

new government, Castro ran out of the convention, calling it a "madhouse."

It is at this point that a kinship was established between the new regime and the native Communists, for it is they who used their leadership of the trade unions to transform them into a pliant tool of the new armed state. **Together with world Communism Fidel Castro shared the conception of the "backwardness of the masses" who had to be led. The state would henceforward give the orders, the workers and peasants would continue to work harder while the leaders continued to lead and set foreign policy.**

Just as the peasant found that, in tilling the soil, he was responsible, not to a committee elected by himself and subject to his recall, but to the state, so the worker found that he too had no organization responsible to him. Despite the lower rents, there has been no change, except for the worse, in the workers' conditions of life and labor. Unemployment continues as do poor wages. Worst of all, there are no Workers' Councils or any other form of free expression, whether in their own organization or in the press. Those who had hailed the revolution had by now as little freedom to criticize any action of the government, least of all its total embrace of all things Russian, Chinese, East European, including the bloody regime of Kadar's Hungary.

The stream of refugees are by no means restricted to "Batista's supporters" or "agents of American imperialism." Everyone from the editor of *Bohemia* to militant trade unionists have attempted to escape, and if the price isn't always the firing squad, it is always silence. When only a Castro—Fidel or Raul—or a Che Guevara have endless voice here and abroad while the masses are made voiceless; when all spontaneity becomes hypostatized into state grooves; when relations with the outside world are not as people-to-people but through army-state powers; and when all this occurs in a world divided into two nuclearly-armed powers which threaten humanity's very existence—isn't it time for a new realistic balance sheet to be drawn up? Least helpful in this regard are the old radicals.

OLD RADICALS

Trotskyists, who have spent years in exposing Russia as "a degenerated workers' state" headed by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, now feel that it is

necessary to whitewash that regime "in order to fight the main enemy, Yankee imperialism." Even some radicals who have spent many years exposing Russian Communism as just another form of state capitalism feel that it is their "revolutionary duty" to spend all their time attacking American imperialism, and none exposing the other pole of world imperialism—Russian totalitarianism.

What is it that impels such self-imposed blindness to the tragedy of the Cuban Revolution which still has

a chance to compel its leaders to follow an independent road? Why should the workers and peasants in Cuba be allowed to think that in the Chinese "commune" the Chinese peasants are any less oppressed than the Cubans were by the American



Cuban revolutionaries on horseback

plantation owners? Why should the Cuban workers be kept in ignorance of conditions of labor in totalitarian state capitalistic Russia? Why should the Cuban people know that the Guantanamo base is a threat to their existence and not know that the Russian tanks rolled over the Hungarian Freedom Fighters? Why should they only know of the discrimination against the Negroes in the South but not know of the extermination of nationalities opposed to Stalinism in Russia?

SOME POSSIBLE DOUBLE-CROSSES

Why should literacy be equated to illiteracy of the realities of a world divided into two, and only two, nuclearly-armed powers out for conquest of the world? Why not allow your new hero, Castro, to know some things about Russia—its cynicism in foreign policy—which might easily result in its dropping of Cuba the minute it could get a "peaceful co-existence alliance" with America? Why, for that matter, not make yourself aware that this petty bourgeois lawyer is just as cynical and could as easily slide into alliance with the American State Department if he came to face the only truly independent third force—the masses wishing to mold their own destiny in their own hands sans Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and the newly-arisen state bureaucracy?

There is one reason, and one reason only, behind all this self-imposed blindness to the realities of our state capitalist world. One and all are Planners who fear the spontaneity of the revolutionary masses more than anything else on earth, including state capitalism.

Fidelistas, like Communists, Trotskyists like other radicals who thirst for power, share the capitalistic mentality of the "backwardness of the masses." All are ready "to lead," none to listen.

WHO ARE THE DOOMED?

It has been said of Jesus: "He could save all others. Himself he could not save." It needs now to be said of the old radicals: They could save no one, and now they do not even want to save themselves. The one consoling feature is their impotence. Far from being capable of doing the revolution, history will show them to be the doomed ones.

To read some of the many other writings by Raya Dunayevskaya on Latin America and the Caribbean, visit the Archives (to order, see p. 7). From 10/25/1962 *Weekly Political Letter*, "Marxist-Humanism vs. the U.S. Blockade of Cuba, the Russian Missile Bases There, Fidel Castro's 'Selective' Party, All Playing with Nuclear Holocaust":

Even without [the] bomb, [Fidel Castro] has moved so far away from the revolution he led that it is hard to see what he is making of Cuba other than a satellite of Russia, and I don't mean it only as a storer of missile bases, **but as an outpost of single party state-capitalism....** Anyone can...repeat generalizations of Marxism on the role of the working class. The proof, **the only proof**, that it is a way of life, not a mere weapon of propaganda, is its **realization in life**. No such thing is true in Fidel's Cuba, where not a single organ—from the trades unions to the peasant unions, from the state to the party—is any longer controlled by the working people.

Celebrate International Women's Day, March 8, and Women's History Month, with Raya Dunayevskaya's Trilogy of Revolution



On the Paris Commune: "The milkmaids, who were on the streets before dawn...surrounded the soldiers and prevented them from carrying out Thiers' orders. Although the men had not yet come into the streets on this early morning, and although the women were not armed, they held their own. As in every real peoples' revolution, new strata of the population were awakened. This time it was the women who were to act first." —**Marxism and Freedom**

"The reader will find especially cogent the fear the Black women's liberationist expressed that 'when it comes to putting down the gun' she might once again have a broom shoved into her hands. The problematic of the day, indeed, is contained in that question, 'What happens the day after the revolution?' That is precisely the uniqueness of today's forces of revolution which is the Reason as well, whether it be the Women's Liberation Movement, white and Black, or the youth." —**Philosophy and Revolution**

"Marx envisioned a totally new man, a totally new woman, a totally new life form (and by no means only for marriage)—in a word, a totally new society. That is why we still have so much to learn from Marx's concept of Man/Woman, not only in his abstract 1844 articulation, but in his empiric 1880 formulation when it was integrated with the need for total uprooting of capitalism and creation of a class-less society." —**Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution**

"...Women's Liberation is an illumination of Marx's vision of human development which he articulated as 'an absolute movement of becoming'....Marx extended the concept of Alienation to the Man/Woman relationship and to all life under capitalism. This is why he concluded that the system...needed nothing short of a 'revolution in permanence.' Clearly, that little word, dialectic, which comprised a critique of 'all that is'—that is, the 'negation of the negation'—opened a whole new continent of thought and of revolution." —**Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution**



See literature ad page 7 to order

PHILOSOPHIC DIALOGUE: *Marxism and Freedom Today*

Organizational Responsibility for Marxist-Humanism

All of philosophy consists in making explicit what is only implicit in the objective movement of history. An objective view of historical development of necessity reveals the subjective, the human force which will be the one to realize the forward movement of humanity. —Raya Dunayevskaya

When asked by Marcuse, who was writing the introduction to her book *Marxism and Freedom*, to summarize that work, Raya Dunayevskaya did so in a way that revealed how the book was making explicit what had been implicit in Marx (see "Philosophic Foundation of Marxism," Dec. 2008-Jan. 2009 *N&L*). First and foremost was the importance of establishing that Marx was no mere economist, but a philosopher, and that Marxism had a philosophic foundation grounded in the Hegelian dialectic. She showed that Marx's philosophic foundation was not limited to his early period when he wrote his *Humanist Essays*, but that it was developed from the young Marx, through the Marx who wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, to the mature author of that "most economic" work which is preferred by the academic economists—Volume III of *Capital*. Part of that Humanism is shown as well in how explicitly Dunayevskaya makes clear that all of "Marx's economic categories [are] social categories," and "are thoroughly permeated with the humanism that came out of the working-class struggles for the shortening of the working day."

HUMANISM, HISTORY AND THEORY

This humanism of Marx is inseparable from what Dunayevskaya called "the relationship of theory to history," which meant never dividing the two and including today's struggles—particularly working-class struggles—in what is meant by "history." She makes that element of Marxism explicit by showing that the "proof of this relationship of theory to history," is how objective events of Marx's time—including the Paris Commune and the Civil War in the U.S.—compelled

* Raya Dunayevskaya, 1963 Perspectives Thesis, "The Need to Transform Reality"; *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, # 3279; excerpts republished in the January/February 2001 *News & Letters*.

EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

and so total that only the deepest uprooting of the system of capitalism that gives rise to them can respond to the fundamental changes that the American people are demanding, and that has turned all eyes first and foremost to the global economic crisis.

TODAYNESS OF MARX'S CAPITAL

There is no way to understand today's global economic crisis other than the way Marx's greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, marched onto the historic stage, as it did in the mid-1970s when his analysis of the law of motion of capitalism to its collapse became not only theory but fact. It was the point at which there was a structural change in capitalism, with constant capital (machinery) overwhelming variable capital (living, employed labor—the only source of value). The resulting decline in the rate of profit was followed by investment nearly stopping, while unemployment soared. That point of capitalism's development is what ensures the collapse of the system we are seeing today.

While there are great differences between now and then, and even greater differences between today and 1933 when Franklin Delano Roosevelt confronted a recognized world Depression, FDR's efforts then—as Obama's are now—were dictated by the goal of saving capitalism. But it took World War II to pull the U.S. out of the Depression and save capitalism.

Today the situation is so grim that youth are joining the armed forces at the risk of their lives to get work. And, under the impact of worsening economic developments, workers are planning demonstrations in Washington. At the same time, although the masses can be counted on to keep trying to push Obama to the Left, he has continued to convincingly demonstrate his intent to save capitalism, as seen in many of his appointments and pronouncements and in his proposed stimulus legislation.

FDR's creation of the New Deal was an effort to ward off the potential revolutionary situation at that moment. None are calling today such a moment. But that very fact is where the importance lies of the new relations promised by the numbers of white workers who broke beyond their concerns with race to vote for Obama. It is here where we can see the importance of creative new labor struggles such as the sit-down strike and victory of the workers of Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago. And it is all these developments that underline the meaning of the new series of discussions we have undertaken as "Confronting Today's Crises: the Marxist-Humanist return to Marx and the revolutionary abolition of capitalism."

him to make changes in *Capital*.

Thus, *Marxism and Freedom* made explicit the role of the intellectual. Marx's methodology, which shaped his completely new form of theoretical engagement with movements of his day, becomes concrete. Dunayevskaya wants her book to show today's intellectuals how they can re-create Marxism for our age by grasping his methodology. So important is this task to her that it takes up two points in her three-point summation at the end of her letter to Marcuse; and the three points are so tightly tied together they read to me as one. The "re-establishment of the philosophic foundation of Marxism in Hegel" is certainly unseparated from "the summation of all three volumes of Marx's *Capital* in a manner that the reader knows Marxism both as theory and as methodology"; and this is to become "so real" to the intellectual "that he could indeed discern the movement from practice to theory and as eagerly long for the unity of the two [the movement from practice and the movement from theory] as does the worker."

CREATING CATEGORIES

While Dunayevskaya's letter to Marcuse on *Marxism and Freedom* makes explicit in Marx's development his philosophic foundation in Hegel and its ramifications including a totally new kind of revolutionary intellectual, Tim Finnigan, in his article in the same issue, "On the 50th anniversary of *Marxism and Freedom*," revisits what is implicit in Dunayevskaya's own contribution. When he begins by singling out the book's new philosophic category, "the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory," it is to explore the power of making such a historic-philosophical category. He does this by bringing in a quote from Hegel's *Science of Logic*: "the greater extension is equally a higher intensity." Creating a category brings something into the world that has not been recognized before. It creates, therefore, a new reality. It is the new reality that makes a "greater extension" and "higher intensity" possible, because we are seeing and experiencing things in a very new way with a new illumination.

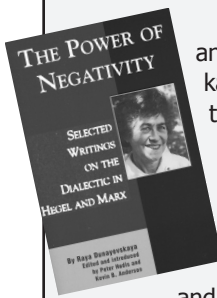
Finnigan cites Dunayevskaya on the process of making categories: "He who glorifies theory and genius but fails to recognize the limits of a theoretical work, fails likewise to recognize the indispensability of the theoretician. All of history is the history of the struggle for freedom. If, as a theoretician, one's ears are attuned to the new impulses from the workers, new 'categories' will be created, a new way of thinking, a step forward in philosophic cognition" (p. 89). This is what *Marxism and Freedom* accomplished, and it is a summation of the book. But he goes further in his short article in seeing that "the question of the dialectics of organization and philosophy was already present in 1958" in the book, in the category created about the movement from practice being itself a form of theory. He illustrates this in a deceptively short manner: simply by saying that "the 'indispensability of the theoretician' can be seen as the responsibility for Marxist-Humanism."

Why does the indispensability of the theoretician imply an organizational conclusion? While there are probably many answers, it seems to me that taking responsibility for an idea—when it is the Idea of Freedom, when it is about revolution and transforming our world, and if it is to be unseparated from the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory—it is not enough to write about it in a book. Rather it must be tested and practiced in an organization. Taking responsibility for the Idea of Freedom has to shape organization if we are to have a revolution that realizes all human potential.

—Terry Moon

The Power of Negativity

by Raya Dunayevskaya



Brilliant theorist, committed activist, and passionate scholar, Raya Dunayevskaya was a role model for my generation. We are fortunate to have her back in this wonderfully edited work.... In contrast to the boring pap of commodified culture and political sound bites, Raya's interpretation makes the logic of Hegel's absolute idea a fascinating and compelling read.

—Susan Buck-Morss, Cornell University

Part I: The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism

Part II: Studies in Hegelian and Marxian Dialectics, 1956-63

Part III: Theory and Practice at a Turning Point, 1964-71

Part IV: After Philosophy and Revolution: Hegel's Absolutes and Marx's Humanism, 1972-81

Part V: The Changed World and the Need for Philosophic New Beginnings, 1982-87

Appendix: Excerpts from 1941-51 Philosophic Correspondence with C.L.R. James and Grace Lee Boggs

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From Latin America

Dunayevskaya's 1957 letter to Herbert Marcuse on the crucial themes of *Marxism and Freedom* as it was going to press, began with "the philosophic foundation of Marxism." Not all philosophic thought transcends its own time. But radical Marxist thought, at least Marx's own writings, rooted in and at the same time re-founding Hegel's dialectic in the era of proletarian revolt, speaks in important ways to the present moment.

MARXISM AND FREEDOM WAS structured around historical movements from practice toward theory from the French Revolution to the European revolutions of Marx's day, to the Russian Revolution, and the mid-20th century revolts, revolutions and movements from below. Dunayevskaya demonstrated in the book, and emphasized in her letter, that such movements from below challenge the philosopher, the revolutionary theoretician, the radical intellectual, to reorganize his/her thought. Thus, she contrasted Hegel, Marx, and Lenin to Proudhon, Lassalle and other radical intellectuals who responded to their historic moments, and yet did not meet the challenge of fully reorganizing their thought to meet the emerging workers' praxis.

In Latin America today there are powerful emancipatory social movements. Whether one takes as the point of departure the Zapatista Indigenous rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, 1994; or the *piqueteros* and then mass uprising in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as the 21st century opened—what is clear is that there is a dialectic of revolt from below that not only has confronted neo-liberal imperialism from abroad and its home-grown personifications within each country, but also has challenged radical activist-thinkers in Latin America to meet this movement from below with the construction of a liberatory project.

HOW IS THIS CHALLENGE being met? As opposed to the elitism of vanguard parties and of narrow guerilla focoism that dominated much of the action and discourse in Latin America from the 1960s through the 1980s, the 1990s to today witnessed a new appreciation of the movement from below in diverse social subjects, and the need for open, non-hierarchical organization. At the same time, there has not always been an effort to create theory that meets the masses' praxis. Often there has been an attitude that everything must come out of the movement from below, with theory being primarily a recording of the masses' self-activity.

This is not wholly the case. The Zapatistas for one, certainly in their Sixth Declaration from the Lacondon jungle, issued a theoretical document that was in their own words, anti-capitalist and from the Left. They have sought to develop their theory in response to the practices of Indigenous communities in the autonomous zones in Chiapas. Also, their document was not just a photocopy of the movement.

Another expression of theory has come from an active thinking about utopia in Latin America. The Latin American concept differs from the abstract utopian socialism of the mid-19th century that Marx critiqued. It was born in resistance to the imposition of European "utopias" upon Latin America, which were in fact living nightmares of exploitation and domination. Neo-liberalism led by U.S. capitalism has been the latest manifestation of this.

In contrast, in Latin America the concept of utopia, based on local experiences and Indigenous ways of doing and thinking, opened a space of social resistance in the present. An illuminating articulation of this comes from the liberation theology thinker Gustavo Gutierrez:

"Utopia, contrary to what current usage suggests, is characterized by its relation to present historical reality . . . Utopia necessarily means a denunciation of the existing order . . . But utopia is also an annunciation, an annunciation of what is not yet, but will be; it is the forecast of a different order of things, a new society. . . [Utopia is] subversive of the existing order. If utopia does not lead to action in the present, it is an evasion of reality" (*Theology of Liberation*, p. 233).

CAN SUCH AN EXPRESSION of utopia, as well as the Zapatistas' theoretical expressions, find a resonance in Marx's dialectic of a "thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism" that Dunayevskaya argues is "the philosophic foundation of Marxism"? I don't mean resonance only as an historic echo, but rather as a re-creation of Marx's Marxism in the present moment, which can fuse with the Latin American theory and praxis toward a new society.

At the November Social Forum of the Americas in Guatemala many participants, particularly Guatemalan Indigenous activists, were attracted by the title *Marxismo y Libertad* (*Marxism and Freedom*). Here in Mexico *Marxismo y Libertad* study groups have formed with activists in the Zapatista support movement.

Clearly, many Latin American activists are searching for emancipatory ideas, including Marxist-Humanism, in movements and organizations of resistance against conditions of exploitation and restriction.

—Eugene Walker

CAPITALISM IN CRISIS AND CLASS STRUGGLES TODAY

Albert Einstein once said "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." From that perspective, there is no solution for workers to the current crisis in our political economy. But it is not a problem to some. The bankers have received a cool \$700 billion with no questions asked which they are now using to buy banks and other assets at fire-sale prices. Problem? What problem?

But this greatest robbery in history is a problem for millions who are now receiving a lesson in the class struggle. They will not soon forget their bitter experience. During the course of the Russian Revolution the revolutionary Vladimir Ilyich Lenin stated that the laboring classes of Russia had gained more in class consciousness in the space of a few months than in the entire previous generation. This process is at work now. Today, with the internet, satellite and all manner of electronic communications, Lenin's space of a few months can be reduced to a matter of weeks or even days.

The government's purpose in the bailout was to preserve the system at all costs (paid by taxpayers-workers). Its view of the working class, especially since 9-11 under President Dubya, is full of contempt and threatens the freedoms that have been bitterly fought for. The workers have not yet realized their historic task but *News & Letters* will help them in this. It is now time for capitalism to be dumped on the ash heap of history.

**Retired Postal Worker
Battle Creek, Mich.**

In "One-sided class war in auto meltdown" (Dec.-Jan. *N&L*), Andy Phillips says workers who have lost their jobs are asking "where's my bailout?" It explains what's on the mind of the Republic Windows and Doors workers. It's what all workers are asking today about the system. The patient is dying because liquidity, its circulatory system, ground to a standstill. Workers know they are bailing the system out with their skins.

**Healthworker
California**

Marx was always listening to the working class. And he was a great theoretician. The movement for the eight-hour day was important to him. The Workshop Talks column in the Dec.-Jan. issue on "Marx on the shop floor"

recreates that aspect of what Marxism is. Obama being Black will not change much in the world. Capitalism will continue with him at the helm. During the Great Depression, the administration created jobs building roads and bridges and dams, but it was war-time production that ended unemployment. It was going to war that ended the Depression.

**Nonagenarian
San Francisco Bay Area**

The unprecedented Defense budget today isn't aimed only at existing wars but future ones. Gates, with Obama's blessing, is planning on mixing NASA—up to now strictly a civilian program—with Defense budgets, in order to deal with the threat China poses to the U.S. war machine in space. The colossal deficit spending becomes a "good investment" in the capitalist sense only after the war's massive destruction of capital—topped off in World War II with the first use of atomic weapons. That's what "saved" U.S. capitalism from full statification, as it was then able to restart the process of accumulation in a world where it alone had intact capital.

**Marxist-Humanist
California**

The Lead in the Dec.-Jan. *N&L* on the "Outpouring for Obama" points to something beyond Obama himself. The jubilation that followed wasn't because the Messiah came. It was that the masses felt they made a change.

**Supporter
Oakland, Cal.**

What Obama said about the economy and having to act swiftly and boldly is why white workers voted for a Black man. They rejected the last eight years. The "boldly and swiftly" I want to see more of is the workers taking over, like at Republic Windows and Doors.

**Worker and Writer
West Coast**

OBAMA AND THE MILITARY

I find it alarming that the media are referring to Mr. Obama as the "Commander-in-Chief" more often than as President, and that the same was done frequently under George W. Bush. I remember that the first president to publicly refer to himself as "Commander-in-Chief" was Jimmy Carter and that it caused quite a stir. It was always consid-

conference protesting against pre-term release from prison of the war criminal Colonel Budanov, who raped and killed a Chechen woman. He received many threats from supporters of "heroic officer" Budanov—and was killed a few days after the latter's release...

Though the world civil society cannot stop the political terrorism in Russia by its own forces, it can exert pressure on Russian authorities by showing that their attitude towards escalating fascist violence ruins the international "image" of the Russian state...

We ask you to send letters to Russian embassies in your countries, expressing indignation about political terrorism in Russia and demanding thorough investigation of the murder of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova and punishment of its organizers. Letters can be mailed to russianembassy@mind-spring.com (US) and office@rusemblon.org (UK).

**Praxis Research and Education-
Center** (praxiscenter@gmail.com)

Editor's note: An accompanying note from Richard Greeman, Secretary of the Victor Serge Foundation (rgreeman@gmail.com), informs that the Victor Serge Public Library—established by Praxis in 1997 to make non-Stalinist left-wing books in different languages available for the first time to Russian scholars and activists—has been told by the authorities that it is being evicted from its premises in Moscow.

READERS' VIEWS

ered a civilian office, even under Dwight Eisenhower. This is a very ominous shift in attitude and reflects a further regression in our American political life. We need to pay attention to this.

**Observer
Oakland, Cal.**

It is said that President Obama wants to set a new tone. He wants to see a new language of reconciliation and engagement towards the Mid-East. He keeps referring to "mutual respect" and "partnership." It's very admirable, even if it sounds a bit too much like corporate-speak to someone like me. But as a Black man, he knows full well (as he expressed it so eloquently in a speech during the height of his pastor Rev. Wright's controversy over race) that before any reconciliation and fundamental change in human relations can occur, the truth about the past, in all its atrocities and exploitations, must first be told and acknowledged.

Progress requires consciousness of history and philosophy, not simply good intentions. While he speaks of "mutual respect" and "partnership," history in the present is staring at him in the face, in the form of the bombing raids over Gaza, and recent troop increases towards the war in Afghanistan. If that's change, then keep the change.

**Asian-American
California**

GAZA'S AGONY

The over 1.5 million people of Gaza live in abject poverty. More than 80% earn under \$2 a day. Officially, over half the working population is unemployed. Hunger and malnutrition, lack of sanitation, medical care, sewer systems and clean water has made Gaza a disaster zone even before Israel's 22-day invasion. The tiny strip is not economically viable even without the air, sea and land blockade imposed by Israel—a clear violation of the cease-fire accord reached between Israel and Hamas.

Israel drastically restricted the number of trucks carrying food, fuel and water into Gaza early in November from 123 to just 16 trucks a day, down from a peak of 475 back in 2007. An underground economy was created, carried out through the tunnels. It is true that Hamas also uses these tunnels to smuggle arms. But the greater fact is that the Palestinians of Gaza could not subsist without them. As always, truth is the first casualty of war.

**Middle-Easterner
Oakland, Cal.**

Here is an excerpt of a leaflet dropped by Israel into Gaza before a recent bombing: "As a result of the acts undertaken by terrorists in your area against Israel, the IDF is forced to respond immediately and take action in this area. For your own safety, you are asked to leave the area immediately." Needless to say, there is nowhere to go. Gaza is a tiny area—10% the size of Rhode Island, densely occupied, and all the borders are sealed shut. But Israelis are still repeating the mantra that turns my stomach: "The IDF is the most moral army in the world."

Throughout these horrific weeks, the most carefully documented reports inside Israel of what is and isn't actually happening have been those of the human rights organizations.

The peace organizations continue raising their brave and lonely voices to the ongoing vilification by "patriotic" passers-by. Here's what I wrote on my sign: "We have become our own worst nightmare." Most passers-by didn't get it.

**Gila Svirsky
Jerusalem**

THE MOMENT LENIN MISSED?

I always enjoy being informed of events in the USA as you report them. But I was particularly impressed by your article on then President-Elect Obama. I also found the article by Tom More on Lenin interesting, although I would have preferred it to sound a little less sectarian. While I sympathize with your desire to propagate the ideas of Raya Dunayevskaya, this must be done in a way that does not lead people to reject them. I recognize it is a difficult line to tread.

**Contributor
Australia**

Apart from her direct questioning of Lenin in her 1953 *Letters on Hegel's Absolutes*, Dunayevskaya had only very light criticism of Lenin all the way until she wrote *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. Her criticism emerged through Lenin's engagement with Hegel, which gave a different view of his ideas in the context of the objectivity of ideas. The thread through which we engage Lenin's limitations was very specific and it goes through what he did see, and what could have taken him in a different direction.

**Ron Brokmeyer
Oakland, Cal.**



VOICES FROM WITHIN THE WALLS

Every issue gets better. I especially like the articles on Raya and

Karl Marx. In the Dec.-Jan. 2009 issue my favorite was about the "Outpouring for Obama" points beyond election to full freedom." I found it important that your article on Obama mentioned Abraham Lincoln. It let me know I was not alone in thinking along those lines. I am speaking along the same lines at a meeting of the Gavel Club here.

**Prisoner
Florida**

I was so happy to read and study Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*. I know the best way to demonstrate my appreciation is by taking what I glean from it and trying to make it concrete. I hope to do it because now, more than ever before, the economic crisis that capitalism has created needs to be adequately explained. Just because imperialist capital has a Black face won't alter its absolute general law of motion.

**Prisoner
Pelican Bay, Cal.**

I read the article by Terry Moon on "Military murders and cover-ups." I am wondering if it is possible to compile the names of all the women who died since the U.S. war started in Iraq. I'd like to include it in something I'm writing. Despite what has been reported and published, more cover-ups continue and it must be made known for the bloodshed to stop.

**Prisoner
Coalinga, Cal.**

I love *News & Letters* for offering information and insight that is generally suppressed by regular channels, and for being an outlet that represents grass-roots struggles throughout the world. I share it with fellow prisoners, who are beginning to also see the reality beyond their indoctrination.

**Prisoner
California**

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

It is heartening to see that the first legislation President Obama signed into law, nine days after his inauguration, was a victory for the rights of women workers. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act corrects John Roberts' disgusting Supreme Court decision in 2007 that gutted the ability of women workers to sue for wage discrimination if they did not file within 180 days of the initial decision, even if the victim is unaware of the discrimination until much later. Now 70, Ms. Ledbetter, who attended the bill signing, worked for Goodyear Tire & Rubber for 19 years before she discovered she was being paid less than men doing the same job. Unfortunately, the new law will not allow her to claim lost wages or the \$360,000 court settlement she was awarded, or to receive a pension based on the wages she should have received. But she said, "I have an even richer reward—that future generations of women will have a better chance at fair pay." **Mary Jo Grey Chicago**



mestic violence, rape, and sexual assault in the U.S. over a two-year period. It's important to emphasize the word "reported," as most assaults go unreported. While a more accurate survey may explain some of the increase, there is no doubt the militarization of U.S. society since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is involved. Rape and sexual abuse by men returning from those wars have skyrocketed.

Women's Liberationist Illinois

Looking at women in the military as in Terry Moon's column in the Dec.-Jan. *N&L*, is the humanist way of confronting militarism, not just decrying the military as an arm of U.S. imperialism.

I had nightmares for several days after reading the story from Somalia in that same issue. We need to be able to tell a story like this not just as an example of cruelty but as an outrage against everyone's humanity.

The Lesbian activist's critiques of a variety of tendencies within that movement show the importance of recognizing that the media spokespeople don't represent those who are in the movement.

Urszula Wislanka California

It is good to know that three major feminist groups—the Feminist Majority Foundation, The National Organization for Women, and the California National Organization for Women—have submitted an amicus brief to the California Supreme Court in support of legal challenges to Proposition 8, which overturned the right to same-sex marriage in the state. That Proposition would also jeopardize fundamental constitutional rights for women, including the right to decide whether or not to bear a child, the right of sexual privacy, and the right not to be discriminated against in employment. The Court is expected to hear oral arguments in the case in March, the month we celebrate International Women's Day.

Lifelong Feminist Illinois

I've met many Leftists who act as if it doesn't make any difference who is president of the U.S. They even said this about Bush—as if capitalism doesn't have a human face. In many cases it is a matter of life and death. That is clearly seen in how every Republican since Ronald Reagan has created or reinstated the global gag rule, that outlaws international family-planning groups from even talking about abortion if they receive any money from the U.S., no matter what it is used for. That rule has been directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of women. You don't have to be under the illusion that Obama is going to challenge capitalism rather than devote himself to keeping it going, to still think it is a good thing that Bush—who directly caused so many deaths either by war or policy—is finally gone.

Feminist Memphis

There's a new government report showing huge increases in reported do-

PROTESTS DO HELP

According to the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration, there were 51 miners killed last year, the lowest on record. A part of this is undoubtedly due to the recent coal mine tragedies in Utah, Kentucky and West Virginia that created a national outrage from the public and resulted in new legislation that called for mandatory mine inspections and led to the hiring last year of 360 more inspectors. The record low of 51 killed last year compares with 67 killed in 2007 and 73 in 2006.

Ex-miner Detroit

Canada's New Democratic Party has switched its official position from being against the war in Afghanistan to supporting it. The reversal comes as the NDP joins the pro-war Liberal Party in a coalition designed to unseat the ruling Conservative party government. Progressives and anti-war organizations are shocked at the switch. Please express your outrage and protest at this shocking support of the U.S. War of Terror in Afghanistan. It is hoped that enough protests both at home and abroad may see the NDP switch positions back to a principled opposition. No to Canadian War in Afghanistan! No to NDP Warmongering!

John J. Memphis

BISCUIT PRODUCERS STRIKE

One hundred thirty-five Stella D'Oro workers in New York have been on strike since Aug. 13, 2008. The members of Local 50, Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) are mostly Latina, Asian and African immigrants. They are being asked to contribute an additional \$1.32 per hour to their insurance, accept wage cuts of up to 24%, lose holidays and overtime pay. The company had tried to divide the workers in different job classifications, but all of them agreed to strike. The Committee in Support of the Stella

D'Oro Strikers has organized marches and a benefit concert planned for Apr. 4. They are asking individuals to boycott Stella D'Oro products. For more information go to www.stelladorostrike2008.com.

Supporter New York

DISCOVERING MARXIST-HUMANISM

I received a copy of *News & Letters* at the protest for Gaza in Westwood. I have looked at it enough to know that it is worthwhile, especially the letters from readers in the center of the paper—as central to the overall message. Raya Dunayevskaya is a new name in socialism for me. I like seeing the assertion of a feminist socialist affinity up front and center to the overall message of the paper. I will read and write you more.

New Reader Los Angeles

When I heard about *Marxism and Freedom* in 1970, my initial reaction was "Marxism and WHAT?!" I had been a Civil Rights Movement supporter and anti-Vietnam War activist who shunned theory and had an aversion to vanguard groups purporting to have the answers. But I have come to appreciate what Dunayevskaya accomplished with this book, as she succinctly states in her letter to Herbert Marcuse in the Dec.-Jan. *N&L*: to "re-establish the philosophic foundation of Marxism in Hegel in so concrete a way that the origins of our machine age as well as the latest period of automation come alive..." Fifty years after publication, that is still true. It is our job to help the freedom struggles of 2009 realize this as they seek full freedom for all.

Marxist-Humanist New York

Have you sent in your contribution to help keep News & Letters going?

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Thousands oppose police brutality

Oakland, Cal.—On the early morning of Jan. 1, 2009, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) police pulled several young Black men off a train supposedly for fighting. Oscar Grant was lying face down on the platform with his hands cuffed behind his back when Officer Mehserle pulled out his gun and shot him in the back, killing him. The initial reaction of the authorities was for Oakland Police Department (OPD) to say they have no jurisdiction, because the incident took place at a BART station. BART failed to even take a statement from their own officers. Instead, they claimed they didn't know what happened, because the cameras pointing at the platform supposedly only transferred images to the agent on duty, that they did not record.

There were, however, videos taken by other passengers. The lack of response by anyone in authority angered many. Thousands came out on Jan. 9 to the Fruitvale BART station shutting it down for hours, then marching to city hall. At the end of the demonstration windows of downtown businesses were smashed and a trash container was set on fire. Another demonstration was called for Jan. 14. That morning police finally arrested Mehserle, hoping to defuse the situation. Thousands came again to city hall to demand justice for Oscar Grant. Following are statements from protesters. —Editors

I feel that the authorities could be doing a better job right now. As for BART and OPD working together, that would be a great thing, but I honestly don't think that this issue is going to be dealt with in a way that will satisfy the public if we leave it in the hands of BART and OPD. We need to bring in some third party resources to get this job done, to get it resolved quickly.

Almost everybody has seen the videos (of Mehserle shooting Oscar Grant). We know what we saw. But we can't jump to conclusions. From what I saw, it could be that the officer didn't mean to do it. I don't know what was in his mind. He needs to make a statement about what happened, come out and say you're sorry. If it was a mistake, taking a human life is a pretty terrible mistake. How do you live with yourself?

I don't know BART procedures. Even if they were justified in pulling the youth off the train, using excessive force after they subdued them was clearly wrong.

* * *

We need justice for Oscar. It is not fair how they look at people based on color, especially in Oakland. It is one thing to arrest him. It is quite different to shoot a man lying on his stomach with his hands cuffed. We can't live like this, we can't let the police get away with it as though nothing happened. That will just let them continue to do what they're doing. We have to put a stop to it.

—A Youth Together student from Mission High School

* * *

We are protesting more than the murder of Oscar Grant. What is important is people coming together to

protest injustice, to confront it, to organize, to make a change.

I don't expect anything but cosmetic changes to come out from this particular campaign around Oscar Grant. They will treat it as an isolated, individual event and try to appease it as that. But people coming together like this creates a space where other questions can be raised, other issues brought up and challenged.

I would like to see a challenge to the way police create a state of emergency in poor Black communities and specifically target young Black men. I would like to see a challenge to the state and the way the state is operating, the systems and levels on which it functions.

Just putting Mehserle in prison will not do that. There needs to be another way to hold them accountable. We need to come together and shut down the city.

The powerful thing about this demonstration is that right now everything is shutting down in downtown Oakland. Downtown Oakland represents big business. When big business' money stops moving then they take notice, they treat it as a crisis, as an important issue.

These kinds of things are going to keep happening. As we are pulling out of the war in Iraq, there are other wars popping up around the world. The governments are attempting to suppress, not the murders or the deaths, but the attention that is going to these issues. We are going to see more violence here, because you can't have violence all around the world and not have violence at home.

So we will continue to see police incidents like this, and other episodes of violence, especially in such a desperate time for the economy when everyone is stretched as thin as they can be.

We are tracked into a culture of coming out to complain and then going home. But we could shut down the state functions and cripple the state to the point that they will have to recognize and actually confront the issues at hand.

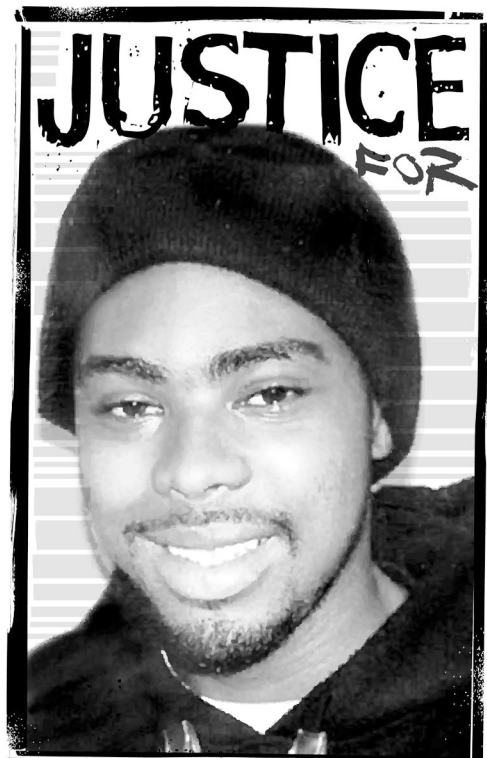
—Hannibal

* * *

BART officials want to justify the shooting by claiming the officer "may have made a mistake, that he was only reaching for his Taser." How in the world can anyone justify using even a Taser when a man is already down? There is absolutely *no justification*.

Officer Mehserle merely pulled the trigger. But the system was already there. He was nothing more than a cog in its wheel. He essentially did only what he was trained to do. *Not* to "protect and serve" but to *kill*. How is his training any different from all the "trained" youth sent to Iraq? Too many youth like Oscar Grant get killed in the U. S. streets. Killed by yet too many youth carrying guns, regardless whether they are wearing the badge or not. Real justice needs to go a lot deeper, all the way to the roots. Focus on the system, not just the individual culprit.

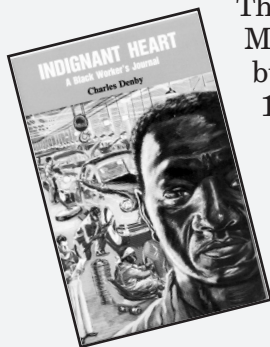
—T. C.



Tony Carranza/East Bay Arts Alliance

OSCAR GRANT

Celebrate Black History Month



The 80% who boycotted Montgomery's segregated buses that first day (in 1956) was more than anyone could believe. Rev. King thought, like everyone else, that it was just going to be one day. But when the Blacks went back to the bus

stop...the (white) bus drivers went by without picking them up. The reaction of the Black masses was "We walked yesterday...we can walk today." And they kept on walking from that day on—for over nine months—until they won.

Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal
—by Charles Denby

Cost: \$15 and \$8, respectively, special \$20 for both (including postage), order on p. 7

The continuing importance of this work is that it presents the Black masses in motion as the touchstone of the development of all American history...(It) remains alive because it never separated history as past from history that is still in the making...It shows that the contradictions in the movements for freedom cannot be overcome without working out a unity of the movement from practice and the movement from theory as the foundation for an overall philosophy that can form the foundation of a new human social order.

American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard
—by Raya Dunayevskaya



BLACK/REDVIEW

continued from p.1

what Obama faces today and what Roosevelt faced in 1932 and 1933?

Alan: Roosevelt faced the Great Depression when millions of Americans were out of work, when poverty existed in every section of the country. He set up social programs to feed the unemployed, to house them, etc. Later, of course, he went to war. I was drafted during that period.

Mel: As someone who has lived through that era, did you feel that the WPA projects helped get people back jobs, and the economy moving?

Alan: What people got during the Depression was relief. They set up those institutions to feed and to house the people that were unemployed, that had no place to live. These were the social programs that came out of the Roosevelt administration. There were tremendous movements against this type of life. They were organized by the trade unions, by African Americans and other groups who were being totally oppressed by that great unemployment. We eventually got out of that when Roosevelt went to war.

Mel: Thomas Friedman, a contemporary author, indicated that we have never gotten out of the Great Depression, that we simply have gone into different wars: WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. We have had great economic times since then, but it seems that the U.S. is on a destined path of resolving economic problems by going to war.

Alan: Yes, I think that's true. But I don't think this country can resolve the problem by going to war forever. It's going to have to find some new solution to this problem of unemployment, poverty, and even U.S. racism, which has not been wiped out. Maybe we have to be very honest that it is capitalism itself that brings these things into being. Whether the president is liberal or conservative, whether he's old or young, it is the very nature of the system that determines politics and the types of social movements that make changes in the U.S. economy. I think that social movements have been more important than presidents. They have brought about changes that no president was capable of thinking about or bringing into being. The greatness of the U.S. depends on the activity of American people, American workers. These are the people that have made this country great, not the man who sits in the White House.

Mel: Your point is well taken....This is not only a man, but it is a movement and it is the movement that has brought about change. Do you see someone like Obama moving from Left to center and from center to Right?

Alan: I am not saying he is going to be guilty of doing that, but it could happen. The main interest of this country has to be supported by the president, regardless of what his race is. And we know what the main interest of this country is, it's a country of big corporations, a country that has to expand its capital in order to exist. This is the very nature of the system itself.

Mel: Obama is refreshing, however, in that he is coming from the Left, as a community organizer from the South Side of Chicago where you lived for years. Can he be the first president not to veer to the right of center? I think that's the ultimate test for this guy.

Alan: It's the ultimate test, but how and when is that ultimate test tested?

Mel: I think it's tested Jan. 21, 2009. This young guy is going to be on the hot seat. Your prediction is something we all look to in the future.

Alan: We have never had a real revolutionary figure in the White House. The whole purpose and history of this country has been to accumulate wealth and power. Some people will say that interest is to achieve freedom and democracy. But freedom and democracy come forward only when masses of people fight for them. I don't think we have an example of the White House leading any such movement. That is a view of a man who is 92 years old. I have lived through the Great Depression, and I have seen that the relief has come when the tremendous mass forces demanded and got it. No great change ever comes from Congress or the White House. It comes from the people's struggle for freedom.

NEWS & LETTERS



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Revolt in Iceland

Barack Obama was taking over the Presidency in the U.S. on Jan. 20, when thousands of demonstrators surrounded Iceland's *Althingi* House as it tried to open a new session. Founded in 930, the *Althingi* is the world's oldest continuous and still surviving legislative body. Protesters threw eggs and the now emblematic old shoes at the parliament. Protesters had also occupied the cabinet office and Landsbanki, the country's second largest bank.

The object of the wrath of this normally very reserved population was the conservative government of Prime Minister Geir Haarde, whose car was pelted with eggs and besieged by protesters banging on windows, as he left the parliament on Jan. 21. The protesters were demanding accountability for Iceland's economic collapse—demanding that Haarde's government step down. The conservatives deregulated Iceland's banks, which then became global players in the speculative boom building up huge paper wealth.

In October Iceland's three largest banks went bankrupt and then so did the country as a whole when the state nationalized the banks in order to keep credit flowing. Now Iceland owes six times the country's national output to the world banking system. The government had to apply to the IMF, which normally is used by underdeveloped countries, for an emergency \$2 billion loan. Other sources lent another \$8 billion. The currency, the krona, has tanked to half its value, as unemployment and inflation have skyrocketed.

FIRST OPENLY GAY WORLD LEADER

Haarde's government wasn't scheduled to face elections until 2011, but then announced they would be held in May. By the end of January, however, the Haarde government failed and a new interim prime minister, Johanna Sigurdardottir, was appointed. Sigurdardottir will be the world's first openly Gay leader. She also comes from a working background, having been a flight attendant in the 1960s and '70s, a union organizer, and, as social affairs minister, a persistent fighter for minorities, women and the poor.

Iceland is a country of about 300,000 people, which had one of the highest standards of living. Enforcing their will and toppling their government, workers gave Iceland's capitalists a taste of direct democracy. Their direct action was probably more in the spirit of the original *Althingi*. Hopefully, this is only the beginning of workers deepening their practice of direct democracy as the way to totally overcome capitalist relations. Demonstrations over similar issues have already spread throughout Europe. In France, for example, a general strike against bank bailouts occurred on Jan. 29.

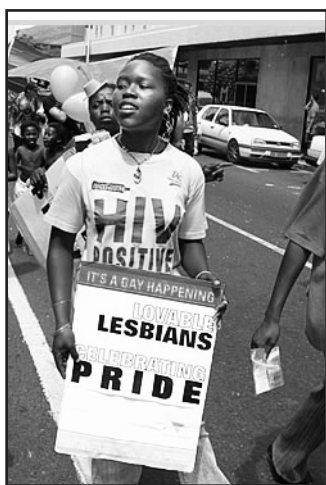
—R. K.

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

In the ongoing struggle to have 14-year-old Brandon McInerney, who killed his openly Gay classmate Larry King in Oxnard, Cal., tried as a juvenile, defense attorneys requested the case be refiled in juvenile court because McInerney had no prior record and his life circumstances were never considered. His attorneys are also appealing Superior Court Judge Riley's rejection of their motion to obtain the District Attorney's office documents used to conclude that McInerney should be tried as an adult.

* * *



Several days after hosting the 15th International Conference on AIDS and STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and in direct violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights against arbitrary arrest and detention, Senegal authorities arrested nine men who were HIV- and AIDS-prevention workers. It is feared that these arrests, combined with their eight-year prison sentences for apparently only the suspicion of homosexual sex, will deter others from helping victims of HIV and AIDS.

* * *

Another Memphis Transgendered woman was attacked in December. Leeneshia Edwards, shot in the face and in critical condition, is the fourth hate crimes victim in Memphis in three years. Last December, Duanna Johnson died after being shot. (See Oct.-Nov. 2008 and Dec. 2008-Jan. 2009 *N&L*.) According to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 23 of 56 anti-Gay hate crimes reported in 2007 in the state occurred in Memphis.

—from outandaboutnewspaper.com

Queer radicalism—struggle continues

That's Revolting! is an important, exciting and profound reminder of the true meaning of the word "radicalism" in a time when even social justice activists often think that the word means a mindless quest to hold the most extreme views possible. The book describes how the Gay Liberation Movement, which began with the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, started off as radical, that is, as desiring a solution to all oppressions and seeing Queer oppression as interwoven with them. This movement viewed Queerness as inherently a threat to an oppressive order of patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism and at the same time a celebration of creativity, sexuality, and community.



That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation, edited by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore (Soft Skull Press, 2007)

The mainstream Gay rights movement that emerged from that radical beginning now mostly concentrates on achieving assimilation and success within capitalism for white, middle-class, gender-conforming, "straight-acting" and able-bodied Gays and Lesbians. (This is also the way a positive Gay identity is usually portrayed in television shows.) This approach leaves out not only Bisexual, Transgender, "gender-nonconforming" (or "Genderqueer") and Intersexed people, it also leaves out others including people of color, poor people, and people with disabilities.

The early Gay Liberation Movement not only recognized that many Queer people also belong to these other groups but saw Queers as allies who must fight all oppression. In contrast, the Gays who achieve success in the capitalistic mainstream world sometimes use their privilege to oppress others. For example, Gay property and business owners often fight to arrest

homeless Queer youth of color and have even opposed a neighborhood homeless shelter. In another example, a San Francisco LGBT center sponsored a fundraiser for the conservative, anti-poor politician Gavin Newsom and allowed police to violently bash protesters. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) also supports conservative politicians.

This book relates the history of some early Gay liberation groups such as the Gay Liberation Front and individuals such as Silvia Rivera, a Transgendered activist for Queer homeless youth. More importantly, it describes the flamboyant activism of some of the many recent radical Queer groups, from the 1990s to the present, who continue to hold the values of the early movement. Gay Shame interrupts corporate-sponsored Pride parades with "Gay Shame Awards" for those who support gentrification and war. FIERCE! is an organization of Queer homeless youth who hold vigils for victims of homophobic and transphobic murders and organize to reclaim public spaces and resources. Activists also describe their participation in the 1999 demonstration against the World Trade Organization and activists who are both Queer and Jewish discuss their activism in support of Palestine.

The book also contains personal stories and a lot of thoughtful discussion by individuals and activist groups about how oppressions are interrelated and what Queer culture brings to the struggle. There is discussion of the importance of sexual liberation in disconnecting shame from sexual desire and stopping the persecution of sexual minorities. Some writers criticize the goal of legalizing same-sex marriage, writing that all of the benefits it confers can be more fairly distributed to all people by other means. This is controversial and may be a starting point for a longer discussion.

That's Revolting! is relevant because the radical Queer movement is undergoing an even stronger resurgence today with the protests against Proposition 8 and with the continuing struggle against anti-Transgender violence. It is important in helping readers understand the philosophies of this movement and why it is relevant to all people.

—Adele

News and Letters Committees invites you to a series of five discussions on:

Confronting Today's Crises: The Marxist-Humanist Return to Marx and the Revolutionary Abolition of Capitalism



Burning of the Landsbanki flag as Iceland's economy melts down, an example of the many crises in the world

Capitalism's destructiveness is seen in unemployment, economic uncertainty, the world food crisis, endless wars, ever-growing prison populations and police repression, resurgent racism, anti-immigrant hysteria, homophobia and sexism, and the havoc wrought by global warming. Obama's election cannot solve these problems. People are looking for a deeper change—for a new human society.

This discussion series tackles these questions by digging into the Marxist-Humanist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya's original contribution, which established continuity with Marx. The classes include discussion of writings by workers, contemporary thinkers on green-collar economy, and 21st century socialism.

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This discussion series is about how to prepare ourselves for helping a new human society be born and getting rid of capitalism and all the rotten human relations we suffer now; for the struggles and labor, the setbacks and traps, the negations and openings, revolutions and counter-revolutions.

The idea of the book we're working on to collect writings of Raya Dunayevskaya on Marx is to internalize the philosophy needed and to project it to the world, and these classes are to help us work that out as we prepare for the revolutionary abolition of this still racist, sexist, homophobic capitalist society.

--Franklin Dmitryev

London protest against the war in Iraq



Gaza shows need for total uprooting

continued from p. 1

if it so chooses. The blockade of Gaza continues.

Much of the situation in Gaza is inexplicable without looking at the various rivalries that involve many parties besides Israel and the Palestinians. This includes the continuing struggle between the fundamentalist Hamas and Fatah, which controls the Palestinian Authority and West Bank. Even while under attack by Israel, Hamas put some of its military effort into attacking Fatah members—they succeeded in killing and maiming many more of them than they did Israeli soldiers, at least 80-100 according to witnesses.

This helps to explain the otherwise incredible fact that in the face of Israel's largest military incursion in decades there was no military unity among Palestinians. Only the marginal PFLP (General Command), a tool of the Syrian state, launched a single, random rocket from Lebanon that blew up the kitchen of a retirement home in northern Israel.

REGIONAL RIVALRIES

There was no unity among the Arab states, either, owing to regional rivalries between Hamas' Iranian patrons and the equally reactionary fundamentalist rulers of Saudi Arabia. While there was a lot of rhetoric from Hezbollah, they are constrained by the opposition of the Lebanese people to any new war with Israel.

The conflict between Egypt and Hamas is also significant. Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, and that fundamentalist group is seen as a threat to the Mubarak regime in Egypt. Egypt has aided Israel's blockade of Gaza, and as much as anyone, it was the Egyptian government that gave Israel the green light to attack.

The Syrian-based leadership of Hamas distinguished itself by opposing any cease-fire and being ready, from the safety of Damascus, to fight to the last Palestinian. Even Hamas' Gaza leadership couldn't stomach this. To indicate how deep the lack of principle runs here, it is instructive to note that Hamas' leader, Khaled Mashaal, accepts the hospitality and support of the same Syrian Baathist government that massacred 2,000 imprisoned Islamists in 1982. It also destroyed the city of Hama killing 20,000 civilians, in the course of repressing its own Muslim Brotherhood.

This should illuminate his callous willingness to sacrifice the people of Gaza. In this Mashaal is certainly within hailing distance of the Sharon of 1982 and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It is only the other side of Hamas' reactionary fantasy of destroying Israel which doesn't shrink from referencing the *Protocols of Zion*—counter-revolutionary forgeries of the czarist secret police and "Black Hundreds" pogromists.¹

The devastation wrought by the war should also help lay to rest the myth of Hamas as a "good government" alternative to the undeniable corruption of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority. Their launching of hundreds of rockets into Israel, sometimes killing civilians, which became the stated justification for Israel's attack, is barbarous and nihilistic. In the end Hamas may have hoped to duplicate Hezbollah's experience in 2006, but 2009 is not 2006 and they greatly overreached.

Although there have been declarations of "victory" and rallies, in the words of one Gazan: "We can't talk about real victory because there were thousands of martyrs and we didn't liberate anything. It's no time for a parade."

OPPOSITION TO WAR

As against the horrors of this war, there were also many protests and important efforts at solidarity. The Free Gaza Movement attempted to deliver medical aid by boat, but was prevented from docking and rammed by an Israeli navy vessel. International aid, including ambulances, medicine and food, was also sent from European trade unions to the General Federation of Palestinian Trade Unions, which put out a call for such support. The war-weariness among Gazans was well expressed by one Palestinian woman who confronted a Hamas member passing out leaflets: "Why are you handing out paper instead of bread?"

The Israeli peace movement was in the street from the first hours declaring, "This is not our war!" Adam Keller of *The Other Israel* wrote, "At record speed, a

rendezvous for protest was suggested by the Coalition of Women for Peace and quickly taken up by Hadash, Gush Shalom, the anarchists, Tarabut and also the Meretz grassroots network. The message spread among all by word of mouth and phone and email and Facebook: "Stop the War!" The voices of past refuseniks and the Shministim made their opposition known.

It is vital to hear these voices of opposition (see "Woman as Reason," p. 2). Even more, the war's regional aspect highlights the importance of all the new forces of revolution rising in the Middle East. There are new militant voices, from striking textile workers in Egypt, many of them women, to the new struggles of workers and women in Iraq represented by groups like the Iraqi Freedom Congress, and the simmering discontent among all sectors of the population in Iran with the oppressive theocracy there.

Mired in corruption and scandal, and hard hit by the 80% collapse in oil prices brought on by capitalist crisis, almost the only "legitimacy" the Iranian regime can cling to is its sponsorship of the "resistance" of Hezbollah and Hamas. Lebanon's Shi'a and the Palestinians of Gaza have paid a high price for this sponsorship, in having their genuine freedom struggles shackled to Iran's counter-revolution.²

PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION

In addition to the cost in human lives, Israel's war has deflected attention from the brave new struggles in the region. It has the effect of sucking the oxygen from the very air of thought. Not only in the Middle East. This is a moment when every big imperialist power, the U.S., Russia, China, as well as a regional power like Iran, is confronted with the most serious capitalist crisis in decades.

It isn't a coincidence that the Iranian regime has intensified repression of late, including closing down Shirin Ebadi's Center for Defenders of Human Rights and fomenting attacks on her office and home, and closing the newspaper *Kargozaran* for publishing an article critical of Hamas. What Iran's rulers really fear is that despite their best efforts the Iranian people will eventually rise up and throw them out as they did the Shah.

In this regard, it is also vital that the new forces of revolution become rooted in a philosophy of revolution that can help them avoid the kind of halfway houses and outright disasters that have destroyed past freedom movements. To this end News and Letters Committees published *Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* (2003) containing Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on the dialectics of revolution and counter-revolution across the region, in Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran.

Dunayevskaya addressed this burning question for Middle Eastern revolutionaries in many ways, as in 1976's "Lebanon: The test not only of the PLO but the whole Left." Here she criticized revolutionaries who were pulled into the orbit of reactionary state powers, ushering in decades of civil war and occupation in Lebanon: "This does not mean that we give up the struggle for self-determination, Palestinian especially. It is that we do not narrow our vision of the revolutionary struggle for a totally different world, on truly new Humanist foundations, the first necessity of which is the unity of philosophy and revolution."³

Bringing about this unity of philosophy and revolution remains the task. News and Letters Committees has held to this principle since our founding in 1955: "The necessity for a new society is clear from the working people's opposition to war. That opposition is based upon a vision of a new society in which they, to a man, woman and child, control their own lives. Any opposition to war, which is based on less than this, must end in capitulation to the warmongers."⁴

The stakes couldn't be higher. Israel's war on the people of Gaza is not a local anomaly, it is the expression of the degeneracy of crisis-ridden state-capitalism. The absolute opposite of that is not any narrow nationalism or religion-infused drive for power, but the total uprooting of racist, sexist capitalist society in all countries and the creation of totally new human relations.

¹ "What more could [right-wing Zionism] have wished for than that the Israeli opponents of their own rulers—the Israeli Left engaged in class struggles and in fights against their country's foreign policy, especially to Israel's non-recognition of the Palestinians as a national entity entitled to self-determination—should suddenly pause in their struggles, with worry over whether at the other end of the spectrum lurks that perennial manifestation of degeneracy, anti-Semitism?" ("The UN resolution on Zionism—and the ideological obfuscation also on the Left," Raya Dunayevskaya, *Weekly Political Letter*, Jan. 24, 1976.)

² The Iranian Marxist Mansoor Hekmat described this relation: "The problem is still fundamentally the Palestinian question. Just as this confrontation strengthens the reactionary religious factions in Israel and gives them much more power—disproportionate to their actual minor weight in people's culture and beliefs, it also adds to the lifespan of political Islam..." (*Porsesh, A Quarterly Journal of Politics, Society and Culture*, Number 3, Winter 2001.)

³ "Lebanon: the test not only of the PLO but the whole Left," Raya Dunayevskaya, *Weekly Political Letter*, August, 1976.

⁴ From the "Preamble" to the News and Letters' *Committees' Constitution*, 1955.

Sri Lanka repression

The Sri Lankan government has captured Mullativu, the last stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The current fighting pits about 50,000 government troops against an estimated 1,000 remaining LTTE fighters.

Amnesty International reports that up to 300,000 civilians have been placed at risk in the current fighting. Many have been killed by government shelling, despite the provision of supposed "safe zones." Others have been prevented from reaching medical care by the LTTE fighters. There is a shortage of food and lack of shelter. According to Amnesty International, "A doctor working in a hospital in a 'safe zone' says that about 1,000 shells fell around the hospital."

The civil war in Sri Lanka between the government and LTTE has claimed more than 70,000 lives. The LTTE has fought for Tamil independence from the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan state. A truce in 2002 left the LTTE in control of a significant part of Sri Lanka, but the current government repudiated that agreement last year and launched an all-out attack. They took Kilinochchi, the rebel capital, on Jan. 2.

Sri Lanka has also seen a recent wave of attacks upon the press. On Jan. 2, *Sunday Leader* newspaper editor Lasantha Wickremetunga, an investigative journalist, was shot and killed in Colombo on his way to work. Maharaja Television was bombed after being labeled "unpatriotic" for its coverage of the government's war on the LTTE. In the most recent incident, gunmen on motorbikes wounded Upali Tenakoon, a Sri Lankan newspaper editor, and his wife.

The home of human rights lawyer J.C. Weliamuna was also attacked with a hand grenade late last year. He has been active in cases involving torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances.

—G.E.

Palestinians and Jews at Chicago Gaza vigil

Chicago—On Jan. 4 I took part in a Jewish Voice for Peace vigil in support of the people of Gaza. Many Palestinians joined us.

There were Palestinian flags, signs and banners of all sorts. I helped hold a Jewish Voice for Peace banner while facing the street across from Borders on Michigan Avenue. Also across the street were what I call Jewish brownshirts with an Israeli flag and signs.

We chanted many slogans such as "Education not Occupation!"

I told a Palestinian boy standing next to me that I am Jewish and oppose the group across the street. He looked at me with a questioning expression. I said Judaism was about justice and that I support the Palestinians at the vigil and the people of Gaza. He asked what the sign I was holding said. I told him it said "No dollars for the Israeli military." Later when I got tired of holding the sign, the boy held it. We made a real connection.

I believe that Jews and Palestinians should work together to stop the killing of civilians and to help create peace in Israel/Palestine. Of course, this will be very difficult.

—Long-time activist



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How to contact

NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES

CHICAGO 228 South Wabash, #230 Chicago, IL 60604 Phone 312-431-8242 Fax 312-431-8252 MEETINGS Contact for Information	NEW YORK NYNewsandLetters@gmail.com Phone 914-462-3691
DETROIT P.O. Box 27205 Detroit MI 48227 MEETINGS Sundays, 2 p.m. Contact for information	LOS ANGELES MEETINGS Sundays 6:00 p.m. Echo Park United Methodist Church 1226 N. Alvarado (North of Sunset, side door)
FLINT, MI P.O. Box 3384, Flint, MI 48502 MEETINGS Contact for Information	OAKLAND P.O. Box 3345 Oakland, CA 94609 510 658 1448 banandl@yahoo.com MEETINGS Contact for information

INTERNET

Email arise@newsandletters.org	WORLD WIDE WEB www.newsandletters.org
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YOUTH Revolutionary Greek revolt continues

by Brown Douglas

The continuing revolt in Greece was sparked in December by the police killing of an unarmed youth. It began in an artsy, left-wing neighborhood of Athens and spread to all sectors of Greek society and throughout the country. Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a 15-year-old student whose crime was merely a verbal altercation, was murdered by a police officer.

The revolt made headlines around the world for weeks, and was almost invariably referred to as "riots." The media focus on burning cars and graffiti projected a sensationalized image to international audiences, papering over the social antagonisms and aspirations for new social relations in the revolt that continued well into January. The word they're using in Greece for the events is *exergersi*, which means "uprising" or "insurrection" and not "riot."

ROOTS OF THE REVOLT

Greek radicals refer to the almost decade of military rule during the sixties and seventies as a major reason for widespread distrust of the government and police. Lethal force by police is not accepted by any segment of the population, but that hasn't stopped rising attacks on immigrants. One example is the Pakistani man who was murdered by riot police while standing in line to seek asylum at an Athens immigration office in October.

Greece has not been immune to all of the multiple crises confronting global capitalism. Racist attacks on immigrants, youth with diminishing prospects of anything resembling a stable future, massive job cuts for workers, and widespread political corruption are all un-



One of the many demonstrations in Athens

derlying causes of the anger that exploded when Alexandros was murdered. The government's massive modernization project of the last decade has not improved the lives of most Greeks.

At the high point of the revolt, students and youth occupied thousands of learning institutions. The mainstream Greek media reported occupations in "800 high schools and 200 university departments around the country." As in the Paris revolt of 1968, a major issue is the alienation inherent in the education system. The Athens Polytechnic was the center of the revolt of Greek youth in 1973 against the then-ruling military junta, and was occupied again as a center of revolutionary activity from the time of Alexandros' murder until Dec. 24. It is just outside the Exarchia neighborhood where Alexandros was murdered.

Greek workers used the space opened up by the youth to exercise power not only against the police and the Greek state, but also against the largest trade union in the country, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE). One commentator put it into perspective by saying that the occupation of the building of the GSEE was akin to American workers taking over the AFL-CIO. Not only did workers occupy the building, but renamed it the General Assembly of Insurgent Workers. The stirring declaration in which they justify and explain their decision to take over the GSEE can be read in full: <http://jameshorrox.wordpress.com/2008/12/17/greek-workers-occupy-union-hq/>.

As in past European revolts, the entrenched "Left" parties, like the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), aligned themselves against any revolutionary action, shamelessly condemning any radical action as "American-directed." Incredibly, some KKE members went so far as to occupy university buildings so that revolutionary elements could not implement the free and open popular assemblies that were being created all over the country! Is there still any serious radical around who does not see the complete invalidity of the myopic "party-to-lead" that has so deadened and betrayed near-revolutions for close to a century?

STUDENTS AND WORKERS UNITE

The high point of both France in 1968 and today's Greek revolt, was a new unity between student and worker revolutionaries. The youth reached out in writing to those who can shake capitalist society to its knees, the workers. Greek workers reciprocated in a letter written to the students:

"So, you've gone beyond us, as always happens in history... You've already occupied your schools and you tell us that the most important reason is that you don't like your schools. Nice. Since you've already occupied them change their role. Share your occupations with other people. Let your schools become the first buildings to house our new relations. Dividing us is their most powerful weapon. Just like you are not afraid of attacking their police stations because you are together, don't be afraid to call us to change our life all together."

To some, the most remarkable thing about the re-

volt in Greece was its simple existence. It's important to not just stand in awe of the revolt, which showed that such an event can explode at any given moment in what appears to be "stable" and "modern" Western society. Though the uprising failed to sustain itself long enough to be a full revolution, we need to learn from the amazing events in Greece. The continuing question is: How do we make a revolution, and what is needed to allow it to develop on its own ground?

Eco-socialists confront climate change

Oakland, Cal.—On Jan. 10 and 11 we attended a West Coast regional conference on "Climate Catastrophe and Social Change: an Eco-Socialist Perspective" at Laney College. The opening and closing plenaries featured Joel Kovel, a founding member of the Ecosocialist International Network and author of *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World*.

The many conference workshops stressed the daunting task facing humans if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change that will wipe out the population centers occupying coastal areas of the world in the next 40 years. It also stressed the rights of the underdeveloped world to a "level of welfare that is beyond basic needs but well short of today's levels of 'affluent' consumption," which can be realized only through a new level of human solidarity on a global scale. The urgency for getting the message out is that even the most heroic efforts for reducing carbon emissions may barely succeed in avoiding the threshold of stopping global warming from exceeding two degrees centigrade.

The strength of this conference was the recognition that the problem of the impending ecological catastrophe cannot be solved within the framework of capitalism. Kovel began by criticizing the back-in-fashion Keynesian economics for its drive to keep capitalistic-style growth going at all cost.

Kovel bases his eco-socialism on Marx's concept of "freely associated labor" and cites Marx's principle that the free development of each is the condition for the freedom of all. Freely associated labor, he said, is fundamentally different from Communism, which leaves out nature and merely takes over capitalism and reproduces its deleterious effects. However, Kovel claims Marx failed to grasp that nature has intrinsic value, claiming that there is still a dichotomy in Marx between labor and nature. This flies in the face of Marx's concept of humans as directly natural beings and the need to overcome alienated labor, which alienates commodity-producing humans from each other and nature.

In our own discussions with participants at the conference, we pointed out that one of the weaknesses of Kovel's presentation of the contradiction in capitalism is that he stopped at the commodity's contradictory unity of use-value and exchange-value instead of going immediately, as Marx does, to how that contradiction is merely a reflection of concrete labor and abstract labor. Abstract, alienated labor is the value-producing substance. This drives the idea that what is real is not nature and human natural capacities, but rather socially determined value.

The viability of the global capitalist system has been called into question by its own internal crisis. The issue raised at this conference—capitalism's absolute destructiveness to nature and, in turn, humanity—cannot be ignored by those struggling for a socialist alternative.

—R.K. and H.L.

Revolution needed in Israel

"Everybody is somebody's Jew. And today Palestinians are the Jews of Israelis." These are the words of the renowned Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi when he broke with Zionism after Begin-Sharon's complicity in the massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila in 1982. It was also Levi who wrote in his masterpiece *If This is a Man* that, "In Auschwitz it was not just Man but the Idea of Man that died."

Levi's account of the death of humanity as an absolute found philosophic expression in Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* where he poses a "New Categorical Imperative: **Never Again.**" With him the Absolute comes crashing down as it is deemed to be but the equivalent of burning human flesh in the crematoria! How could that burning Hell ever disclose a positive in the movement of the dialectics?

Thus, what's drawn from resistance within the Death Camps as well as the Ghetto uprisings is made to comply with an "Ought." Everyone, including Emil Fackenheim, the author of *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, was convinced that "the Absolute is incomprehensible." The "Kingdom of the Auschwitz," he wrote "is not of this world." What's left to do, then, is to perpetually resist the "Absolute." The Holocaust, he argued, emerged from a concept of totality. But when people in Bosnia march in the streets with the yellow arm bands, it should serve as a stark reminder that "Never Again" has been but a hollow call to a halfway house.

The tragedy of Israel may be summed up in the self-relinquishment of its **history** as a struggle for freedom. What's intellectually conserved, and continually recollected, and what permeates its organizational life is the long night of captivity and the experience of a "meaning-less death." No one should ever underestimate the lasting presence of the Holocaust on the mind of a people on the verge of total annihilation. And yet one is not thereby to forget its very opposite, the birth of a whole new consciousness of freedom that arose from within the death camps.

It is this idea that is in need of Recollection. Otherwise, each new generation is condemned to begin all over again as if all that has preceded is completely lost. For Israel to "resurrect" the idea of freedom, all the formative experiences of its struggle for self-determination, it must come to recognize that it has been transformed into opposite—the oppressed has become the oppressor. To save Israel from itself, and to usher in a new era in its relationship with Palestinians and **their** aspirations for self-determination, Israel must experience a new, a social revolution.

—Raha

Efren Paredes: jailed for life at 15

Efren Paredes, at the age of 15, was jailed for a crime he did not commit. Within three months of the murder of his friend and boss, the teen was sentenced to three life terms, two without parole. He's 35 now—20 years behind bars.

I have seen cases like this before, having been a secretary at the Medill School of Journalism when David Protes taught investigative journalism. Dr. Protes's classes were directed at wrongful convictions. The Ford Heights Four (1996) were shown to be innocent when his students were working their case, as was Anthony Porter (1999).

Efren Paredes's case is a classic. Start with the media circus surrounding the murder of a well-liked member of the community, a beloved family man and a good friend/supervisor. The District Attorney and prosecutor are wildly anxious to find the killer. Add a local drug dealer (and possibly a police informant) who puts forth his son as someone who will testify on condition of immunity. Add two teenagers who admit to involvement in the crime and two under-age teens who knew about the plans. Have all five of these conspirators finger a prominent very good boy who is vulnerable because of his Hispanic background (the only one in school).

Add to this array of snitches a purposely inept investigation, a little planted evidence, some rap lyrics to prejudice a jury, a couple of lies during jury selection, a lawyer who didn't have time for a real investigation, a gullible public and . . . well, you'd have to read up on the case at www.4efren.com.

Efren was never in trouble with the police before this happened. It was his first offense—except it wasn't. Efren is innocent of this crime.

In addition to his innocence, he is someone you'd like to know. I feel privileged when he asks to talk to me on the phone. I had the honor to speak at his parole hearing. He is an expert in Braille translations and works for the Michigan Braille Transcribing Fund. Efren organized a walk for breast cancer inside the walls; he advocates for other prisoners, and has prevented suicides.

If you want to help Efren, his case now awaits the Michigan Parole Board's recommendation to Governor Granholm regarding a commutation. All you need to know and instructions for helping are at the website. Any questions you would like to ask me can be forwarded from arise@newsandletters.org. And thank you for any help you may offer.

—January

WORLD VIEW

Russia-Ukraine clash

by Gerry Emmett

Hundreds of thousands of European homes went without heat, and factories were forced to close for two weeks in January, as Russia and Ukraine clashed over the oil shipped by Russia's Gazprom through Ukraine's pipelines. The crisis ended, for the moment, when Russian Prime Minister Putin and Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko signed a ten-year gas delivery agreement on Jan. 19.

As in the recent war in Georgia, imperial rivalries were involved. The subtext of the episode was the effort by Putin's government to put pressure on Ukraine for its intent to join NATO and the European Union. The gas crisis meant that Putin's government was willing to be seen in Europe as an unreliable gas supplier, in order to impose the same price on Ukraine.

The move did succeed in influencing the internal politics of Ukraine, pitting Tymoshenko against President Viktor Yushchenko, whom she has criticized in the past for involvement with RosUkEnerg, the middleman in the shipment of Russian gas which is half owned by Gazprom and half by Ukrainian businessmen. The company has been accused of kickbacks and corruption. The new agreement would eliminate RosUkEnerg's role and will be an issue in Ukraine's upcoming presidential election.

The ability to outmaneuver Ukraine's politicians reflects Putin's success in co-opting and marginalizing his own internal opposition. The remnants of Russia's liberal reformers of the 1990s now exist in an unprincipled anti-Putin alliance with the "red-brown" National Bolshevik Party (NBP) as part of former chess cham-

pion Garry Kasparov's "Other Russia." Meanwhile Putin's government has built upon the economic reforms, which were made at the expense of the working class, and at the same time taken on the NBP's ideologist, Aleksandr Dugin, as an important state adviser.

With falling oil prices driving economic crisis, there is new opposition rising. Thousands demonstrated in Vladivostok and other cities at the beginning of February. The dire situation of the Russian opposition today was addressed in a recent essay by poet-activist Kirill Medvedev. He describes a new turning point, in which "a task that was wholly bungled at the beginning of the '90s is once again taking center stage: the creation of a real left-wing movement, based on workers' autonomy, on independent labor unions, on the cooperation of grassroots movements and organizations."

Medvedev writes, "The real need now is for the emergence of a new stratum of leftist intellectuals who have mastered the history of leftist thought, leftist politics, leftist art of the 20th century and who have, through Western Marxism and neo-Marxism, recognized their participation in the international socialist project. This is, undoubtedly, the cultural and political goal of humanity—because it is precisely a participation in self-government on as broad a scale as possible—and not the possibility of a career, pure art, or a private life—that is the next step, without which humanity is doomed to moral and physical degeneration. The old slogan 'socialism or barbarism' has become unbelievably relevant." ("The Writer in Russia," *Dissent*, Fall 2008.)

In today's Russia, this amounts to a call for a new attitude to objectivity.

Latin American Notes

Mexico—A massive demonstration in Defense of the Popular Economy was held in the center of Mexico City on Jan. 25. Tens of thousands of protesters from the capital and from many of the states of Mexico streamed to the Zócalo to hear López Obrador (the Presidential candidate from 2006 who most likely won the popular vote), present a program of actions for the next two months in the face of the deteriorating economic situation faced by Mexicans.

An increasing inflation rate and a meaningless minimal rise in the minimum wage, combined with the deepening impact of the U.S. recession, have intensified the already deep economic and social inequality Mexican workers, peasants and unemployed face.

Obrador proposed a series of protest meetings in the coming months both in the capital and in the states of Mexico. These will involve demands in housing, electricity, gasoline, and retirement funds.

* * *

Bolivia—The Jan. 25 vote has finally given birth to a new Constitution, the first time Bolivian citizens have had a right to vote on their Constitution. Among its provisions:

- Recognition and a degree of autonomy for the country's 36 pre-Columbian indigenous nations and Afro-Bolivians. Article 289 in the constitution stipulates, "Rural indigenous autonomy consists of self-government and the exercise of self-determination for rural indigenous nations and native peoples who share territory, culture, history, language, and unique forms of



juridical, political, social, and economic organization." Indigenous people did not have a right to vote before the 1952 Revolution.

- Education is mandated to be free, while health insurance is supposed to be universal.
- Crucial national resources are to remain in the hands of the state. Since 2000, Bolivians have carried out massive protests against the privatization of water and gas.
- Women are guaranteed equality in work, and discrimination based on sex is prohibited. However, abortion remains illegal.
- The constitution prohibits foreign military bases in Bolivia.

The key question now is whether and how these and other important provisions will be implemented.

—Eugene Walker

Venezuelan murders

A suspect has been arrested in the November murder of three Venezuelan union activists, but questions remain. Richard Gallardo, Luis Hernández and Carlos Requena were shot dead by a gunman on a motorbike in the city of Cagua, southwest of Caracas in Aragua state. They were leaders of the National Workers Union (UNT). Seven members of the UNT have been killed in Aragua in the last two years.

They were involved in a workers' struggle at Colombian-owned Alpina food processing company. Hundreds of workers had occupied the plant and were demanding full payment of money owed them by Alpina. There were clashes with police.

Police have since arrested Julio Cesar Agrinzones Romero, a worker at Pepsi Cola de Venezuela's plant in Villa de Cura in southern Aragua. Luis Hernández was a worker there as well. However, union officials state that Agrinzones Romero was at work the night of the killings.

Suspicious of a professional hit have been raised, in line with the more than 2,500 unionists who have been killed in Colombia in recent decades.

Some unionists in Aragua also pointed to the pro-Chávez mayor of the municipality of Zamora, Aldo Lovera, as a suspect, as Luis Hernández had run against him and demanded a recount of votes. Lovera had allegedly responded with death threats.

Gallardo, Hernández and Requena were members of the section of the UNT which opposes government control of the labor unions, the CCURA (United Autonomous Revolutionary Class Current) and the Workers Left Unity. Demands for a full investigation of their deaths have been heard around the world.

Rwanda-Congo unity

In a surprise reversal in mid-January, President Joseph Kabila's Congo government allowed up to 4,000 Rwandan troops into Congolese territory in pursuit of Rwandan Hutu militias. The Hutu militias, which took part in the genocide of up to half a million Rwandan ethnic Tutsis and dissident Hutus, were forced out of Rwanda in 1994 and have been based in eastern Congo. They have terrorized that region since then, taking control of villages, mines and businesses.

In return, the Rwandan government sponsored a Congolese Tutsi rebellion led by General Laurent Nkunda. In another surprise reversal, Nkunda was apprehended in Rwanda as part of the deal. He and his militia have been charged with massacres and other wholesale violations of human rights. Congo says it will seek extradition. Nkunda's militia underwent a recent split with part of the leadership seeking peace with Congo's government. In an unprecedented cooperation, Rwandan and Congolese forces have been fighting together in Kasinga against the Hutu militias.

The ongoing war in eastern Congo has been incredibly brutal. Over five million people have died from violence, famine and disease. Of the 45,000 who die every month, half are children under five years old. Millions have become refugees. The practices of ethnic cleansing, genocidal rape, and press-gang child soldiers are common.

In its previous ventures into Congo the Rwandan government has been accused of exploiting eastern Congo's people and mineral wealth. But if this new agreement holds it can be a very positive development.

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*.