

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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'For' the union, but not fired up



by John Marcotte

A guy came down to our job from the Teamsters International to talk to us about organizing non-union workers. He gave us cards to fill out to volunteer to help, to talk to non-union drivers, leaflet and so on. Most, if not all, of the guys here feel favorable to this. It is a very important question.

We know this four-year contract recently signed with the unionized freight companies is just a breathing space. After a month-long strike this spring we did beat back their demand for part-timers at half pay but we still took concessions. We feel the companies are going to go in for the kill next time around.

NON-UNIONS GROWING

Ten years ago there were something like 300,000 freight Teamsters. This spring there were only about 120,000 left from all the deregulation and companies going under. Of these, about 80,000 were on strike. The bottom line is, the strike did not cripple the economy. Most of the freight kept moving with the non-unions. If you can't stop the economy, you have no power. You can hurt your immediate boss, that's it.

The big trucking corporations, and even lots of the smaller ones, have been "double-breasting"—building up non-union subsidiaries and throwing business to them. It could get to a point where a strike might even suit them, because it would tear down their union operations and build up their non-union outfits. If it gets to that point, they will have us where they want us.

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Black World

Race—the final frontier



by Lou Turner

The continuing voyages of American politics into the racist underpsyche of the American mind has taken this country, this election year, to reactionary depths that even it has never gone to before.

Racism barely disguises itself in the ad campaigns, debates and press releases of predominantly white, middle-class office seekers this year. And the media has reported ad nauseum that this is an objective expression of the country's preoccupation with the crime phenomenon in U.S. cities, schools and homes.

While there has been no end to code names that white America invents to stigmatize Black folk, never has this ideological naming ceremony been as ubiquitous as this election year. There is not an electoral campaign that has not pushed the crime button in the American psyche and not had a Black face come up on the screen.

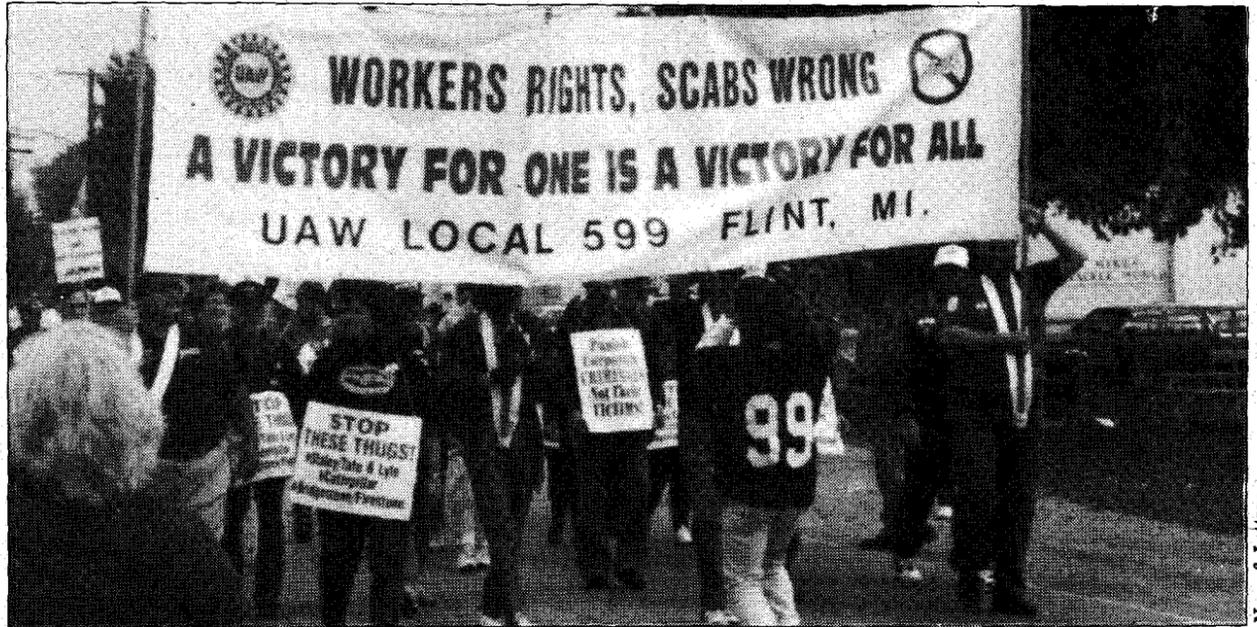
But while House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich and Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole are hot to carry out their "Contract against America" with a call to return to Reaganism, it was actually that "Reagan Democrat" Bill Clinton who paved the way with his \$30 billion Crime Bill. That and the welfare "reform" proposals he unveiled earlier this year represented Clinton's attempt to steal the right-wing Republican agenda.

Consider Bill Clinton's stigmatizing rhetoric before a klavern of police chiefs in New Mexico in mid-October: "...what we must be worried about is wave upon wave of these little children, who don't have somebody both good and strong to look up to, who are so vulnerable that their hearts can be turned to stone by the time they're 10 or 11 years old. And when there is a good one—a 5- or 10-year old kid in difficult circumstances, blooming like a flower in the desert, knowing it's wrong to steal candy—he actually has his life at risk."

Clinton had in mind the story of the 10- and 11-year old youths responsible for the death of a 5-year old youngster, in Chicago recently. Not unlike the demonizing rhetoric of Black people that spews forth from the campaign ads and debates in this year's political races, Clinton invokes the foreboding class images of society being inundated by population flood waves of the poor—not merely of adults, but of their children. The Black ghetto evokes the opposite image, that of a moral desert, utterly lacking in any sense of right or wrong.

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Militant labor actions resist Clinton's state-capitalist agenda



Victorious Buick City auto workers joined thousands marching in Decatur, Ill. against corporate despotisms.

by Jim Mills

Eight thousand embattled union members and their supporters poured into Decatur, Ill., last month. Anchoring the Oct. 15 demonstration and march were workers from A.E. Staley, locked out last year as they resisted contract concessions. Joining them were Decatur Caterpillar workers who walked out June 21 along with 13,000 others in three states, and Firestone-Bridgestone workers, on strike since July 12, who walked off the job with other rubber workers in five other locations.

Each union is locked in a bitter dispute over the conditions of work. The company contract proposals have in common expanded hours, weekend and holiday work, cuts in pay and benefits—in short, a push for total control over the lives of the people making corn products, farm implements and tires.

Members of the three unions, women and men, Black and white, marched shoulder to shoulder through the industrial east side of this working-class city. The militant parade passed by each company's plant one by one in order to break court injunctions limiting no more than a

handful of picketers to each gate. At the Staley site, the marchers dedicated a bridge overpass to workers killed by their jobs. An impromptu rally and sit-in at a street intersection concluded the day's show of defiance against corporate prerogatives to exploit labor.

Elsewhere in the Midwest, 11,500 United Auto Workers at General Motor's colossal Buick City complex in Flint, Mich., scored a rare victory. A four-day strike ending Sept. 30 forced GM to expand the work force by 800 jobs as well as implement a program to reduce repetitive stress injuries. (See "GM knuckles under," page 3.)

And in one of the largest election victories in the South since workers brought a union to J.P. Stevens 20 years ago, workers at Tultex in Martinsville, Va., voted for the Amalgamated Clothing & Textile Workers union.

Indeed, 1994 has seen a resurgence of labor actions. Organizers are seeing workers in the South winning union elections at a 2-to-1 clip. As of the first third of 1994, triple the number of workers had been on strike compared to 1993. Not all actions are officially sanc-

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Eyewitness to China's hollow economic boom

by Xu Wei

Guangzhou—China has undergone great changes in certain aspects, yet in others it stays the same or has become even worse. Almost everyone I talked to for six weeks believes corruption has become incurable. Indeed, corruption has escalated so much that it has become normal: "No official is clean."

I sensed a total disillusionment with the government and the party. Both are rotten within and both have proven incapable of correcting themselves, yet show no signs of giving up power. China's political system remains unchanged. In addition, power and money have become closely intertwined.

SURFACE PROSPERITY

On the surface at least, Southern Canton and major cities look prosperous—despite the homeless beggars (usually old men, women and children). The urban life style has changed. Making money, consumption and enjoyment are key activities. Commodities are plentiful. Clothes and shoes made in China follow closely styles in Hong Kong and the West.

Some urban families have air conditioners; a few free-ways in Canton and Beijing areas, some of them bought and run by Hong Kong tycoons, are already in use. McDonald's, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Estee Lauder, Valentino, expensive foreign wines are quite conspicuous. Every city looks like a huge construction site. Streets are jammed by vehicles, foreign and domestic.

Inflation is high. The price of all necessities has gone up greatly. Luxurious commodities—clothes with foreign labels and better styles—can be as high as a few thousand yuan and are displayed in almost every store. In Beijing, one small pizza and two drinks at Pizza Hut (there are quite a number of McDonald's and Pizza Huts) cost close to 100 yuan. To compare, school teachers make 300-400 yuan a month and many retirees live on less than 300 yuan a month. Cities are expanding into what were rural areas. This

is most obvious in Southern Canton. The countryside has been virtually replaced by apartment buildings, Western-style houses and shops. Now Guangzhou relies on food supplies from other provinces.

I was not impressed by the "miracle" of China's economic reforms. Shenzhen's industrial areas are full of factories and dormitories for workers—usually peasant girls and boys from the countryside of Sichuan, Jiangxi, Hunan, etc. Many work in factories owned by foreign business. The dormitories are seven or eight stories with balconies. At a brief glimpse they look OK. Yet looking carefully you will find that workers are crowded in small rooms with one big bunk. The walls are stained and windows dust-covered, the balconies are crowded with washed clothes. The dormitories are walled and carefully guarded, identification is required to enter the building and no outsiders are allowed in.

Chinese workers are in a difficult situation. About 60% of state industries are losing money. The problems don't simply lie in management and structures. Forged industrial products are flourishing. Industries on the coast, which were intended to export products, have

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Feminist subjectivity center of debate

by Laurie Cashdan

Editor's note: The letter below responds to comments from a Chicago feminist printed in the October N&L. We invite other readers to join this dialogue.

Thank you for your careful reading of my essay, "Feminism and Marx's humanism reconsidered" (N&L, March 1994). I appreciated your concern with the question of subjectivity and its relation to agency, which I feel is key to whether feminist theory can work out emancipatory possibilities in the retrogressive 1990s.

Raya Dunayevskaya used a phrase in *Philosophy and Revolution* which relates to this question of feminist subjectivity: "The whole point seems to be to hold on to the principle of creativity, and the contradictory process by which creativity develops" (246). Nearly every feminist writing or organizing today would have something to say about that "contradictory process" means to them in the 1990s. My concern is whether we have held tight to the "principle of creativity" which drives this process.

Let me make clear what I mean by creativity and its contradictory process by first referring to a short article published next to your letter, "A voice from the Delta," by Sarah White, a Black woman working in a catfish plant in Mississippi who, along with her sister workers, organized nearly the entire industry. She writes about facing unemployment and welfare lines until catfish processing plants opened on the old cotton plantations:

"We were eager to start work and disband the welfare lines. But the picture that was painted was not so beautiful when we had the chance to look at it again. That new-found feeling of being independent and part of the working society was destroyed in 1981 when the doors of Delta Pride opened."

Elsewhere she has written about the "kill line" of Delta Pride—the spattering of blood, deafening noise, pressure to work faster by shouting fore(women), wages low enough to qualify workers for food stamps. Nothing else so cuts through the ideological oppositions we hear daily—welfare/independence, unemployed/employed—nor so overturns the question of "pride" itself.

Yet many feminist theorists have shifted their concentration away from such creativity and toward what they call "the discursive structuring of subjectivity," by which they mean the historical, social construction of gender and women through discourses—or language.

Many feminist theorists who base themselves on Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge have insisted that discursive theories of subjectivity do not rob women of agency. They see agency taking place within (or in the interstices between) discourses and power relations rather than among individual agents of free will. When you write, "I am not at all convinced that Foucault's claim that discourse also structures subjects 'makes it impossible' to imagine agency," you may have such arguments in mind.

As Joan Scott puts it: "Subjects are constituted discursively, but there are conflicts among discursive systems, contradictions within any one of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy. And subjects have agency. They are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them."¹

Increasingly, some feminists have argued that while they agree that subjectivity does not arise from biological or economic sources unmediated by culture, they are not convinced that discursive poststructuralist theories allow them to conceptualize feminist agency or creativity such that it is not a mere reflection of the dominant culture.² Women become the object onto which discourses are mapped in this subject-object reversal.

Indeed, such a subject-object reversal could prove deadly in the 1990s, when racist and sexist ideology

Haitian woman of courage

Los Angeles—On Oct. 4, I went to hear Alerte Belance, called the "woman of courage" in her native land. She had been dismembered and tortured by the Haitian paramilitary force FRAHP. Her nose, ear, tongue and forearm were chopped off with a machete.

Her husband had been an active supporter of Aristide, and the FRAHP thugs had come to their house in the middle of the night to search him out. Alerte heard their approach and told her husband to leave. When the soldiers entered they grabbed her and carted her away, leaving her three small children crying alone in the darkness.

After hacking at her and chopping her up, the FRAHP forces left her for dead on top of a heap of corpses. But the strength of her courage and spirit kept her alive. The next morning she crawled to the roadside. She was taken to a hospital, and eventually applied for and received political asylum in the U.S. The U.S. government told her not to speak out about Haiti and what happened to her.

In the U.S., she received no medical attention for three months. She lived in a homeless shelter. Only recently, with the help of groups such as the Haitian Action Network, which sponsored her talk in L.A., has she been able to support herself. She stood before us, small and stout in stature, with a brilliant red and violet scarf encompassing her gentle face; her eyes were glowing, dark and bright.

Before her talk, a Haitian man sang a song of freedom in a piercing voice that rang through the church and filled us with sadness and hope. Afterwards, a young Black man said he was part of the gang: truce between the Crips and the Bloods. "We identify with your struggle," he said. "We feel that your struggle there and our struggle here are one." —Kim

abound but new social movements emerge with great difficulty and then are met with more ideological pollution that limits their scope to pushing the perimeters of existing "free-market" capitalism.

This is why I feel it is urgent to grapple with the way Marxist-Humanism has posed "dialectics of Absolute negativity" in relation to subjects of revolution. I would like to hear your thoughts on Dunayevskaya's 1974 essay, "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning," reprinted in N&L (October and November 1994).

Dunayevskaya emphasizes that what Hegel called "the patience, seriousness, suffering and the labor of the negative" is needed to work out "a totally new relationship of philosophy to actuality and action"—which includes the actuality of women's movements globally. "Just as the objective world and the elemental quest for universality have a crucial meaning for students of the dialectic," she writes, "so do the students of the dialectic have a crucial meaning for the movement from practice." The contradictory process of creativity in this retrogressive period takes center stage in this view.

1. Joan W. Scott, "Experience," in Judith Butler and Scott, eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (1992), p. 34.
2. See Kate Soper, "Productive Contradictions," in Caroline Ramazanoglu, ed., *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism* (1993).

Youth march for choice

New York City—It was raining. There were more cops than demonstrators. I was disappointed because there were only several hundred at the pro-choice demonstration, Oct. 23, against the "right to lifers" who formed a human cross on Fifth Avenue. We were mostly young women in our teens and early twenties. But we sure got attention as we marched all the way to George Pataki's campaign headquarters for governor. We shouted slogans at the top of our lungs in the cold rain and felt excited to be doing something.

How dare they! First they try to control my mind in school, now they want to have a say on my body! These anti-lifers (like our slogan said, "Pro-life, your name's a lie, you don't care if women die!") are more interested in the quantity of life than its quality. Why is it, in religion once you make a mistake, that's it for life? They say, no matter what, you have the child. It reminds me of the book we read in school, *The Scarlet Letter*.

Even though only a few anti-lifers showed up for their own "chain of fools" human cross, it was very scary. You get more aware there are people out there who are trying to break that stepping stone for women down, even kill you like they did the doctor in Pensacola.

And once again, it raises questions of relations between women and religion, men and women, society and women, and class and color in relation to women. That was another disappointment. Why was it mostly white women at this demonstration? —High school student

Adrienne Rich, poetry and revolution

Adrienne Rich's *What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics* (1993) is a profoundly important book, of a kind which only after reading it do you realize how much you needed it. Set at the end of the Cold War and "alleged triumph of corporate capitalism," as Rich puts it, "It reflects the undertaking, by one kind of artist, to see and feel her way to an understanding of her art's responsive and responsible relationship to history, to her contemporaries, and to the future."

At such a moment which, without too much exaggeration, could be said to herald the end of the old poetic cosmos, as all meaning is pulverized into the one single concept of Commodity, Rich reaches back to the origins in "naming." What she finds is our common human world: "This impulse to enter, through language, into the order and disorder of the world, is poetic at its root as surely as it is political at its root."

As opposed to this human world of poetry made by all, there is that actual world of capitalism, brutality and genocide in which poetry finds itself. Rich sets up a small drama, as someone in the midst of a domestic violence incident turns on her car radio and hears Wallace Stevens reading "The house was quiet and the world was calm." Without negating the beauty in Stevens, the need for something more, for new poetry, becomes clear.

Rich returns to Stevens and her relation to his verse. He is first her "liberator" in the music of language, and only later can she come to terms with the casual racism in many of his poems, which she sees as part of a "mass imaginative failure" also part of her own childhood, "the vast encircling presumption of whiteness."

Against this background, Rich notes the significance of dozens of other voices which have arisen since the '60s. The chance to find their work here must mirror the revelatory power which hearing them first had on her. Particularly moving are the remembrances of Audre Lorde and Arturo Islas, and of first reading and hearing Judy Grahn.

Rich writes of the '60s, "I could feel around me—in the city, in the country at large—the 'spontaneity of the masses' (later I would find the words in Rosa Luxemburg) and this was powerfully akin to the experience of writing poetry." New voices in poetry and life helped Rich find her own new poetic voice.

When she uses this vision to rethink political art as it was known in past revolutions, as well as to confront the present moment, the result is most exciting:

I did not want the current times, with their images of falling walls and slogans about a "new world order," to wash out for me all continuity with revolutions of the past and the hopes they had touched in so many nerves.

Brazil's new unionists

New York City—Brazilian sociologist Mary Garcia Castro spoke on women, gender and labor unions in Brazil and the U.S. at the Barnard College Center for Research on Women, Sept. 14. She described "class-based feminism" as transforming Brazilian unions in the last decade, due to the doubling of women in the labor force and women's leadership roles in strikes. Brazil has also seen a "reaching in strategy" to change unions by changing men. Some unions now deal with the "totality of workers' lives," including love and homophobia.

Men participate in these changes because women have been so tough in strikes and have led union organization of domestic workers, the landless and others.

Although many women have entered the labor force, 37% are self-employed or part-time, so women's first demand is still entry into the formal job market. Sexual harassment, outlawed last year but still widespread,



Women labor at 'Brazilian nut factory.'

health problems from working conditions, and unequal pay are other major issues. Reproductive rights is another—35% of poor women are sterilized, and proof of sterilization is required to get many jobs.

Castro sees the changes within unions as part of a new labor movement which emerged since the end of the 1970s with women as a new "subject." This movement has taken the forms of neighborhood associations, mothers' organizations, liberation theology, rebellion against traditional union hierarchies and grassroots women's movements. Community and labor groups worked together in the fight against the pre-1976 dictatorship, she said, and it is natural for them to work together now to fight the rising cost of living.

While gender is addressed by unions, Castro said, race is not. In the banking industry, Black women hold all the lowest paid jobs. Labor unions say racism is the province of the Black movement and do nothing about it.

Castro contrasted Brazilian "class-based feminism" to the "legal-institutional approach" she found in the U.S. unions she studied. I suggested that "class-based feminism" could be found in the U.S. in the new community-based workers' centers and self-organization of women that N&L has reported recently. —Anne Jaclard

I knew that for Marx himself, Communism had never meant less than the means for freeing human creativity in all persons to the fullest: he believed that the release of that very creativity would ensure that no revolution turned in on itself, stagnated, and froze; that in "revolution in permanence," "new passions and new forces" would repeatedly arise as the creative currents of each and all found voice.

For Rich, "it's as if the process of poetry itself temporarily releases me into that realm of human power which Marx said is its own end." Such an integrated vision of poetry and revolution is rare and precious—and I'm not sure if there is, anywhere, a more articulate example of it. The book should become a vital part of today's battle of ideas—for instance, over multiculturalism and the "canon." In her own development as poet and human being Rich embodies both continuity with the past and necessary discontinuity which allows new voices and a new world to arise. —Gerard Emmett

Women of color left out

Chicago—When I signed up for a class on race and gender at my university, I assumed we would be discussing both together. The class has definitely proved me wrong. First we discussed race. Now we're discussing gender without race.

When we discussed race, all we discussed was biased research that scientists used to support arguments that African Americans were inferior to Euro-Americans. We talked about craniometry.

In the gender section we've read Simone De Beauvoir and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and now we're reading bell hooks' *Ain't I a Woman*. But we discussed her last chapters first and skipped over her first three chapters on the devaluation of African-American women and how we're seen as sex objects. We actually haven't talked about African-American women. The professor asked whether domestic work is demeaning because women do it or because it's service work, and all the white women started talking about their personal experiences at home.

We viewed a film in class called "Ways of Seeing." The film only addressed Euro-American women. I made the point that to discuss women's issues, you have to address all women...women of color. I said I had a problem with trying to discuss issues without acknowledging other cultures. No one acknowledged what I said and they continued on with their class discussion. I put my books into my backpack and walked out of the classroom.

—African-American woman college student

Mississippi: a tale of three catfish plants

Belzoni, Miss.—You can win union recognition at a plant, but unless you really have a union of the members, it doesn't mean much. At the Simmons catfish plant in Yazoo City, Mr. Simmons, the owner, is still the law, the total boss of the plant. He sits in his big house on the hill behind the plant and he rules it, just like it was with the old cotton plantations.

Our union, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1529, won an election to represent Simmons workers, but after years of intimidation and firings, people are afraid to talk to union representatives. Most of the 200 workers are not union members and don't pay union dues. There is no effective steward system in the plant.

Mr. Simmons loans money to individual workers. People say: Don't make trouble and Mr. Simmons will take care of you. There are crowded and unsafe conditions all over the plant, especially on the kill line. Each time a worker needs to use the bathroom, she has to clock out and then back in. The plant manager has been firing workers any time he feels like it, and he talks to them like dirt.

What makes me so angry is that here we have a union, but the way of thinking really hasn't changed. The plantation mentality has workers in its grip. When it gets hold of you, you have no life or mind of your own.

The Delta Pride plant in Belzoni is a very different kind of plant, nothing like Simmons, but it still has problems. It is a very smooth-running operation. The job standards are not a big problem. The management has learned not to abuse workers.

At the same time the contract is not being followed. There are "little things" like the aprons. When you get a hole in one, the contract says you are supposed to get another one. At Belzoni, you don't get one; you try to tape the old one, and you get fish guts on your clothes. Then there are big things, like the way workers get written up for "abusing" bathroom time. The contract says that they have to prove it, but they are disciplining people without any proof, up to three days off.

Why isn't the union stronger at the Belzoni plant, when it is the same company, the same contract, the same union local as at the big Delta Pride plant in Indianola? I am trying to figure it out. The Belzoni plant got the union in 1991, after the big Delta Pride strike was over. They didn't have to struggle with the old management. They didn't have a testing of fire like the workers at the Indianola plant had. Do you have to go through that to be strong?

What I want to say to the workers at Belzoni is that the struggle for respect at Delta Pride is an ongoing battle, a way of life. If they know you have gone to sleep, they will eat through the foundations of the union like termites in a building.

The Belzoni contract is the next one coming up, in October 1995. We need to get total support and unity from all the Delta Pride plants and, really, from all the catfish plants in Mississippi. We are the only ones who can

change our lives, and to do that we have to develop our minds. We have to believe in the dream and teach our kids to believe.

—Union activist, Local 1529

Indianola, Miss.—We didn't get the wages we wanted in the last contract, but we are trying to make sure that everything else we got at the main Delta Pride plant is strictly enforced. I am a steward and my policy is: "Never knuckle under to a supervisor. Go by the contract, by the book." This will only work if the great majority of the workers in the plant are union members and if the members all stand up for themselves.

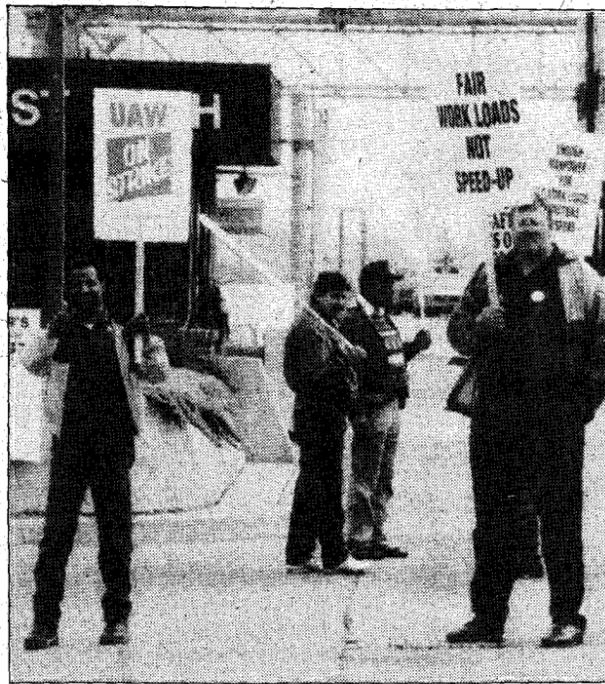
My view is that we will respect the supervisors and we expect them to respect us. If they disrespect us and violate our rights, they know that we will file a grievance. Most of the time now we don't have to grieve; they want to solve it before a grievance is filed. No recent grievances have gone to arbitration.

The contract says that we get a break every two hours, not whenever the supervisor feels like it. They had been working us 10 or 15 minutes over. Now we are telling them it has to be within five minutes of the two hours. On the kill line, we are watching the speed. We say: "Work at a normal pace. Do what your body allows." We don't want any more crippling injuries.

Everyone is back from layoff. We are up to about 1,200 workers in the plant. Around Labor Day there was a lot of overtime while people were still laid off. We told the company to cut that out, to bring back the laid-off workers instead. And they did.

—Steward

GM knuckles under



Flint, Mich.—On Sept. 27, 11,500 members of United Auto Workers Local 599 went on strike over health and safety issues, work standards, movement of work to outside companies and, most importantly, a demand that General Motors hire new employees to relieve overworked auto workers. Those involved in the strike had been working 50-60 hours per week. Some 4,000 outstanding health and safety grievances were on the table.

After a four-day strike that nearly shut down General Motors' North American vehicle assembly operations, GM capitulated and agreed to hire over 800 permanent employees from a pool of approximately that many former employees in the Flint and Pontiac area. On Sept. 25, GM had averted a strike at the 1,200-employee Fisher Guide plant near Flint by agreeing to hire 118 former auto workers.

The strike affected the Buick City complex, the V-6 engine plant and several smaller plants. The Buick City complex is the sole source for torque converters used in most General Motors automatic transmissions. This is what threatened to shut down all GM North American vehicle assembly. As it was, plants in Ste. Therese, Quebec; Lansing and Pontiac, Mich.; Linden, N.J. and Shreveport, La. were shut down by the strike.

The 50- and 60-hour work weeks were accompanied by an absentee rate of 10%, including workers on sick leave. The absenteeism in turn caused General Motors to use more overtime. In spite of dramatic improvements in productivity, GM remains behind Ford and Chrysler in that respect. General Motors was trying to bring itself into the 21st century on the backs of its workers.

GM has reduced its hourly employees from 300,000 to 247,000 since December 1991, which exceeds its target of 250,000 hourly employees by 1995. Adding less than 1,000 workers may seem to be a drop in the bucket compared to a loss of 53,000 jobs, not to mention the massive reductions in the 1980s. The real importance of the added workers is that General Motors was challenged and beaten within four days.

Local 599 president Dave Yettaw was, unfortunately, quoted by the Flint Journal as saying that "slowing down the line speed was no issue, we wanted jobs for the workers." In reality, both of these are issues, as is a whole lot more.

—Dan B.

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Temping can kill

Chicago—Four workers were killed and five seriously injured on Chicago's Edens Expressway, Monday, Oct. 3, when the steering failed on the van taking them to a factory in Libertyville, Ill. The preceding Friday I had been a passenger in a van carrying workers along the same route. That van is among a small fleet belonging to a temporary agency.

The driver's pay arrangement is generally a flat fee per route or per passenger. In the former, the agency's interest is for the driver to get the most done in the fewest routes, to assign a number of workers in excess of the vehicle's seating capacity. In the latter, this interest is extended to the driver as well. For each day the agency deducts about \$3 from the worker's wages.

That Friday I found myself pressed between the seat and side door of the van, the driver racing past cars on the expressway. I was thinking how I might be killed in the next few moments, never having known what kind of work had me inside this vehicle.

The agency makes a policy of not telling workers what a new assignment entails. Shortly after I began at the agency, an administrator needed signatures on paper work for a new contract and took a few of us along for the first day on the job. On the way I asked what we'd be doing at the company. "What's it matter?" he replied. "Work is work, right?"

All concrete labors have been reduced to one abstract, congealed mass; to the increasing sector of "temporary general laborers" this is as obvious as receiving the same poverty wage whatever variety of production one is drafted into today. Regularly exploited by continually changing employers, one detests them on an individual basis and comes to oppose them as a class.

The other day I heard a worker at the agency's office telling another to expect only one 20-minute break in the impending eight-hour shift. Gesturing as if wringing out a wash rag, he said, "They squeeze you for everything you're worth." The other frowned and shrugged his shoulders, "They all do that."

This experience is brought into dialogue with that of company employees. "Y'know," said one temporary worker at my previous assignment, "everywhere I've been, the workers are complaining about their management."

—Tesla Coil

Somerville Mills in contempt

Somerville, Tenn.—Somerville Mills has been found in contempt of court because they did not comply with the judge's ruling to bargain in good faith and to make the workers whole in the back pay that they owe them. Also we are getting ready to go to court on Oct. 31 for an EEOC charge where the company discriminatorily built the women's bathroom open to the plant—there's no door, no wall. The men have always had a door.

The company gave us a big raise trying to undermine the union, Furniture Workers Local 282. We took the raise, and we still didn't vote the union out. So then the company reduced our money that we make on our tickets per dozen that we sew [piecerate] and raised the quota that we have to produce [for the base rate] so we couldn't make more money. It was bad faith bargaining for them to do that because the union was already in.

This EEOC thing is going to light a fire under their feet, because they never thought we could go that far. The plant manager, his assistant, all the men, they would just walk up in there. We had no privacy in our bathroom, no privacy at all. The company's alibi is that there was so much theft. When the company built that plant, they didn't know if there was going to be theft in there or not. They just did it where they could keep an eye on the women. I feel good that EEOC is taking us seriously.

Sometimes we do literature to bring the workers up to date on things and what else is still pending at the Labor Board. We do one-on-one where we go to the new workers, try and make them feel comfortable, and ask them to join the union and get involved. We take time to educate them on what's going on and why we feel the need of the union. That's been working real well. At one time they were too afraid to listen or stand there and be seen talking with somebody involved in the union. So that's a plus for us even though we're not getting the cards signed right now.

—Black woman activist

Organizing S.F. sweatshops

San Francisco—We are ILGWU organizers picketing San Francisco Knitworks. There's no strike going on because there's no union yet. We're asking dealers and distributors not to do business with this company because the owner is harassing the workers and us, trying to keep a union vote, which was already scheduled once but then canceled, from happening. There are about 80 workers here, and the boss illegally tells them the company is going broke, so don't even think about organizing a union.

We have had success in stopping Yellow Freight company from picking up stuff because they're union, but the company has just shifted to a non-union carrier called EFL. These guys have been crossing the line every day. They tell me their supervisor threatens to fire them if they don't pick up the orders.

We're trying to get our foot in the door. Eighty-five to 90% of the sweatshops in San Francisco are not union. The majority of them are piecework. S.F. Knitworks is actually one of the few who pay hourly wages, which run from the minimum up to about \$5.50 an hour. Piecework means that if the rate is good and you're a fast worker, you might make \$7 or \$8 an hour. In smaller shops, in some of the back alley places in Chinatown, it means many workers are getting \$10 a day.

—Picketeer

Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

Why is it important to be union? It is not just the pay, though that is important. We have a lot of protection from our contract. We have the right to follow our work in any change of operations. We have seniority protection, which means no favoritism. They cannot discipline us for productivity. That is a safety and health question when you are doing heavy work, and dealing with traffic and weather conditions. We have the right to refuse unsafe equipment. We cannot be forced or pressured to break Department of Transportation rules, such as driving too many hours. The list goes on.

So if we are "for" the union, how come we're not fired up and breaking down the doors to go out and organize others? Maybe a story from my job helps explain this. We work for a small regional trucking company which, though under the national master freight agreement, also has a "white paper," a side agreement. For example, we make 50¢ less, we don't have a Teamster pension, and so on.

WORKERS AS BYSTANDERS

This is a company that's growing, that got away without a strike by signing a "me too" agreement, which we feel they aren't living up to by insisting on this white paper. They're abusing the contract, but we don't have any say in the negotiations. We have no voice. Only we hear the union delegate tell us "it doesn't look good." We had this company on the run at the time of the national strike, and now "it doesn't look good"? We can't understand that.

Now, the union got a tentative agreement with the company about two months ago, and they "can't" tell us what's in it. Management knows what's in it, the local knows, the International knows—but they "can't" tell us, the guys who have to work under it, until the morning that we vote on it! Do they think we are stupid, we are children, that we can't be trusted to discuss this agreement intelligently? Why the secrecy? Is it that bad? This is supposed to be our union, and we are just bystanders to the whole process.

At the very least this is plain stupid unionism, to say you want to get the rank and file involved in building the union and then you treat them this way. Yes, we are all for unionizing. But when you get treated this way by your own union, maybe it takes the guts out of it. It cuts the ground out from under your feet to go out there and be enthusiastic.

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya
**MARXIST-HUMANIST
ARCHIVES**

Editor's Note

We proudly present the second part of Raya Dunayevskaya's lecture to the Hegel Society of America, originally titled "Hegel's Absolute Idea as New Beginning." The paper was delivered twenty years ago on November 8, 1974, at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

In the first part, reprinted in the October 1994 N&L, the author begins a "step by step" analysis of the 27 paragraphs that comprise the "The Absolute Idea," the final chapter of Hegel's *Science of Logic* (SL). "To be swept up by the dialectic is to experience a plunge to freedom," she writes, and continues with a discussion on Hegel's dialectic method in the thought of Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin.

Our reprinting this pivotal presentation is intended to foster the broadest dialogue on the dialectics of organization and philosophy as well as perspectives for News and Letters Committees. We welcome your comments.

The reprint here can be found in **The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development**, microfilm number 11535. Readers can obtain a copy of the whole lecture by sending \$1.85 to News & Letters, 59 E. Van Buren, #707, Chicago IL 60605.

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Founder of Marxist-Humanism

We will take up the illumination the actual movement from practice (these past two decades) sheds on the problematic of our day at the end of this study. Here it is necessary to resume Hegel's own concentration on and development of "second negativity" in those last 12 paragraphs of Absolute Idea.

(3) Beginning with paragraph 15, and all the way to the end of the chapter, we no sooner face the subjectivity that has overcome opposition between Notion and Reality than we learn that, since this subjective is the "innermost," it is also the "most objective moment" (SL 835-6), and it is this subjectivity as objectivity which is "subject, a person, a free being." Clearly, free creative power assures the plunge to freedom. It is the unifying force of the Absolute Idea. And since absolute negativity, the new foundation, is not "something merely picked up, but something deduced and proved" (SL 838), this subjective could not but be objective, so much so that it extends to the **system itself**.

There too we learn that the content belongs to the method, is the **extension of method** so that the system, too, is but another "fresh beginning" which has been arrived at through an infinite remembrance of things past and advance signposts (*Weitergehen*). This is why the discussion in paragraphs 20 through 25 not only never departs from absolute negativity as the transcending mediation, but shows that every advance in the system of totality becomes "richer and more concrete."

The expression, "richer and more concrete," no more than the categories of subjectivity, reason, freedom, may not have led the reader to think of any such "materialistic" movement as the movement by which man **makes** himself free, but here is how Hegel spells out "Free Mind" in **The Philosophy of Mind** of his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences:*

When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength, just because it is the very essence of mind, and that as its very actuality...The Greeks and Romans, Plato and Aristotle, even the Stoics did not have it...

If to be aware of the Idea—to be aware, that is, that men are aware of freedom as their essence, aim and object—is a matter of **speculation**, still this very Idea itself is the actuality of men—not something which they **have**, as men, but which they **are**. (*Encyclopaedia*, paragraph 482)

The fact that, in the *Science of Logic*, the stages in dialectical advance are not shown as so many stages in the historic development of human freedom, but, in the end, unwind as a circle, become a circle of circles, is, however, a constant reminder that every absolute is a new beginning, has a before and an after; if not a "future," surely a consequence, a "successor"—or, expressed more accurately, **has only the antecedent and indicates its successor** in its conclusion." (SL 842) Whatever Hegel said, and meant, about the Owl of Minerva spreading its wings only at dusk simply does not follow from the **objectivity** of the drive, the **summation** in which the advance is immanent in the present. While he neither gave, nor was interested in, any blueprints for the future, he was not preoccupied with death, the "end" of philosophy, much less of the world. His philosophy is "the end" only in the sense that "up to this moment" philosophy has reached this point with "my" philosophy of absolute negativity. From the beginning, when his first and greatest elemental work, **The Phenomenology of Mind**, ended with nothing short of the Golgotha of the Spirit, Hegel had succeeded in describing the final act as if it were an unfolding of the everlasting. When subjected to the dialectic method from which, according to Hegel, no truth can escape, the conclusion turns out to be a new beginning. There is no trap in thought. Though it is finite, it breaks through the barriers of the given, reaches out, if not to infinity, surely beyond the historic moment.

In the final two paragraphs we see that there is no rest for the Absolute Idea, the fulfilled Being, the Notion that comprehends itself: the Notion that has become the Idea's own

Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning

content. The negativity, the urge to transcend, the ceaseless motion will go into new spheres and sciences and first then achieve "absolute liberation." The absolute liberation experienced by the Absolute Idea as it "freely releases itself" does not make it ascend to heaven. On the contrary, it first then experiences the shock of recognition, "the **externality of space and time** existing absolutely in its own without the moment of subjectivity." (SL 843)

So much for those who consider that Hegel lived far away from the concrete objective world, in some distant ivory tower in which he "deduced" Nature from the Idea. Equally wrong, however, are those who, while recognizing that Hegel presents the transition to Nature as an actual process of reality, conclude that Hegel is standing on his head. Proud as Hegel might have been of the feat, we need to turn both to the **Science of Logic** and the **Philosophy of Mind**, especially the three final syllogisms, to see what Hegel was telling us.

What was an intimation in the *Logic* about Nature being the mediation is spelled out as the first syllogism at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*: Logic-Nature-Mind. In that paragraph Hegel further assures us that "Nature, standing between Mind and its essence, sunders them, not indeed to extremes of finite abstraction, nor stands aloof from them." (*Encyclopaedia*, paragraph 575)

One of the most relevant of the scholarly studies of the 1960s is Reinhart Klemens Maurer's *Hegel und das Ende der Geschichte: Interpretationen zur Phänomenologie*. He holds that it may very well be true that the first of these final syllogisms (in paragraph 575), which has Nature as the mediation, gives the appearance that "Hegel turns to Darwin, turns to dialectical materialism and other nature-geneses of man," and also means to turn "to Liberty," there leading the "course of necessity," but Hegel himself brings in a "correction" in his next paragraph. Here the sequence reads: Nature-Mind-Logic [paragraph 576]. Professor Maurer then proceeds to "appropriate" that syllogism as expressing the dialectic of the *Phenomenology*. Whatever one may think of that analysis as a philosophy of history or whatever, the point most Hegel scholars do

agree with regarding the final syllogism (paragraph 577) is this, in Otto Pöggeler's words of 1961: "In opposition to the usual interpretations of the Hegelian text, I should like to propose the following: that the actual science of Spirit is not the Logic, but the philosophy of Spirit."

Thus the focus of the third syllogism has shifted and the stress has been correctly placed on the fact the Logic has been replaced and, in its stead, we get, not the sequential but the **consequential Self-Thinking Idea**. To Hegel this has resulted from the fact that "it is the nature of the fact, the notion, which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition." (*Encyclopaedia*, paragraph 577)

Hegel's Absolutes never were a series of ascending ivory towers. Revolutionary transformation is immanent in the very form of thought. As we saw from the chapter on Absolute Idea, the unifying force was free creative power. By the time we reach the mediated final result, Absolute Mind, the absolute negativity that was the moving force in Logic, in Nature, in Geist where we saw them as concrete stages of human freedom, there no longer was any difference between theory and practice. This is why our age can best understand Hegel's Absolute. It has been witness to a **movement from practice** for two long decades (ever since the death of Stalin lifted the incubus from the heads of the masses in East Europe). To this writer, Hegel's genius is lodged in the fact that his "voyage of discovery" becomes one endless process of discovery for us. The "us" includes both Marx's new continent of thought of materialist dialectics, and Hegel scholars, as well as the movement from practice that was itself a form of theory once its spontaneity discovered the power of thought along with its physical might. This writer has followed very closely this movement of revolt ever since June 17, 1953, and saw in it a quest for universality because she had already discerned in the dialectical movement of the three final syllogisms in Absolute Mind a new point of departure in the Idea and in the movement from practice.⁹

This movement from practice hardly had the ear of contemporary Hegelians, orthodox or Marxist, as evidenced in the erudite, leftist director of the famous Frankfurt School, the late Theodor Adorno. His very reason for being, for thinking, for acting, was Dialectics, that is to say, for negations of what is. He entitled the summation of his life's thought, his intellectual legacy, **Negative Dialectics**.¹⁰ This book, however, has little to do with the dialectics of negativity, and least with the concept of Subject, by which Hegel distinguished his view from all other philosophers who left the search for truth at Substance only. As "concretized" by Marx for the proletarian class, Subject is supposed to have been accepted also by Adorno, but again, Adorno keeps his

distance and originality locked up in what he calls **Negative Dialectics**. From the very beginning of the Preface of his work (page xix), Adorno informs us that the positive in the negative—"the negation of the negation"—is the enemy: "This book seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits without reducing its determinacy." The so-called "theoretical inadequacies of Hegel and Marx" revolve around what he sees as the all-encompassing evil, the concept, that "subsuming cover," its "autarchy."¹¹

Naturally, Adorno keeps his distance from "positivists" and the vulgarisms of the knighted Karl Popper and his infamous "Hegel and Fascism" school. Nevertheless, Adorno, almost out of nothing, suddenly brings in Auschwitz and introduces some sort of kinship between it and absolute negativity. He writes: "Genocide is the absolute integration...Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death...Absolute negativity is in plain sight and has ceased to surprise anyone."¹²

By "almost out of nothing," I naturally do not mean that Auschwitz was not the reality of Fascism, nor do I mean only the suddenness and shock of introducing such subject matter in the climax of a book called "Meditations on Metaphysics." Rather, I mean it is wrong. That is to say, it is totally illogical and non-dialectical, considering that Adorno devoted an adult lifetime to fighting fascist ideology as the very opposite of Hegelian dialectics and had seen the very death of dialectics in Nazi Germany. Perhaps a better word than

"wrong" would be Adorno's own curse-word "naive." I mean that as late as 1957, in his *Aspects of the Hegelian Dialectic*, he almost defended a subject-object identity.

Subject-object cannot be dismissed as mere extravagance of logical absolutism...In seeing through the latter as mere subjectivity, we have already passed beyond the Speculative idealism...Cognition, if it is genuine, and more than simple duplication of the subjective, must be the subject's objectivity.

And, indeed, in his *Negative Dialectics*, he reiterates the same idea when he writes that, despite the fact that Hegel "deifies" subjectivity, "he accomplishes the opposite as well, an insight into the subject as a self-manifesting objectivity."¹³

Why, then, such a vulgar reduction of absolute negativity? Therein is the real tragedy of Adorno (and the

Frankfurt School). It is the tragedy of a one-dimensionality of thought which results when you give up Subject, when one does not listen to the voices from below—and they were loud, clear, and demanding between the mid-fifties and mid-sixties. It is a tragedy once one returns to the ivory tower and reduces his purpose to "the purpose of discussing key concepts of philosophic disciplines and centrally intervening in those disciplines."¹⁴ The next step was irresistible, the substitution of a permanent critique not alone for absolute negativity, but also of "permanent revolution itself."

Now, whether the enduring relevance of Hegel has stood the test of time because of the devotion and analytical rigor of Hegel scholars, or because a movement of freedom surged up from below and was followed by new cognition studies, there is no doubt that **because** Absolute Negativity signifies transformation of reality, the dialectic of contradiction and totality of crises, the dialectic of liberation, Hegel's thought comes to life at critical points of history, called by him "birth-times of history." In addition, there were Marxist scholars, revolutionary dissidents, who built on new ground. While a scholar from the West, like Reinhart Maurer, was preoccupied with Hegel's concept of where to end, the Czechoslovakian philosopher, Karel Kosik, was preoccupied with where to begin anew. Of the Eastern European studies that accompanied the revolts and revolved around Marx's Humanism, especially Marx's "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," one of the most rigorous studies was Karel

(Continued on page 5)

- The letters on the Absolute Idea and the three final syllogisms of Absolute Mind (dated May 12 and May 20, 1953), I have turned over to the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit. These comprise part of the collection on **Marxist-Humanism, its Origin and Development in America, 1941-1975** [now called **Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development**]. They are available on microfilm for other libraries and are listed as "The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection." [The 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes" are now available in **The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism** (Chicago: News & Letters, 1989).]
- The original German edition was published in 1966. Quotations will be made from the English translation by E. B. Ashton published in 1973 by the Seabury Press of New York.
- Adorno's accusation of "conceptual fetishism" against Marx's famous "Fetishism of Commodities" as "truly a piece from the heritage of classic German philosophy" (page 189, footnote) is not relevant here. Contrast it with Karel Kosik's analysis of the very same section in a work described below in footnote 15.
- Negative Dialectics**, page 362.
- Negative Dialectics**, page 350.
- Negative Dialectics**, page xx in Preface.

Part Two



Raya Dunayevskaya

Hegel's Absolute

(Continued from page 4)

Kosik's *The Dialectics of the Concrete*.¹⁵

Nor were these serious studies limited to the "East."¹⁶ As Frantz Fanon saw it, the African struggle for freedom was "not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute."¹⁷ There is no doubt, of course, that once action supersedes the subjectivity of purpose, the unity of theory and practice is the form of life out of which emerge totally new dimensions. To this writer, this is only the "proof" of the ending of the **Science of Logic**, the absolute as new beginning, the self-bringing forth of liberty. Because Hegel's great work had new horizons in sight, Nature and Spirit, the Absolute Idea had to undergo "absolute liberation" (*Befreiung*). No mere transition (*Übergang*) here; Freedom is unrestricted. It will "complete" (*vollendet*) its liberation in the **Philosophy of Mind (Geist)**. But there is no doubt either in the **Science of Logic** about the Notion being Subject, being Reality, and not some sort of closed ontology. To think that Hegel referred only to the idea of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world when he wrote about "the pivot on which the impending world revolution turned at that time"¹⁸ is both to forget the Christians thrown to the lions, and that it was the "resigned" Hegel of the **Philosophie des Rechts [Philosophy of Right]** who wrote about the "impending world revolution" and not the young Hegel who had earlier toasted the great French Revolution.

Is it mere accident that, after 150 years of indifference, two simultaneous translations of the **Philosophy of Nature** appeared in English? Or is it mere accident that in the new studies on Hegel, a thinker like Professor Riedel suddenly sees in Hegel an equal primacy of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea? Or that new studies in Hegel cover East and West, North and South, and that many of the world conferences on Hegel coincide with Marx and Lenin as philosophers? Is it not rather that the problematic of our crisis-ridden world impinges in no incidental way on the whole question of the relationship of theory to practice not just on the immediate level, but one grounded in philosophy? No doubt, as Hegel put it, to accept a category at face value is an "uninstructed and barbarous procedure." But it is also a fact that the single dialectic process surges up from thought as well as from actuality. It would be equally "uninstructed" for philosophers to act as if the relationship of theory to practice is merely a "job for politicians." Just as the objective world and the elemental quest for universality have a crucial meaning for students of the dialectic, so do the students of the dialectic have a crucial meaning for the movement from practice. Just as the movement from the abstract universal to the concrete individual through the particular, **necessitates** a double negation (and that, after all, comprises the whole movement of the **Science of Logic**), so does the "comprehension" of it. If philosophers learn to eschew elitisms, then the unity of theory and practice, of absolute as new beginning, will not remain an abstract desire, or mere will, but philosophy itself will become action.

In his **Hegel: A Re-examination**, Professor Findlay was right when he stated that Hegel's exegeses can seem "arid and false to those who see nothing mysterious and god-like in the facts of human thought." But is it not equally true that philosophers who stand only in terror before revolution not only do not "comprehend" it, they cannot fully comprehend the revolution **in thought?** And Hegel did revolutionize philosophy. Absolute Idea as new beginning can become a new "subjectivity" for realizing Hegel's principle, that "the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and that unity which is truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone." This is not exactly a summons to the barricades, but Hegel is asking us to have our ears as well as our categories so attuned to the "Spirit's urgency" that we rise to the challenge of working out, through "patience, seriousness, suffering and the labor of the negative," a totally new relationship of philosophy to actuality and action as befits a "birth-time of history." This is what makes Hegel a contemporary.

15. Two of the chapters of his **Dialectics of the Concrete** have been published in English in **Telos** (Fall 1968 and Fall 1969). While in the second issue, Kosik contrasts the empty absolutes of Schelling with those of Hegel, who characterized the absolutes of the Romantics as having got to the Absolute "like a shot out of the pistol," in the earlier, 1968 issue, Kosik wrote that Marx's beginning of **Capital** with "Commodity" means "it can be characterized in Hegelian terms, as the unity of being and non-being, of distinction and similarity, of identity and non-identity. All further determinations and richer definitions are characterizations of this 'absolute' of capitalist society. The dialectic of interpretation or of exegesis cannot eclipse the central problem: How does science reach the necessary beginning of the exposition....The dialectic is not a method of reduction, but the method of spiritual and intellectual reproduction of reality." [Kosik's book has since been translated into English in its entirety under the same title, **Dialectics of the Concrete** (Dordrecht: Syntheses Library, 1976)].

The only one in the academic world in Hegel studies in the West who has dealt seriously, not with existing, given, established, state Communism, but with Marx himself and sees the transformation of the commodity as phenomenon into Notion is Karl Löwith in his **From Hegel to Nietzsche**, translated by David Green (New York: 1964). The original German edition appeared in 1941 as **Von Hegel bis Nietzsche** (Zurich: 1953).

16. I have limited myself to Eastern Europe, but of course I really mean the East, the Orient, and Mao's perversion of Hegelian dialectics, especially the concept of Contradiction, with which I have dealt elsewhere. See Chapter Five, "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung," in my **Philosophy and Revolution**, pages 128-150.

17. Frantz Fanon, **The Wretched of the Earth**, page 33.

18. Hegel, **The Philosophy of Right**, translated by Sir T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942). Preface, page 10. See also the translator's note Number 26 on page 301.

Editorial

No to U.S. grip on Haitian life

The problems confronting the Haitian masses and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, now that he has returned to resume the work they had overwhelmingly elected him to do three years ago, are formidable. It is not only the depth of the poverty in that land where three-fourths of the seven million population are unemployed, malnutrition is rampant, only one in four can read, and the great majority live without electricity, telephones, a sewage system or even roads. Whatever infrastructure Aristide had begun to put into operation, before the coup sent him into exile, was systematically destroyed and is now virtually non-existent.

Yet what confronts Aristide today is not only this great worsening of all the enormous problems Haiti faced three years ago but the political and economic straitjacket in which the U.S. is attempting to tie him as the condition for his return. That straitjacket—called "Strategy of Social and Economic Reconstruction"—was presented last August in Paris to those who would be funding \$800 million over the next 15 months for the "reconstruction"—primarily the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the U.S., France and Canada.

RECONSTRUCTION OR STRAITJACKET?

Under the Plan, the Haitian government is to cut the number of its 45,000 civil servants in half, move social services to the private sector, sell its state-owned industries, and remove import restrictions and tariffs. It is the same plan the U.S. has always pursued in the Caribbean—guaranteeing that those lands remain as importers of U.S. goods and pools of cheap labor for their factories.

How sharp a break it is from the demands of the Haitian people and Aristide's economic goals in his first seven months, can be seen in the failure to so much as mention any adjustment of a minimum wage, the rock-bottom wages that make Haitian workers so attractive to U.S. manufacturers. Aristide's government had sought to raise it to the equivalent of \$3 a day (now worth about \$1), but the coup took place before it could be put into effect. This is what the World Bank called a "non-issue" in its plan for Haiti.

Aristide's selection of the wealthy businessman and champion of "free trade," Smarck Michel, to become Prime Minister, was clearly a bow to U.S. rejection of his expected choice, Claudette Werleigh, on the grounds that she was too far to the Left. It is being heralded as an attempt to "bring rich and poor together" in a "transition to democracy." But the irreconcilable class conflicts in Haiti are sure to grow. The very wealthy elite, who sponsored the coup to retain their power, will now only grow wealthier, and the poor will as always grow poorer.

TWO WORLDS IN OPPOSITION

Accepting the limits of today's capitalist world realities is not the freedom the Haitian masses created the Lavalas—their "Flood"—to win. The opposition to U.S. intervention that was heard within Haiti from the beginning stood opposed both to the totally racist opposition that spewed from the U.S. Right and the illusions of some in the Left who saw it as an "opening" for Haiti's liberation. Although many such illusions nonetheless still persist, both within and without Haiti, it does not mean that the masses cannot yet determine their own destiny.*

The very different direction the masses want to take has been seen continuously over the past month—in their fury at the immediate release of the attaches the people have captured and turned over to the U.S. forces; their anger at the troops' protection, not of the people from the thugs still allowed to flourish, but of the homes of the wealthy; their very different concept of what the U.S. calls "looting" and the masses consider reclaiming the wealth they produced.

The conflict between what the masses are aiming for and the "plan" the U.S. has in mind for them—namely, to keep them in check, now that Cedras and company have outlived their usefulness to U.S. imperialism—explains the great difficulty the U.S. forces are having in establishing a new police force. The head of the U.S. Special Forces, who had hoped to simply "purge" and "retrain" the existing force, was reduced to

complaining, "How clean do their hands have to be?" when angry crowds recognized the same thugs who had been oppressing them.

Nothing more dramatically demonstrates the way in which the masses wanted to smash the old, not take it over, than the pictures of the Haitian people sweeping into the emptied police stations and, though they owned nothing, smashing everything in sight—tables, chairs, typewriters—anything that represented the oppression they had been suffering.

What confronts the Haitian people, at the turning point the whole world has reached today when retrogression has threatened every new revolt that gives the world hope, is how to achieve both the uprooting of the old and the creation of the new. In the face of what would seem today the overwhelming weight of U.S. imperialism and the pull of the world market, what looms most crucial of all is never losing the pull of the underlying philosophy of the masses which Marx had called "human power which is its own end." It is that struggle in Haiti that calls for the strong and creative support of all revolutionaries—most of all right at home in the U.S., beginning with a demand for the withdrawal of the U.S. forces and the return to the Haitian masses of their own destiny.

* See "Who will listen to the Haitian masses?" in October 1994 N&L.

Left fails Bosnia test

Chicago—The insensitivity of the majority of the Left to the Bosnian struggle against genocide was manifested yet again at the Radical Scholars and Activists Conference this year when conference organizers included a supporter of the Serbian government in a panel on "Bosnia, the U.S. and the Left." This decision was vociferously opposed by other panel members.

Frieda Afary, a Bosnia solidarity activist, stressed that the Bosnian struggle started as a fight against ethnic cleansing and for preserving a multiethnic society. She argued that it is time we faced the ramifications of reducing solidarity with Bosnia to a question of being for or against U.S. military intervention. Neither those who have advocated U.S. military intervention nor those who cry, "Hands off Yugoslavia!" have raised the question of freedom and self-determination for the Bosnian people. It is time the Left filled the void in the articulation of a liberatory alternative to capitalism. The current trend toward Muslim exclusivism in the Bosnian government has grown in the face of this void.

Susan Soric, a Croatian-American feminist activist who helped found NONA, a center for Bosnian and Croatian women refugees in Zagreb, spoke of the failure of the majority of feminists to recognize the genocidal nature of the rapes perpetrated by the Serbian government in Bosnia: "Do we see Bosnia as an isolated case? We cannot retreat on this issue or else we'll be subjected to tyrants ourselves. Never again is now." She read a condemnation of the Serbian government's atrocities in Bosnia by the Serbian organization, "Women in Black."

Barry Romo, the president of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, drew a parallel between falsifying Serbian genocide and the L.A. Police Department justifying beating Rodney King. He said: "It is kind of bizarre to be at a socialist gathering and debate the truth of what is reality."

Peter Maher, a supporter of the Serbian government and professor of linguistics, presented a chain of propaganda which denied the Serbian government's campaign of ethnic cleansing and rape. The audience expressed their anger and disgust with his lies. A Croatian history professor denounced the inclusion of a Serbian government apologist on the panel and said: "It is your job to separate your socialism from the socialists of the type of Milosevic and Mihailo Markovic."

After the discussion, we had the privilege of seeing the first showing of the film "Ecce Homo" (Behold the Man) made by the Sarajevo woman film maker, Vesna Ljubic. The audience was so moved that the chair of the panel, Rado Mijanovic, had to cancel his planned showing of a Serbian propaganda film.

So topsy-turvy has today's world become that at a gathering of "radical scholars" we had to be subjected to neo-fascistic propaganda under the name of "democracy." Fortunately the other members of the panel and the audience did not allow this atrocity to go unchallenged.

—Sheila Fuller

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THE PRICE OF THE NEW WORLD DISORDER FROM HAITI TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Though considerable numbers of people protested intervention preceding the U.S. invasion of Haiti, here in Los Angeles a demonstration scheduled for the day of the invasion attracted just a handful of protesters. It is troubling how the imagination of American democracy with its image of benign intervention has possessed the progressive Left, whether in the defense of U.S. troops' "peaceful role" or in the opposition to intervention on no principled ground that separates it from the racist Right.

The media image of "peaceful" U.S. troops and "violent" Haitian masses is not "outside" democratic practice but captures the mental straitjackets of abstract democracy. With Aristide's compromised return, we need to move beyond the imagination and image, the "peaceful" invasion of our minds, to begin to comprehend not only the reality of the skeptical attitude of American and Haitian law and order but to grasp on principled revolutionary ground the self-determination of the Idea of freedom. Again, the necessary beginning is this: "Who will listen to the Haitian masses?"

Joseph S.
Los Angeles

I interpret your October lead to say that the legitimacy of the U.S.-installed Aristide presidency is a question for the Haitians masses to settle. On the mark! Many politicians in New York had written off Aristide even before the coup. Perhaps they so value the opportunities of state power they hate to see it exercised with less than maximum effect. But might not the situation hinge on other kinds of (less formal) authority?

Cal Brown
New York

I have been involved in activities opposed to U.S. military intervention for over a decade, but I can't help but feel different about the situation in Haiti. I know the U.S. military has all sorts of plans to make sure things there go their way, but the situation had reached the point where the Haitian people could not remove the military regime without outside intervention.

Feminist
Chicago

The popularity the U.S. has in Haiti right now has to do with the fact that they have killed some thugs which the Haitian masses haven't been able to do for some time. But what will happen now that Aristide has returned and will be constrained and try to break those chains? That's when there will be a whole new dialectic of events that will reveal what the U.S. role really is.

Anti-imperialist
Illinois

For those who wish to get to the bottom of what lies in store for Haiti, I suggest you look at the situation in the Middle East, especially in Iraq. Following the Gulf War in 1991 the U.S. military established a "safe haven" for Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq—after having ignored the Kurds for years. It appeared to many Kurds that the U.S. was finally doing something of "humanitarian" value with its military power. But three years later the situation in these U.S.-protected "safe-havens" is characterized by murderous infighting between different Kurdish groups, serious economic collapse, and brutal repression against dissident Kurds. Looking at where Haiti is headed tomorrow in light of where Kurdistan is today may tell us something that the mainstream media isn't discussing.

Archivist
Chicago

It is very tragic how the plight of the Kurds and the Shiite marsh Arabs was hardly mentioned during the latest commotion between Clinton and Saddam Hussein. The U.S. can very quickly mobilize tens of thousands of troops to defend the Kuwait emirate, but has little or nothing to say about the victims of Hussein's rule inside Iraq. The same is true of the attitude toward the Palestinians—while everyone trumpets the arrival of "peace" between Israel and Jordan and the effort to achieve a breakthrough in relations between Israel and Syria, the stateless Palestinians are becoming more invisible than ever before.

No wonder Hamas is able to gain so much attention inside the occupied territories with its "anti-American" rhetoric.

Middle Eastern activist
Illinois

The cowardly bomb attack on a public bus in Tel Aviv on Oct. 19, like the one in Buenos Aires this past July 18 that killed more than 100 people, shows again the real face of fundamentalist/racist organizations like Hamas. When terrorism, i.e., the indiscriminate violence against innocent people, is used to achieve an end, it means that those who use it are in a desperate situation. It is clear that Hamas does not have massive support because everything that it represents is inhuman, totally alienated. Why do they kill workers?

I wonder if the "critical" support of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) to Hamas is so critical that it can respond to this question?

Carlos Varela
New York

I was so pleased to get the latest issue of the paper today. It was a shining moment of rationality in a day of dark sorrow. A powerful bomb exploded on a bus during rush hour in Tel Aviv this morning instantly killing 20 people and wounding more than twice that number. I don't know how to convey the magnitude of the destruction.

And yet, despite the brutal logic of a spiraling cycle of violence and revenge, there are fragile signs of hope to be found. Those who once were sworn and bitter enemies work cautiously together, and it may be that one day life in Israel will take on a semblance of sanity. For the present, however, I think it is difficult for those who live here as well as for those who don't to put this society in rational perspective in any but the most tentative of ways. When Jews and Arabs living in Israel finally begin to consider the idea of freedom seriously, I believe they will do it together. I know they have to, and I know they can.

Ted V.
Jerusalem



FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE SIGHTLESS

About 100 blind people and supporters marched and rallied Oct. 12 in front of the State Capitol for "The Right to Read." We support the Blind Childrens' Literacy Act (HB No. 4497) which would maintain choice in educational services, including the Michigan Schools for the Blind and the Deaf (MSB and MSD).

We distributed information packets to the legislators which explain why we need to continue the transcription of Braille textbooks, better preparation of special-ed teachers, and training blind students for independent (cane) travel, typing, and Braille. We also want a separate Board of Education for the MSB, with a majority of blind people.

A lot of people believe technology (such as tape recorders and print-to-sound transcription machines) will allow blind people to be independent. But as Raya Dunayevskaya wrote about Automation, now you are dependent on expensive, bulky machinery (and don't forget a power source!). We need all choices so each child's Individualized Instruction Plan can be realized. "Reading Means Jobs, Self-Esteem and Financial Independence!"

SVG and DP
Detroit

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS?

I call the news media nothing but a propaganda machine for the capitalist system. Take how the O.J. Simpson trial makes the news every day, and compare that to the realities of the California state budget cuts to children's programs, or the lawful allowing of the virtual destruction of all of the state's original for-

Readers' Views

ests. And did you know that we had about 19,000 prisoners incarcerated when Governor Ronald Reagan took office in California, and today we have 126,000? And we the taxpayers are paying \$31,000 a year for each person kept locked up. Meanwhile, two million California children have no medical coverage, and one-quarter of the state's children are living at poverty level or below.

And all I have said above pales in importance, compared to what O.J. Simpson had for breakfast this morning.

Disgusted
Los Angeles

I was a battered wife and nobody ever did a story about my abuse. I'm sure we all know someone who has been abused. But it doesn't get TV coverage. And does the coverage of Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, or Iraq compare to the coverage of O.J. Simpson? Whole peoples are losing their very existence. Are we letting the very essence of human beings be destroyed?

Working woman
Oklahoma



VOICES FROM WITHIN PRISON

I'm on this welfare line because I just got out of jail. I'm trying to get my life back together.

Prison equals slave labor. At the New Jersey prison I was in, we made everything we used: clothes, mattresses, farm products, plus diplomatic license plates. The pay started at 22¢ an hour and went up to 52¢! They say it costs \$30,000 a year to keep a person in jail, but they sure didn't spend that on me. At one prison recently, the administrators stole five million dollars.

Man on welfare line
New York City

I am a 39-year-old political prisoner doing 16 years on fabricated charges. I am often in the federal courts on civil issues and prison conditions and find the information in your newspaper very necessary and relatively parallel to my endeavors. It's as if the root of all injustices and social problems, regardless of the realm, lies in the love of money for itself. I always thought we should only like things, but love people. Thank you for your work.

Prisoner



THE PRIDE OF BEING A WOMAN

As a woman you have a certain pride and have to continue the long, rocky path of struggle for who you are. A "woman" can be just a fact or can mean something more. Let me tell you what it is to be a woman. As I look at my reflection to see who I am, I must ignore the dog whistles and the hatred directed toward me because of my gender. Everyday I must walk into a world that is dominated and controlled unfairly by the opposite sex, a world where I am considered less. Yet I know this is wrong. I refuse to let the hatred of those eyes strip and rape my soul. As a woman I refuse to walk behind the man.

Cheryl, high school student
New York

Anna Maillon's column (N&L August-September) "Who defines battered women's struggles?" is enlightening. I was particularly impressed with Marx's "how pivotal is the Man/Woman relationship and not only the class struggle." Although our patriarchal and capitalistic system (some men as owners and some women as property) is the root which needs uprooting—our daily work en route to a "new Society" is crucial. Our services protect some women and

children from further domestic violence, undermines the patriarchal structure's permission to batter, and "empowers" women to rebel against male domination and abuse.

Worker for Domestic
Violence Victims
California

To the "Reader" who submitted the piece on feminist theory in the last issue: I think you are right to be wary of generalizations about postmodernists etc., and specifically about the point that discourse theory eliminates agency. Of course, discourse theory doesn't eliminate agency and in a convoluted way makes itself (i.e., discourse) the agent. Literary will, then, is not the author's will, but discourse itself. But in its own terms "it" rereads the past. Spivak's theoretical perspective of "privileging" Marxism is still within the confines of viewing it as a discourse and as such a redundant form of idealism which makes for a very dehumanized conception of Marxism.

Shelley
New York

MARX'S HUMANISM TODAY

Marx's 1844 manuscripts are still new for today, a concrete-Universal. They can't be underestimated. In 1844, Marx anticipated what he would later develop as the perversion of capitalism, how abstract value is a social relation and use value is an individual act. The contemporary Left doesn't grasp Marx's concept of the self-activity of the masses as what can transcend capitalism's fetishism of commodities; they end by making a fetishism of the critique of fetishism. What Hegel wrote about the power of the Idea of Freedom—"When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength"—Marx concretized in his philosophy of revolution.

Steve
Los Angeles

In the excerpts from Dunayevskaya's draft chapter for *Philosophy and Revolution on Marx's 1844 "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic,"* she says Marx's "promise that 'further down we will develop the logical content of absolute negativity' was not fulfilled." It is Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism that developed this category as its unique contribution, "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning." What Marx did do was "show this absolute negativity at work in the very opposition both to Hegel and the actual capitalistic world...to create 'positive Humanism, beginning from itself.'"

Sonia Bergonzi
Chicago

I enjoyed struggling with the writing by Dunayevskaya on Marx's 1844 Manuscripts. It's important to see that the Hungarian Revolution dragged those essays out of the dust-bin of history, but the point today is what they can mean for the 1990s. The proof that Hegel lives on in Marxism is the "process of becoming" of a whole new continent of thought.

Mitch Weerth
Oakland, Cal.

I'm not sure that Marx's 1844 Manuscripts are directly relevant to today. He says the communist abolition of private property is only a first negation which must in turn be negated in order to reach freedom, but he still calls communism "a necessary mediation." Some stagifying seems implied: first comes the abolition of private property, and only afterward comes "positive humanism." But given the failure of nationalized property to offer any real solutions in the "socialist" countries, can such a "mediation" really still be considered "necessary?"

Graduate student
Chicago

U.S. LABOR IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

To maximize their profits, the giant international monopolies are moving the jobs providing a living wage in North America and Western Europe to the "low wage" Third World, where they can pay workers 60¢ an hour. Even using child and prisoner labor is not abhorrent to them. At home the remaining jobs are taken over by computers which have no unions while millions become unemployed or live on welfare. It's a situation that leads sooner or later to social unrest. The return to power of the different communist parties in Poland, Lithuania and Hungary, the rise of neofascism in Italy and in Western Europe are warning signs. Is a fascist dictatorship in the U.S. or a return of Communist dictatorship in Russia possible? Actually, it seems to be the only logical outcome if the present trends continue. Already \$30 billion have been allocated in the U.S. for fighting "crime" and it's a small step to move from "law and order" to straight dictatorship.

Laszlo Gati
British Columbia

* * *

My sister worked at a company that made photo albums in Brownsville, Tenn., not far from Memphis. The company folded up—and then it went to Mexico. She had been there for 25 years. The guy who owned it ran it into the ground, taking everything he could for himself as long as it was running. Some company in California bought what was left and moved it. There was no severance, no pay, no job for my sister. This was after NAFTA passed.

L.P.
Decatur, Ill.

* * *

GM here was hiring temporary workers at \$12.75 an hour. There has now been a freeze. None can transfer out and no new hires will come in. This is not just in Oklahoma but on the international level. There will be a lot more to this story in the days ahead, you can be sure.

Lynn
Oklahoma

* * *

The social conditions in Britain today have been shaped by global structural

changes in capitalism and 14 years of Conservative rule. Mass unemployment and widespread homelessness are considered normal. Workers' rights continue to be eroded. This year the government abolished Wages Councils (which set minimum wages) and now they want to abolish the Agricultural Wages Board (which sets a minimum payment for farm workers). But the absence of a real challenge from the left is as true in Britain as in any country.

Richard Bunting
Oxford

* * *

Dozens of Black construction workers picketed here in October, protesting the lack of Blacks being hired to rebuild the Cypress Freeway which was destroyed by an earthquake in 1989. Caltrans has already hired most of its workers, 98.8% of whom are white. Pickets reported attempts to get applications from the Oakland Caltrans office, only to be told that the positions were filled. White construction workers were later given applica-

Lynn
Oakland, Cal.

* * *

National Metal Processing in Detroit signed a contract with Allied Industrial Workers Local 267 in 1974. However, in 1988, the owners began to hire a series of "employee-leasing firms" to manage its employees. In March 1991 the latest of these, Branch International Services, ended negotiations for a new contract, locked out the workers and hired non-union "replacements."

Despite NLRB and Circuit Court rulings in favor of the workers, they haven't been reinstated or received back pay. Many have been unable to find other work. Contact: Locked-out National Metal Workers, P.O. Box 11128, Detroit, MI 48211; phone/fax: 313/584-6556.

Supporter
Detroit

* * *

When "global competition" is repeatedly used to force down our standard of living, it was refreshing to read Dunayevskaya's poignant reminder that it is not competition that yields labor-

saving devices, but rather the capitalists' need to get rid of rebellious labor. Perhaps nowhere has labor been more rebellious lately than among postal workers, who have developed an odd habit of helping their bosses "retire." While the Post Office has eliminated no fewer than 45,000 jobs, they've yet to eliminate the rebellion. A recent study by the Government Accounting Office reveals that automation of mail processing in Waterloo and Mason City, Iowa has resulted in a huge decrease in labor productivity. The Post Office is at a loss to explain how this could have happened.

Jan Kollwitz
Chicago

* * *

VOICES OF THE LATINO DIMENSION



Recently, while distributing News & Letters and the Spanish supplement, Noticias y Cartas, outside a building containing garment shops, we found several workers sitting on the floor of the lobby. We spoke with two young women from Mexico, who explained that the owner was a half-hour late and would probably not arrive that day. The owner is the only one with keys to their small shop, and if she doesn't show up, all the workers have made the trip to work for nothing. Needless to say, they make minimum wage and don't get paid for days they don't work.

N&L member
New York

* * *

Economic desperation today is generating a desire for a way out. I sense that workers are trying to find an explanation of where we are. Culture can unify people, but it can also express limits, as in what I sometimes see in Mexican nationalism. All nationalities are present here in the U.S., and there is the possibility here to break from bondage and work for change, across boundaries.

From what I've read of Marxist-Humanism, this philosophy is raising questions to find a way out. We need to be active in the development of freedom ideas.

Mexican revolutionary
Los Angeles

THE REAL CRIMINALS

I am the mother of four young adults. Recently, after coming home at night, my sons have told me how they have been stopped and frisked by undercover police in our own neighborhood. This has happened to them more than once. There is no apparent reason for this other than the way my sons dress and carry themselves. They do not belong to any gang, and were never arrested. The police call them liars and generally attempt to intimidate them.

My family lives in Wrigleyville. This area has attracted many young professionals. There is construction going on all over, condominiums can't be built fast enough. It seems as though in order to make the streets "safe" for these young white professionals, the police have taken to harassing young men who do not fit into that mold. As a mother this is very frightening. I am not about to ask my sons to begin wearing the uniform of conformity. I like them fine just as they are. But once they walk out that door, they are vulnerable. Any cop who doesn't like their walk, or the way they dress can stop them. Hopefully, my sons will not forget who they are dealing with and will not react normally to this outrage.

Judy
Chicago

●

QUEBEC'S GAY DIMENSION

You should know that the New Democratic Party in Quebec didn't get around to passing a resolution defending human rights for gay and lesbian people, even though they support it in their rhetoric. On the other hand, the Parti Quebecois did. Do you think that has something to do with their winning the recent election?

Gay man
Chicago

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Black/Red View

Berkeley High 'School Colors'

by John Alan

This October PBS (Public Broadcasting System) presented "Frontline," its highly respected public affairs program, "School Colors," a documentary film report on why racial integration has failed to become a meaningful success at Berkeley High in California after almost 30 years of practice.

"School Colors," while not a great documentary, is not the usual kind of television documentary on the crisis in the public school system because the story is told from the point of view of students and teachers and not of school administrators or sociologists. Thus, what we hear are the voices of minority students telling us what's wrong with racial integration, why it doesn't work and why it is often a humiliating or confrontational experience in a high school noted for its racial and ethnic diversity.

CLASS REALITY BEHIND DIVERSITY

A Black woman student described the world of Berkeley High by pointing to the steps of the main building and saying that's where the white students gather, "That's Europe and I never go there." And on the other side where the Hispanic students gather, "That's Mexico, and where I stand is little Africa."

A Black male student said: "Integration is the worst thing that could have happened to the Black male."

A Hispanic student said it's an insult to be called an American when Hispanics, after a debate, could not get their own edited page in the school's paper.

Residents of Berkeley have long known that there was little racial harmony at Berkeley High. Stories appeared in local newspapers about verbal clashes between white and minority students. Therefore, "School Colors" offers no startling revelations. But when scenes of racial tensions appear in a documentary film, and the voices and faces of the students are heard and seen, a powerful new dimension is added to the portrayal of racial tension at Berkeley High. Some parents considered "School Colors" too negative, others said integration has failed.

Racial and ethnic tensions at Berkeley High can be understood more clearly when one catches the crisis in the dialectic of self-identity created by the racially diverse nature of the student body: it is 38% white, 35% Black, 11% Asian and Pacific Islander, 9% Hispanic and 7% mixed race. This statistical diversity is simply bare variety, and there is no meaningful interrelationship or equality of racial and ethnic status on the campus.

CONTRADICTIONS IN BLACK IDENTITY

What Blacks and other minority students are aware of is that they're from a lower social and economic class and that the 38% white middle-class students compose 80% of the top track, college bound students. "School Colors" deals with this class difference obliquely by juxtaposing a scene of white students studying English classics and calculus with a scene of a Black student finding it difficult to identify the shape of a cube. And then there is a scene where a math teacher says that placing students in a track is undemocratic because it denies many

Rebuilding Haiti

Oakland, Cal.—A member of the Bay Area Haitian American Council went back to Haiti for Aristide's triumphant return. These are some of his comments:

I was on one of the planes which accompanied President Aristide's plane to Haiti. Even before we landed, from the view above the city, we saw the streets full of people. When we landed we could see many, many people showing their portraits of Aristide. You could see that some of the pictures had many folds in them from three years of being in hiding.

As I witnessed this, Cesar Chavez' slogan, "Si, se Puede," kept coming to me. The people's determination and resistance rooted in their faith for a liberated Haiti had brought the struggle to this joyful day.

Nobody likes to see a foreign power at their homes, but people feel that because of the U.S. soldiers many of them are still alive. Images of the Haitian police beating a man and shooting people right in front of the press and U.S. soldiers created an outrage in Haiti and a furor of calls to the White House from people in the U.S.

The people are not waiting for the military to do anything for them. They are disarming the police, etc. They are very busy people: busy rebuilding the movement, busy rebuilding the country. I saw a very militant spirit there. People are aware of the sacrifices they made; they have been starving for three years, suffering tortures and murders. They know who the enemy is. They know that the changes are their doing.

The death squads are the enemy. They know that the CIA has a relationship with the death squads like FRAHP and the Haitian military. FRAHP was created as a terrorist organization. We need full investigations of the drug trade going through Haiti and the corruption of the elite. The people fleeing Haiti were fleeing calculated, cold terrorism.

The mass organizations such as Ti Legliz (Little Church), the student organizations, the peasants and the industrial unions will continue in their work to democratize Haiti. For example, union workers fired from the state-owned power company, Electricite d'Haiti, went back to demand their jobs.

The coup was an attempt to dam the human flood (Lavalas) for justice and democracy. There is a crack in the dam and Lavalas is pouring out. That's why we need solidarity. The traditional bosses and their death squads still have their weapons. Aristide is only as strong as the movement.

students whole areas of academic training.

In another scene a Black teacher is telling a class of mostly Black students that they need to speak English grammatically or they will not be able to get a job, buy a car or raise a family. She mimics ungrammatical Black English, and then is opposed by a Black student who insists that English is not his problem and that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X didn't concern themselves with English grammar. He sounds absurd—just as absurd as those Black students who create Africa out of their sheer imagination as they self-segregate themselves on campus. But it's an "absurdity" which is not at all divorced from reality or reasoning. It should be listened to!

Both the interjection of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X in the English grammar class and the creation of Africa on Berkeley High's campus are attempts to project a Black identity into a perception of a multicultural campus which, in reality, promotes a concept of white middle-class cultural ambitions—a reality from which most of the minority students are excluded by class, race and history. And history is a very important defining element in this relationship; the past is present in one's self-identity and African Americans carry a great burden of past history into the present.

The projection of Black self-identity certainly is not on the same level as "Black Is Beautiful" was in the 1960s. Although it creates tension, it remains only a symbolic gesture towards overcoming the contradiction between the idea of education and the reality of the elitist kind of education doled out at Berkeley High. However, the projection of Black self-identity has caused the press, documentary film producers and television critics to arrive at the conclusion that the meaning of multiculturalism is on trial. In this case "multiculturalism" is not in the dock, but the entire de facto segregated U.S. public school system is, which in many areas has become an ideological battle ground for those who seek to control the minds of a future generation.

Hell No! to Prop. 187

Los Angeles—On Nov. 8 Californians will be voting on Proposition 187 which would exclude undocumented immigrants and their children born in the U.S. from basic educational, medical and social services. It would require professionals in those fields to report all individuals suspected of being undocumented. Up to 100 thousand people marched through Los Angeles Oct. 16 to protest this Nazi-like measure.

Starting in East Los Angeles, we walked down the newly named Cesar Chavez Avenue. Teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers, priests and others joined the masses of people of all ages and races. The great majority were from Mexico and Central America. Many marchers of African ancestry were there, as were whites and Asians. The youthful Korean Drum Corps played their instruments and danced the entire length of the march on that hot day. Aztec dancers performed.

I marched near Justice for Janitors for a long time and talked with them about their march in June (see July News & Letters). I was also near the Bus Riders Union, recently active in keeping fares from being raised.

I recognized a Chicano actor and a number of Mexican and Chicano artists. One said that as "free" as we may feel in the U.S., he feels like the police run the streets, whereas in Mexico the people still own the street.

On this day all of us seemed to share the connection of our indignation and our hope to change this life into something livable. I would catch someone's eye and a smile of delight would cross our faces: The street was ours—for a moment. At one point a police car beeped its siren at us to indicate that we had to make way for oncoming traffic. Instead of moving away, a mass of siren beeps poured forth from the crowd.

The chants in Spanish about "Pig" Wilson (Pete Wilson is the California governor pushing the proposition) were funny, but most of the slogans I heard were dull and could not compare to the sensation I felt in general. How can such a powerful connection between people, as was this march, begin to take us further than "vote yes," or "vote no"?

—Anna Maillon

San Francisco—Almost a thousand people marched through San Francisco's Mission District on Oct. 15, calling for an end to racism against immigrants and carrying banners that read "No human being is illegal" and "Deport Columbus." Among the crowds were groups of students from Mission High School, where action against Prop. 187 (anti-immigrants) and Prop. 184 (three strikes) has taken the form of sit-ins, numerous walkouts and weekly demonstrations.

The demonstration lasted from 10 a.m. to late at night and during the march it sometimes spanned 12 city blocks. Most of the crowd was under 15, with huge contingents of youth from both the Mission, a Latino neighborhood, and students from the Bayview-Hunters Point housing projects.

—Participant

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In Lexington, Ky., riot police patrol in force after a city cop shot a Black youth and Blacks took to the streets by the hundreds in protest.

Rights hearing on U.S. racism

New York—Hearings on U.S. racism were held in Harlem Oct. 8 before a panel of distinguished human rights authorities from around the world. Sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, the hearings are being held in seven cities around the U.S. If the panel finds U.S. racism to violate human rights, it will recommend the United Nations take action.

Local people testified about the many police killings of Black youth and adults, including the recent murder of a 13-year-old boy who, with his friends, was playing with toy guns when a cop happened upon them, saw the toy in his hand and fired.

Eddie Ellis, a former Black Panther, described his frame-up by the government in 1969 as part of its "counter-intelligence" program against political activists. He was recently released after 23 years in prison. Another framed activist has been able to prove his innocence by obtaining his government files, Ellis said, but his files have not been released because the feds claim their 1969 investigation is still ongoing!

Panelist Donald Woods, the South African journalist who was banned for 14 years and had three friends killed in prison, said he had been skeptical about charges of political prisoners in the U.S., but now he understands that the U.S. doesn't call them political prisoners, but instead criminalizes political people.

Adam Stevens described the extensive research and experiments being sponsored by the federal government to identify potential criminals when they are small children. Called "youth violence initiative" research, it is based on the theory that an early tendency to violence is genetic and can be ascertained by age six. Research is going on at over 300 institutions, and thousands of public school children are being watched. Bio-psychological techniques of social control, i.e., drugs and psychotherapy, are offered free to parents of targeted children.

In spite of protests by parent, student and public health groups, two Harlem school districts are participating in one such project, and Harvard University's project involves 10,000 children in Chicago. Needless to say, the children selected are mostly Black and Latino.

The "youth violence initiative," for example, fits right in with the recent revival of eugenics theories in respectable places. They could not get away with such discredited malarky were it not for the fact that capitalism has no use for much of the youth population. Instead of admitting that crime is caused by lack of jobs and job prospects, the government is devising excuses to drug Black children and to lock up Black youth and throw away the key.

Racism is not a static phenomenon, but is in part a response to the rebelliousness of the Black population. The Los Angeles uprising scared the rulers, and they must find ways to control the youth who want to tear up this society at its roots.

—News and Letters participants

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Militant labor actions resist Clinton's state-capitalist agenda

(Continued from page 1)

tioned. Caterpillar workers walked out of plants well in advance of the official strike deadline this summer. Some 2,000 striking tire builders and other unionists fought with police protecting scabs as they entered Dunlop Tire Company in Huntsville, Ala., Aug. 21. And workers in the General Motors Livonia, Mich., engine plant recently sabotaged the electrical lines as redress to grueling conditions.

WHAT RECOVERY?

The rise in labor militancy in 1994 comes amidst a so-called economic recovery that has hardly reached poor people and workers in the U.S. Yet the billboard issue for politicians big and small—and incapable of making a fundamental difference in the lives of common people—is “crime.” Detached from any social context, the rhetoric oozes racist code language that has lamentably caught the ear of many white workers. All too many have also gravitated to anti-immigrant politics like those surrounding California Proposition 187 as if that is an answer to their problems. Furthermore, union members in Virginia have formed “Coal Miners for Ollie North” to back the Senate bid of the once Reagan minion and Contragate felon. And racist-tinged union signs outside the Firestone-Bridgestone gates in Decatur pin the loss of jobs in America on Japan. These are evidence of the kind of confusion that can kill any new beginnings for labor on the horizon and shows the need for a vision for labor all its own.

For the current militancy occurs in the context of some dismal economic facts. A quarter of the new jobs created in the first half of last year's economy were temporary help. A quarter were part-time jobs. U.S. census figures from 1992 indicate the number of full-time workers in poverty increased more than 50% since 1979. Simply put, a third of America's workers are employed at poverty wages. Trends also show U.S. working families gravitating toward the lower income pole as middle incomes disappear.

Capitalism has continued its increasingly hostile atmosphere for labor organization into the 1990s as well. Abetted by the National Labor Relations Board's snail's pace for redressing unfair labor practices, employers fired 10,000 workers per year in the 1980s for trying to organize. And “good faith” bargaining for first contracts cloaked stalling tactics until pro-union votes could be set aside. Where workplaces are organized, major strikes had declined drastically in the 1980s.

Closely linked to union membership hitting an all-time low is the current rise in productivity. The result is harder, faster, and longer work with fewer workers because of layoffs. The number of auto workers in the U.S. has fallen from nearly one million in 1985 to 750,000 today. The previous decade saw cuts just as drastic. The auto industry is not alone. Steel employment has fallen from 772,000 to 421,000 over the past decade. And in retailing, bar codes have contributed to the loss of 450,000 jobs since 1990.

STATE-CAPITALISM'S NEXT INCARNATION

While the downsizing continues, the quest for higher productivity growth, the Holy Grail of capitalists, continues. After the 1974-75 global economic crisis and restructuring, it plummeted. Then Reaganomics came along in the 1980s to discipline labor by repressing unions and amassing a national debt so great that it would severely curb government-funded social services for working and poor families. Productivity growth has recently risen slowly, very slowly, yet capitalism is still waiting for the booming profits from heavy investment in computerized processes during the 1980s.

“Political crises reflect the general absolute law of capitalist production differently in different historic periods” is how Raya Dunayevskaya described capitalism's restructuring to survive a falling rate of profit. It was the Great Depression's birthing of U.S. state-capitalism under the rubric of “New Deal” that engendered a three-way alliance of labor leaders, government and business. It was tied to Keynesian economics which held

that full employment was the key to economic recovery and to eluding social revolution.

In the 1980s, Reaganomics, as articulated by economist Peter F. Drucker, proposed that economic growth could be uncoupled from employment. Indeed, while productivity has begun to rise, administration economists keep revising what passes for full employment. At the same time wage levels, adjusted for inflation, are actually falling. For workers, the economic crisis never abated.

Given the push for greater productivity (read “sweated labor”) and the impoverishment of workers, how did the union bureaucracy meet this onslaught? Concessions bargaining became the reasonable solution, so convinced were the labor bureaucrats that labor's future is tied to that of capitalist production. Now company lawyers present union bargainers with contracts that make it seem like the unions don't exist.

CLINTON'S NEW AGE LABOR DISCIPLINE

Workers taking up positions on the picket lines at Caterpillar seemed almost a backdrop to a well-publicized fight in Congress that would soon culminate in passage or defeat of the Striker Replacement Bill, long a singular goal of the AFL-CIO and the UAW especially in answer to persistent anti-union Reaganism. Since a filibuster killed the bill once and for all, the Caterpillar strike has receded from view. What almost went unnoticed at the time the bill failed, as the strike continued, was a letter from President Bill Clinton to Caterpillar management. In it he asked management to bargain with the union, adding that its intransigence signaled an undesirable willingness to replace workers. He had a better idea: management-labor cooperation.

Far from just a meek favor for labor, the letter signaled a fundamental effort by the administration to shore up capitalism in crisis, for during 1994 the Labor Department headed by Harvard economist Robert Reich has held hearings around the nation on proposed changes in labor law. In doing so, Clinton's “Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations” has undertaken the government's first major examination of workplace conditions and laws since the Depression.

This builds on efforts to co-opt the voice and functions of unions by giving employees the idea that management would listen to them. Employers in the 1980s instituted—often with union backing—an array of organizational schemes, variously called quality circles, labor-management cooperation, employee involvement, jointedness and teams. Alarmed over the sharp decline in the rate of growth of U.S. manufacturing productivity and by increasing global competition, the commission is poised to sharply alter labor law and government regulation. It seeks to enshrine those corporate employee participation schemes. Rules prohibiting company unions would be scrapped.

Two new kinds of organization are vying. One kind is the workplace of the future envisioned by Secretary Reich, emanating from the despotic plan of capital in its high-tech phase. The other is the organization of thought evoked by the very conditions imposed on workers in the 1980s. And from that organization of thought, both voices and alternative organizations are beginning to come forth.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE?

“A bunch of crap, that's all it is,” is how a Black woman worker locked out from Staley—which had a cooperation program—greeted the commission's proposals. “The companies want us to give them our mind. What's in it for workers? Are we going to keep our jobs for life? Are

they going to promise not to relocate somewhere else?”

Perhaps the grandest experiment in team organization has been the “revolutionary” Saturn auto factory in Spring Hill, Tenn. General Motors and the union leaders didn't plan on members of UAW Local 1853 voting Sept. 7 to scrap cooperation. Rank-and-file opponents of the pro-cooperation union leaders had organized Members for Democracy.

In Decatur the three assailed unions meet weekly to map out joint actions. In a step away from the top-down business union mold, activities from publishing leaflets to planning actions like those on Oct. 15 take place through local channels. Furthermore, locked-out Staley workers from the beginning have welcomed solidarity from every quarter, further promoting dialogue.

The organization of thought has extended into internationalism, as well. Due to cross-border solidarity between General Electric workers in the U.S. and Mexico, members of the independent STIMAHCS union in Ciudad Juarez across the border from El Paso, Texas, won the right to a secret ballot union representation election this summer. And Honeywell workers who make thermostats and switches in Chihuahua received assistance from unionists in the U.S. when 20 in-plant organizers were dismissed.

In the so-called right-to-work South, winning and keeping a union is a militant struggle all the more so because of the viciousness of the opposition. In the organizing drive at Tultex, the campaign became the talk of Martinsville, Va., this summer virtually drowning out an expensive anti-union campaign run by the company through the media. Members of other unions helped leaflet plant gates and helped in other ways.

Other kinds of organizing, especially among Black workers, are reaching across union lines and even across trades. In North Carolina, Poultry Workers in Action recently challenged a state center established to find ways to reduce repetitive stress disorders. They condemned the enterprise as just another false scheme to set up worker-management cooperation without binding guarantees for employees that a union contract could provide. In Indianola, Miss., a worker at the Delta Pride catfish processing plant which organized a union eight years ago reported that a neighbor at the massive new Fruit of the Loom plant in Greenville sought her help in starting a union shop committee.

Workers' centers are a new kind of organization meant to defeat the notion that the workplace or craft is the only basis of worker organization. A worker center has taken root in Ahoske, N.C., the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives which assists women in the poultry processing industry. Others have membership that includes Asian and Latina workers in Oakland, New York, El Paso and other cities. (See “Community based workers' centers meet,” N&L Aug.-Sept. 1994, page 2.) Women are prominent in all the centers.

Government intervention on behalf of employers against labor and the crushing drive for greater productivity for competing in an integrated global economy—these cannot be underestimated as forces arrayed against working people and their families. Yet just as dominating is American ideology, the most persistent and disorienting form of which is racism. The challenge to capitalism seen in 1994's new actions, new thinking, and new organizations therefore includes a challenge to labor to distinguish itself as “reason” apart from American racist ideology and other false alternatives to capital's domination. Working out that sort of philosophy is the need of the moment.

Black World

(Continued from page 1)

These “phantoms formed in the brains of men,” as Marx described this phenomenon in *The German Ideology*, are also “sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises” (*Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 36). The racist political phantom of “crime” is anxious is a subliminate of America's new material reality. The middle-class anxiety over its shrinking job base, a growing surplus population swollen by lay-offs, immigration and perceptions of record high Black and Latino birth rates, and a dysfunctional education system whose tax base is being shifted to bolster an unprecedented prison construction boom.

The “material premises” upon which this regressive edifice rests are, paradoxically, the very ones the Clinton administration has championed and refined from the Reagan-Bush period, namely, the benefits of “free markets” and “free trade.” What these “material premises” meant for American capitalism is down-sizing, capital flight to cheaper labor markets, unprecedented mass layoffs powered by a high tech “revolution,” a de-skilling of labor and concomitant declining wage rate. The unemployment rate was re-calibrated to correspond to the new economic reality, while the educational chances, and thus economic future, of the next generation became as uncertain as the “new world order.”

The political displacement of middle-class anxiety over these consequences of the “material premises” of “free markets” and “free trade” onto Black folk, and increasingly Latinos, actually conceals an ideological shift in America's vaunted “work ethic.”

What is retrogressively new about the racism of middle-class social anxiety, rooted in the structural dynamics of the current economic reality, is that, added to its



fixation with the 1970s' “feminization of poverty” and 1980s' demonization of young Black males, its current preoccupation with the transgressions of children reflects a new “anticipatory stigmatization” of the poor. This refers to those pseudo-scientific theories, such as found in Herrnstein and Murray's *Bell Curve*, and popular perceptions of the poor that “predict” the failure of Black folk to learn, to work in a high tech economy, and to live in disciplined accord with “American values.”

The American middle-class is in a state of self-induced denial regarding, the structural causes of unemployment and crime. It is one which rests on the “material premise” that it is simply in the class interests of those who benefit from the degradation of the Black labor market and the penal containment of Black surplus labor to boldly go where no society has gone before, that is, to extinguish the future generation only recently, or not yet, born. That's what's frighteningly new this election year.

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Essay Article

Derrida on Marx: (Re)turn or De(con)struction?

by Kevin Anderson

Ever since he stunned an international Marx conference in Riverside, California last year with his call for a return to Marx, something which also marked a major "turn" in his thought, Jacques Derrida's book *The Specters of Marx* has been eagerly awaited by a broad spectrum of the intellectual Left. The book is in fact a much-expanded version of that April 1993 lecture.

Derrida and the philosophico-literary school of "deconstruction" which he represents have long been associated with an intense theoretical radicalism rooted in abstruse linguistic/textual analysis. He and his numerous followers along with the whole cultural movement termed postmodernism have tended to disparage not only liberal thought, but also Marx's thought, as essentially Eurocentric, phallogocentric, and full of humanist illusions and delusions.

Instead of Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger are often invoked as the truly radical philosophers, something which drew Derrida into an embarrassing (for him) dispute with the American leftist philosopher Thomas Sheehan in the *New York Review of Books* in 1993 over Derrida's attempt to suppress the English translation of his own statements which seemed to excuse Heidegger's anti-Semitism.

At a directly philosophical level, his most prominent colleague in the United States, Gayatri Spivak, while using some of Marx's theory of exploitation has pointed proudly to "deconstruction's share in the undoing of the dialectic" as well as to deconstruction's opposition to all forms of "transcendence" of the given.¹ Derrida himself, in one of his first essays in English, originally published in 1968, attacked humanist readings of Marx as forms of "onto-theo-teleology," calling instead for "an absolute break and difference" from/with the Western humanist tradition, Marx included, via a return to Heidegger and Nietzsche.²

Derrida's own work has usually been more complicated and interesting than that of his followers. For example, while some of his American followers support crude forms of Third Worldism and others hesitate to openly defend women's liberation against Islamic fundamentalism, Derrida himself strongly supports human rights movements. He is a prominent member, for example, of the French committee to support the persecuted anti-fundamentalist Bangladeshi feminist writer, Taslima Nasreen.

ON THE URGENCY OF MARX FOR TODAY

The opening pages of Derrida's new book are full of praise for Marx. In the first chapter, he writes: "Upon rereading the *Manifesto* and several other great works of Marx, I said to myself that I knew of few texts in the philosophical tradition, perhaps none, whose lesson appears more urgent today."³ Derrida mourns the fact that today "the name of Marx has disappeared" (p. 5) from philosophical and political debate, but he says that the specter of Marx still haunts our post-1989 world. There are many provocative literary allusions with regard to

1. See Spivak, "Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida," in her *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 119.

2. Derrida, "The Ends of Man," in his *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 134-35.

3. Derrida, *The Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 13. Further pagination directly in the text, translation occasionally modified.

Why plague in India now?

The world's first pneumonic plague epidemic in decades hit India in September. Thousands were stricken; its resurgence left the government scrambling to deny, then explain it. The plague is one aspect of a resurgence of infectious diseases across the world. It is an inevitable result of the global restructuring of capital brought on by the past 20 years of economic crisis.

It is only natural that an epidemic should come charging out of shantytowns like those in Surat, to which the urban poor and expropriated peasants are consigned.

In Surat garbage and flood debris, even dead animals, had been left rotting for weeks. Survivors jeered and threw stones at officials who made a show of inspecting the city. "The plague is a natural culmination of the breakdown of the system, and of urban civil society," said one resident.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that infectious diseases are on the rise in the U.S. too. How can this happen in the face of continuing technological progress, 20 years after a U.S. Surgeon General proclaimed that it was "time to close the book on infectious disease?"

While the Surgeon General was boasting about the conquest of infectious disease, tuberculosis persisted in the ghettos. A two-tier health care system nurtured deadly new drug-resistant strains. A World Health Organization report declared a global TB emergency, predicting 30 million deaths in 10 years.

Now that its threat to white middle-class America is clear, billions of dollars will be spent just to contain TB. "We have turned a disease that was completely preventable and curable into one that is neither," said the president of the American Lung Association.

Do today's rulers harbor the illusion that they can protect themselves through spatial apartheid, shutting out Blacks, immigrants, and the working class from their gated communities, their fortress office buildings? Or do those barriers only constitute another symptom of the fatal illness infecting this so-called civilization?

—Franklin Draitnyev

the notion of the specter, not only to the first sentence of the *Communist Manifesto* about the specter of communism haunting Europe, but also to Hamlet being haunted by his murdered father's ghost.

Derrida's point is not to introduce or reintroduce Marx into what he calls the "great canon of Western political philosophy" (p. 32) but rather to make Marx actual, to challenge the new "dominant discourse" which has become an "incantation" to the effect that "Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, with its hopes, its discourse, its theories and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism" (p. 52). He argues that "it is necessary to assume the heritage of Marxism" in such a way that this "heritage is never a given, it is always a task" to be worked out for the future (p. 54).

These gestures toward Marx for today do not mean, however, a return to the humanism and dialectic of Hegel and Marx. There are enough hints even on these early pages praising Marx of where he will go later. For one still finds silence about the 1844 *Essays*, and an effort to separate the "spirit" of Marxism from "Marxism as ontology, philosophical or metaphysical system, [or] as 'dialectical materialism'" (p. 68).

Then, a little over halfway through the book, Derrida announces that "what is certain is that I am not a Marxist" (p. 88). As he goes on, it becomes clearer that the "spirit" of Marx which he wants to evoke is that of a radical critique of capitalism, but not the "dialectical method," the concept of "totality" or other philosophical aspects of Marxism, which he explicitly opposes (p. 88).

It is beginning to sound more familiar, as if he wishes to use some of Marx's socio-economic analysis without embracing the core of Marxism, the dialectic, that he wishes instead to substitute his own deconstructionism for the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic. Deconstruction, he tells us, is "an attempted radicalization of Marxism" (p. 92). It is necessary to use deconstruction to overcome some of Marxism's worst flaws which include its "anthropo-theology" rooted in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* (p. 144), its "untenable humanism" (p. 145), and its concept of the "whole" (p. 146).

DIVERGING FROM MARX

In the closing pages of the book Derrida takes up the famous section on commodity fetishism from Chapter One of *Capital*. He seems to agree with Marx that under capitalism the products of human labor take on a life of their own, assuming a fetishized, mystical form while, at the same time, the human being is dehumanized, and relations between people, Marx writes, take on "the fantastic form of a relation between things."⁴ All those who are oppressed by this racist, sexist, homophobic, classist system know well this feeling of being reduced to an object, a thing, (some)thing less than human.

But it is at this crucial juncture that Derrida diverges in an important way from Marx. He seems to make a serious misreading of Marx when he writes that "as soon as there is production, there is fetishism" (p. 166). Derrida probably knows full well that for Marx, precapitalist societies with their more open forms of social hierarchy did not need commodity fetishism, and were socially transparent. Also, he no doubt is aware (but does not mention) that Marx saw the growing self-organization of the workers and other revolutionary groups as pointing toward a future society of freely associated labor where human rationality would take hold of and uproot commodity fetishism.

Derrida seems to argue instead for the permanence of fetishism, and mentions the "general question of fetishization" as something he will return to in a "work to come" (p. 167). He apparently considers Marx's critique of commodity fetishism under capitalism to be nothing more than an attempted exorcism of the fetish. Or putting it more accurately, he thinks that dialectical Reason—in the sense of unmasking, critiquing, and going beyond the fetish—itsself has no rational basis.

He suggests that Marx may be grounded in a set of "messianic" beliefs, which includes, Derrida writes, an "exorcism at the beginning of *Capital*" which is linked to a great "revolutionary promise" for the future (p. 163). Derrida does not therefore dismiss Marx because even such an "exorcism" would not "discredit" Marx, and he points to the possibility of a form of messianism without theology. However, he writes that Marx is a "critical but predeconstructive" thinker (p. 170). But this does not mean any easy assimilation of Marx into deconstruction for "Marx has not yet been received" and he remains even today "a clandestine immigrant" in Western thought (p. 174).

Let us look more closely at Marx's own text to get a better grasp of Derrida's critique. Derrida (p. 164) quotes the following passage on commodity fetishism: "The whole mystery of commodities, the whole magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labor on the basis of commodity production, vanishes therefore as soon as we come to other forms of production."⁵

He never, however, quotes any of Marx's historico/dialectical analysis which follows, wherein precapitalist social formations such as European feudal-

4. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, trans. by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1976), p. 165.

ism had "no need for labor and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality" (p. 170) because the exploitation of the peasantry was open, brutal, and direct. In a different way, the liberatory society of the future to which Marx also points will dispense with commodity fetishism because in a society based upon "freely associated" labor, human relations would assume not only a "transparent" but also a "rational" form (p. 171). It is these very notions of transparency and of dialectical Reason which Derrida questions.

To be sure, in today's retrogressive climate, it is hard to see the actuality of dialectical Reason as negation of the negation, as the positive in the negative of this crisis-ridden world. Yet without such a perspective, on what grounds can we really go beyond the capitalist order?

On the other hand, Derrida's critique is more compelling than that of Althusser's a generation ago. Althusser tried to banish Hegel, humanism and dialectical Reason from Marx, which was impossible to do given Marx's own writings. Derrida, however, is seriously engaged with Hegel throughout his writings. Although he too is an anti-humanist, he acknowledges Marx's humanism, yet urges us to return to Marx.

Two decades ago, in her *Philosophy and Revolution*, the Marxist-Humanist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya wrote that in the reified [thingified] and fetishized world of capitalism, "the reification of human relations is a fact so overpowering that it dominates the whole of society and the thought of the period."⁶ Is this not the trap Derrida has fallen into, in assuming fetishism to be permanent? Is this not in large part because deconstruction lacks an historical dimension?

Perhaps this problem is related to another one also found in deconstruction and in postmodern theory generally, the tendency to reject subjectivity. Dunayevskaya addresses this problem in a later discussion of fetishism. There, she stresses that post-Marx Marxists tended to discuss fetishism, if at all, only as an "objective" feature of capitalism, one which weighed down upon us, and not as something which also generated "subjective" yearnings for freedom on the part of the oppressed: "The objective may outweigh the subjective, but, unless we see the unity of the two and grapple with the truth of both, we will never be free. And freedom is what all the striving is about."⁷

But none of this should obscure the uniqueness of what Derrida has done. In raising Marx as the thinker for today, Derrida may have opened up some important space for debate on Marx, Hegel, and the dialectic among youth, feminists, and radical intellectuals generally.

Furthermore, Derrida has put forth very forcefully the notion that Marx's own writings, by now over a century old, are still, as cited earlier, very "urgent" for "today." Perhaps some of this will inspire the generation of radical youth who have been influenced by Derrida to confront Marx directly and to connect Marx to their fight against sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, war, and imperialism. It is interesting that Derrida is the only one of today's internationally prominent philosophers to advocate a return to Marx.

He is taking the opposite tack to that of other "radical" philosophers such as Richard Rorty or Jürgen Habermas. Why has he done so? Why now?

Something is rotten in a European civilization which allows genocide to continue unchecked in Bosnia, which greets another genocide of up to a million people by the French-financed Rwandan regime with near silence, and which allows a "normal" fascism, as in the "neo" fascists who are part of the Italian government, to become simply an accepted part of political life. All the while this same civilization, of which America is the sole superpower, closes its borders ever tighter against people of color.

It is perhaps this rot,⁸ this decadence, this retrogression, which has drawn one radical French philosopher, one who as a teenager was forced to wear the yellow star under the Nazi Occupation, to return to the greatest of Europe's revolutionary philosophers, Karl Marx, as the one who is most "urgent" for us today.

5. Marx, *Capital*, p. 169. Further pagination directly in the text.

6. Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, orig. 1973), p. 88, emphasis added.

7. Dunayevskaya, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 144.

8. In a recent review of the book in France, Alain Guillerm writes: "We can thank Derrida for having written such a book during a period of rottenness," *L'Homme et la Société*, No. 111-12 (January-June, 1994).

"We wish particularly to emphasize our opposition to the view that a labor newspaper should devote its pages exclusively to matters that immediately and directly concern the spontaneous labor movement, and leave the theory of socialism, science, politics, questions of party organization, etc., to an organ for the intelligentsia. On the contrary, it is necessary to combine all the concrete facts and manifestations of the labor movement with these questions; the light of theory must be brought to bear upon every separate fact."

V.I. Lenin

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Eyewitness to China's hollow economic boom

(Continued from page 1)

turned to the domestic market and beat off industries in other parts of the country.

Some officials make a fortune by declaring bankruptcy. By the end of this year legislation on bankruptcy will be put in practice. One woman factory worker told me she feared that would legitimize factory closures and more workers would lose their jobs.

It is likely that China will complete privatization in about 20 years. I was told that many factories have already closed and a large number of workers are let go with 50-70 yuan a month. That's far from enough to buy food today. Exploitation exists broadly. A friend who works in a school told of how peasants laboring on a construction site are paid five yuan a day, enough to buy a bowl of noodles, and to get such a job one needs connections. Among shoppers in Shanghai and Beijing I often saw half-naked peasant workers sleep on the pavement. In Canton both Chinese and foreign—especially Hong Kong—businessmen try to extract as much surplus value as they can.

In general peasant workers in these "world market factories" are not paid more than 300 yuan a month. This is nothing in Southern Canton which is the most expensive area in the country.

I met a few teenagers from the countryside in Sichuan province. These high school graduates went to Canton—the Chinese land of opportunity—to seek their fortune. They paid an employment agency to get jobs in a Hong Kong-owned toy factory working on an assembly line that turned out very much like a labor camp. Workers were not allowed out of the factory.

The first month was without pay. After that they were paid 195 yuan a month. They had terrible food and slept in beds with blood-sucking bugs. There was no medical care; sick workers were forced to go on.

Not surprisingly, rising consumerism, inflation and the increasing gap between rich and poor have social costs. Theft and robberies are common. When four teenagers escaped from their factory/prison and decided to go home, they were robbed in public by a man in a security guard uniform at Guangzhou Railway Station. In Shenzhen and Guangzhou, friends advised me not to go get on the privately operated buses where robberies often happen.

Southern Canton's apartment buildings have their balconies wired—even on the seventh and eighth floor—and homes are protected by double doors. They remind me of New York City.

WOMEN EXPLOITED

It is clear that economic reforms have greatly affected women's lives. A few months ago in Beijing, the Association of Chinese Women had to resist a loud call for women to leave the workplace and return home. In Canton and Sichuan it is popular for private restaurants to stage "fashion shows" during dinner time to attract customers. I was taken to a newly opened huge restaurant of Thai style in Foshan where four young girls were doing a "fashion show." They were very young—likely just out of high school—and not comfortable in their revealing clothes while walking in front of mostly male customers.

Prostitution is broadly practiced. Beijing's top prostitutes charge 1,500 yuan per hour. Everywhere "high-ranking" prostitutes rent rooms from grand hotels. Usually they have a deal with the hotel's staff who provide information about their male customers, for instance, their status, room and phone numbers.

Lower ranking prostitutes work on the streets and in cheap hotels. In addition, cinemas, barber shops, massage clinics, bars, swimming pools and beaches are places that male customers can get special services. A cinema on Shenzhen's main street sets up so-called "love seats." It costs 120 yuan for a "couple" to "watch a movie." In front of the cinema many young girls hang around, usually peasant workers, seeking men to "watch movies" for about 100 yuan.

Even the Chinese Women's Association admits that China has become another haven for whore-mongers. They come from Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, the Middle East and Western countries. They like Chinese prostitutes because they are cheaper and relatively "clean," being a short time in the "profession." It is striking to see advertisements on treating sexual diseases everywhere.

Women's commodification is also clear in the print media. Many magazines sold at book stands on the streets carry stories of rape, including gang rape. Such stories are usually disguised by conscientious titles, for instance: "A Brutal Crime: Records of Gang Rape of Chinese Women by Japanese Soldiers." The content, however, is pornographic, often with sketches of half-naked women, either prostitutes or victims of sex crimes. Pornographic materials are not only printed by private workshops, but also in state publishing houses.

TIANANMEN 1989, AND CHINA'S 1990s' 'GOLD RUSH'

If the 1980s was a decade of political insurgence, the 1990s seems to be the "gold rush" era. People are involved in all sorts of money-making practices. In Southern Canton in particular it's as if brainwashing had occurred. Nobody talks about politics. It's hard to believe that in 1989, after watching on Hong Kong TV what was happening on Tiananmen Square, the people in Guangzhou blocked the major bridge in the city in protest.

People in Beijing still remember 1989. From time to time 1989 emerged in my conversation with strangers. In the public space, however, June 1989 is erased. I went

to Tiananmen Square several times and it was, as usual, full of tourists. There was little sign reminding people of those days and nights. It is said that the steps to the People's Hero Monument have marks of bullets. But that area was surrounded by chains and no one was able to approach for a close look.

Mao has maintained a place in China. For some it is unthinkable not to visit Mao's Memorial Hall during a tour in Beijing. Mao's small portrait appears on taxis in Canton and Beijing. People told me Mao is regarded as a god whose greatness and brutality are believed to drive away evils that may destroy one's fortune. Thus he, to some extent, is used as a modern god of wealth.

One vendor in the Beijing Working People's Palace criticized the prevailing materialism and the government's selling-out of China to foreign business. He anticipated social disorder in the future considering the increasing poverty in the country.

I was amazed at how clearly ordinary Chinese see things and how critical they are of the government and the social problems. Yet many admitted that few were interested in politics. Absent in the 1990s is political will, political organization and collective political action.

Small demonstrations directly linked to economic matters occur from time to time—peasants protest against heavy taxes and workers, particularly retired workers, demand pay increases. They are usually put down with force and end with nothing.

The biggest change is that political demands have been replaced by economic ones. I suspect it is the government's strategy to lead people away from politics after 1989 by encouraging money-making and consumption. There is no doubt that a large number of people have brought into consumerism—last year in particular the media propagated lifestyles of the neo-rich.

Soaring inflation is the reason why so many are moonlighting and have lost their livelihood. To fill the stomach is the primary concern. Above all, 1989 seems to have totally wiped out desires for, or belief in, political change. I have come to realize that the cost of 1989 is

much, much higher than the death of thousands and the creation of a few elitist "student leaders" who have quickly embraced capitalism. It was a turning point in China's course of reforms—unfortunately not in a positive direction.

WHAT IDEALS WILL EMERGE?

What I found in China is the collapse of popular politics in Beijing and the country as a whole. Those who once played a major role in the pro-democracy movement—students and intellectuals—have either "plunged themselves into the sea of commerce" or are still hoping that an emerging middle class, neo-rich will affect China's political and economic life. I do not share this optimism. I have no doubt that the neo-rich—officials, owners of private business, technocrats, cultural elites and commercial entertainers—are connected to officials in one way or another and will have a greater influence on China's policy. Yet I am concerned about what kind of influence they will exert on the country. I fear that self-interests will become national policies.

I left China with complex feelings. I may be too pessimistic in thinking that China's chance to become a fair and relatively strong, self-sufficient society is very slim unless some fundamental changes occur in the political sphere and a different understanding of socialism and capitalism develop.

I don't know how long China can hold on as a nation. It remains a political project to get rid of this government, the entrenched feudal thoughts and practices and capitalist values. But where is the will? What ideals will emerge to unite people to fight for social justice?

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Youth

Haiti exposes nadir of anti-war

by Maya Jhansi

The 1990s began with a bang—George Bush's invasion of Iraq and the outpouring of tens of thousands of people opposed to Bush's bomb frenzy. Within days, however, this spontaneous anti-war movement collapsed—successfully sabotaged by Bush's yellow ribbon campaign. Now while a genocidal holocaust still rages in Bosnia virtually unchallenged by organized U.S. anti-war solidarity for Bosnia, U.S. imperialism parades itself as the harbinger of democracy in Haiti. What's going on?

The youth of the 1990s have inherited a strange world indeed. In the past month, the U.S. invaded and occupied Haiti in the name of "democracy" while the world watched. The loudest voice of opposition to the invasion didn't come from anti-war youth or the Left as in the 1960s' anti-Vietnam War movement, but from the racist right wing which argued that Haiti was not worth a single U.S. life. This right-wing cooptation of anti-interventionism calls on us to rethink the concept of "anti-war" and what it means for today.

It is perhaps not as "easy" to be anti-war today as it was during the Vietnam War where the U.S. was waging a direct war against a national liberation struggle. Today U.S. imperialism wears a benign mask, posing as the beacon of humanitarianism and democracy. After all, weren't the Americans fighting that most bloody dictator in Iraq? And whatever their motives in Haiti, aren't they getting rid of the murderous Cedras?

Indeed, now that Aristide is back in Haiti, Clinton and the U.S. military machine are taking credit for "bringing" democracy to Haiti. Of course, this is a logical fallacy—how can a military "bring" democracy anywhere??? The illogic of this view hasn't stopped many on the Left from supporting the U.S. invasion and occupation.

In a recent column in *The Nation*, for example, Christopher Hitchens argues that though the U.S. may have been in cahoots with Cedras in the past, the "algebra at work" in the situation in Haiti will force the U.S. "to behave as if it were acting on principle." Most shockingly, he ends by declaring, "For now I proudly wear the yellow ribbon that supports our boys in Hispaniola!" The creative self-activity of the Haitian masses which exposes the true nature of the role the military is playing in Haiti and the way the U.S. has put a stranglehold on Aristide shows the absurdity of Hitchen's position.

But he certainly helps to underscore what a strange and topsy-turvy world we live in when the Right opposes U.S. intervention and much of the Left supports military invasion in the yellow-ribboned colors of jingoism!

Nevertheless, others on the Left continue to ignore the contradictory reality of this changed world by stubbornly holding onto old slogans. "Hands off—!" You fill in the blank, anytime, any place—even if it means opposing lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia and allowing the Bosnians to die without means of defending themselves. Like Bosnia, the situation in Haiti really exposes the emptiness of fixed left political formulas and categories. In the end, there is nothing substantial to distinguish the old anti-war slogan of "No to U.S. Imperialism in Haiti" from the racist, right-wing opposition to intervention in Haiti.

The nature of today's changed world shows the need for a vision of a new society as the only means of distin-

guishing one's opposition to war and military intervention from that of the right wing. It could very well be that Haiti and the post-Gulf War reality show the historic nonviability of a concept of anti-imperialism which spends itself in what it is against without articulating what it is for. If that is true, youth today are living at a crucial crossroads in the movement for freedom. It has perhaps never been more clear than today that we need to begin with what we are for.

Free Forrest Green!

Los Angeles—It's a dangerous undertaking, and it's a crime, to be a young Black man who's a peacekeeper. That's what I learned when the police came and arrested my son, Forrest Lee Green, for murder.

My son is 26 years old and, although he knew all the gang members in the neighborhood, he was not in a gang. He learned to walk these streets and somehow have the gang members understand that he had chosen to settle down and raise a family. But the police never accepted that.

My son was 12 years old when the police first labeled him as a gang member. To me, that's like they were reserving a penitentiary cell for him right then. It was right after Police Chief Daryl Gates started the CRASH program, which gave police officers the leeway to stop you and write up their "feeling" of you, without any evidence or probable cause. And the police wrote my son up, as a gang member—for riding his bicycle on the sidewalk at 12 years old!

That got him into their data base. And they kept harassing him ever since, to keep him in the data base. One time they stopped him with \$51 in his pocket; it was money he had to buy some tennis shoes. And they wrote him up for trafficking in narcotics! Even the DA rejected it! And they kept that \$51 for three years before they gave it back to us, and I had to get a judge's order to force the police to give us that money back.

Three years ago, they tried to frame Forrest on a murder charge. He had never been in juvenile hall; he had never had even a misdemeanor arrest. He was volunteering at the high school as a peer counsellor, talking to the kids about staying out of trouble. And the police tried to frame him for murder. But they put together such a sloppy frame that it just disintegrated on them.

Then they came back two years later, almost to the day, and did it again. On a different murder. My son didn't even know the boy who got killed. Later I found out that in the week before that boy died, three people had put guns to his head and threatened his life. But the police came and got my son because he has a nickname, "Eight-Ball," that supposedly someone mentioned.

There are other folks that also have that nickname! But they don't care. They grab one of us as a suspect—and that's it. The case is closed. No matter what kind of other information people give them, they don't care. Any Black man will do.

We can't let this go on, that just because you're Black and poor you're a criminal. I can't afford a lawyer, and the Public Defender won't talk to me, and she isn't even talking with Forrest either. So what is going to happen to my son?

—Ardelphia Hickey

Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The Middle East has once again proven to be the key to the international situation, whether with the Israel-Jordan treaty, the Israel-Syria negotiations, the U.S.-Iraq confrontation over Kuwait, or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

All of the hoopla surrounding Clinton's visit and the signing of the Israel-Jordan treaty on Oct. 26 cannot cover over the festering problems which still threaten to explode in the region. In fact, it is more their mutual fear of the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism than any genuine desire for peace that has brought the various powers, great and small, toward negotiations over the past year.

This is surely the motivation behind the decision by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States to ease their economic boycott of Israel. As for Egypt, the fact that fundamen-

Election results in Brazil

In Brazil's Oct. 3 presidential election, Fernando Cardoso of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party soundly won against Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva (Lula) of the left Workers Party. Cardoso's victory was due primarily to the immediate results of the "Real Plan," a currency restructuring program he put in place while Finance Minister, and which went into effect last July. Popular support for Cardoso accelerated as inflation, chronic in Brazil for years, dropped from 45% in June to only 1.5% on the eve of elections.

Cardoso's candidacy also had the support of the International Monetary Fund and 97% of Brazil's chief business executives. His economic plan includes opening Brazil's major industries—oil, mining, telecommunications, energy—to foreign capital, privatizing state-owned companies, and maintaining the IMF-approved restructuring of Brazil's huge foreign debt.

Lula, a union leader and former auto worker, accused Cardoso's corporate backers of suppressing prices during the campaign to gain support. In the week following the election, food prices went up 4%, and the inflation rate is expected to rise for the first time since the Real Plan went into effect.

Nearly 25% of Brazilians live in abject poverty, and one-third struggle on the brink of starvation. Brazil ranks second in the world in the gulf between rich and poor, below Botswana. While Cardoso has promised a program of billions to improve housing, education, health and sanitation, it all depends on raising funds from privatization.

Almost 20% of Brazilians showed their disgust by casting blank or otherwise invalidated ballots, and the unrest evident before the elections has not disappeared. Auto workers struck in September against a labor-management agreement (Camara Setorial) which through speed-up has resulted in 20% increased productivity but stagnant employment and wages.

Also before the elections, over 10,000 gold miners, armed with weapons and alcohol, invaded the outnumbered Yanomami Indians on their mineral-rich reserve in what even the government's Indian agency has called "day-by-day genocide." Politicians, catering to the jobless miners for their vote, dismissed the Indians' rights. These and many more contradictions are sure to intensify under Cardoso's presidency.

Middle East in crisis, from Israel to Iraq

talists would be so brazen as to nearly stab to death 83-year-old Nobel Prize winning writer, Naguib Mahfouz, ensured the deployment of the military to protect Clinton during a brief stopover there.

The Israel-Jordan treaty breaks no new ground whatsoever toward a real foundation for peace in the region.

First, with the exception of the period of the Gulf War, Israel and Jordan have been tacit allies ever since 1970, when King Hussein crushed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Second, the only new thing in the treaty actually undermines the chances for peace—Article 9 refers to the "special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem." This clause has given Palestinians the impression, probably correctly, that Israel intends, with the help of Jordan, to hold onto the whole of Jerusalem indefinitely, bypassing the Palestinians completely.

It is this clause, already approved in July, plus Israel's failure to implement the 1993 accords with the PLO, which have fueled the rise of the terroristic Hamas movement among Palestinians. These Islamic fundamentalists, who want to set up a theocratic state which would drive Jews into the sea and oppress women and all who do not share its sectarian interpretation of Islam, are growing also because of the corruption and authoritarianism of PLO chief Yasir Arafat's leadership. Their growth is aided as well by the absence of an independent left alternative to Arafat.

The three Hamas attacks in October, from the Oct. 10 gunfire in a Jewish area of downtown Jerusalem, to the subsequent kidnapping and execution of an Israeli soldier, to the horrific actions of the suicide bomber who killed over 20 Israelis on a bus in the center of Tel Aviv on Oct. 19 have shown that the fundamentalists have the means and the will to strike virtually anywhere.

Equally shocking were the cheers which greeted news of the Oct. 19 bombing among a sector of the Palestinian community. Yet it should also be remembered that similar cheers from some Jews greeted the murder last February by a Jewish fundamentalist of over 40 Arabs at the Hebron mosque. The refusal of the Israeli government to crack down on Jewish fanatics and settlers in February mirrors the refusal today of the PLO to crack down on Hamas.

Clinton's negotiations with Syria, which apparently achieved little of substance, will hardly, even if successful, solve the Palestinian-Israeli problems on the ground. These problems include not only the question of Jerusalem, delayed elections on the West Bank, the thousands of political prisoners Israel still holds, and Israel's racist and short-sighted attempt to replace Palestinian labor with new migrant workers from South Asia. Also looming in the background is the fate of millions of Palestinians living in exile in various Arab countries, especially Lebanon and Jordan, who have not even been promised citizenship in the new Palestinian entity.

In Iraq, the decision to move troops toward Kuwait in October and then withdraw was an apparent defeat for Saddam Hussein who once again miscalculated the will of the great powers to defend the oil kings and sheiks.

The economic crisis in Iraq is worse than ever after four years of draconian UN economic sanctions which have harmed the masses far more than the regime. Amid silence from world opinion, the Hussein government has committed genocide and created ecological disaster in its effort to wipe out resistance among the largely Shiite Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq.

What does "peace" in the Middle East mean, if Saddam Hussein's brutal rule continues, if the Palestinians languish in poverty, prison, and exile, and if fundamentalist groups are growing everywhere?

Italy's general strike



Unemployed workers protested outside Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's office in Rome, joining millions of workers who took to the streets in 97 cities, Oct. 14, in a nationwide general strike.

What democracy in France?

Several shocking events have exposed the French government to sharp criticism from intellectuals and human rights activists and have posed deep questions about the nature of democracy in France. In October, the rightist government refused to grant a visa of more than 24 hours to exiled Bangladesh feminist writer Taslima Nasreen. Nasreen responded sharply, stating that "it is regrettable that France bows to fundamentalist forces for political and economic motives."

The decision produced a week of attacks on the government, some of which linked the decision to its racist immigration policies. A month before the government banned all demonstrations of any kind during a visit by Chinese leader Jiang Zemin.

But the biggest shock was to the Left with the revelation in a new biography of President Francois Mitterrand, now an isolated more or less symbolic figure inside a rightist government. The biography punctures the claims of the reformist Left to have resisted the Nazis.

The biography reveals that Mitterrand joined an extreme rightist group in 1934, and that in 1936 one of his first political actions was to participate in a racist demonstration against a French law professor who had agreed to represent Ethiopia when it appealed vainly for help against an invasion by Mussolini.

Later, Mitterrand became an official in the collaborationist Vichy regime, and even today claims that he was unaware of Vichy's persecution of Jews. He did not join the Resistance until 1943. Even afterwards, he helped to protect Vichy leaders.

Who We Are and What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that stands for the abolition of capitalism, whether in its private property form as in the U.S., or its state property form, as in Russia or 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. We have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead."

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-87), 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. These works challenge post-Marx Marxists to return to Marx's Marxism.

The new visions of the future that Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are

rooted in her rediscovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a "new Humanism" and in her recreation of that philosophy for our age as "Marxist-Humanism." The development of the Marxist-Humanism of Dunayevskaya 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*, on deposit at the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in Detroit, Michigan.

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 have 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, exploitative society, 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.

Kurds face betrayal

Factional killings have been rampant in the Kurdish-ruled areas of Iraqi Kurdistan. The political parties in power, Barzani's KDP and Talebani's PUK, faced with an economy in shambles, rampant hunger and massive destruction of the land have been self-destructing as well. With unprincipled tactical alliances with Turkey and Iran, they have outraged and alienated their own masses. Since 1992 several armed conflicts have broken out. The two parties have practically declared war on Kurdish freedom fighters in Turkey and Iran.

Many Kurds have come out marching and protesting to stop the killings and betrayals. Women's marches have put a stop to the fighting on several occasions.

Meanwhile, Turkey is conducting the largest military campaign in its history against Kurds. Half a million troops are stationed in eastern Turkey. At least 50,000 are in active combat. In October alone, 17 villages were destroyed in less than 72 hours after being labeled as "supply bases." Thousands of Kurds including writers, elected officials and legislators have been killed or are in jails today.

The Gulf War never ended for the Iraqi Kurds. After fleeing by the millions into the mountains, and after the world outcry in their support, the United States reluctantly provided a shield for them to return to their lands. With the U.S. military under the umbrella of UN/NATO, Kurdish political leaders formed a government that today is being used as a noose around the neck of Kurdish aspirations for national liberation.

It is common in the Left to point to this situation as "proof" that the main enemy is "nationalism." But that is yet another way to overlook the fact that Kurdish national consciousness (not nationalism) is still indispensable to the development of any revolutionary movement in the whole region. What we see today is the consequences of the failure to spell out the dialectics of revolution concretely.

It is crucial to solidarize with the Kurdish masses by working out the meaning of the philosophy of revolution that is needed, and ensuring that it is tightly tied to the struggle of the Kurds for freedom. —Cyrus Noveen