

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Capitalism's takeover of farming



by Felix Martin, Labor Editor

Leaving Chicago, going south through the farming counties of Illinois and Indiana, we saw no one in the fields—just corn and soybeans as far as the eye could see. It's a different way of farming under capitalism today than it was when I was a farmer.

Farming before World War II was still under the system where each farm was a unit, where the farmer took a wife to produce his own hands to work the farm. Horses and mules were the power for the heavy work, like pulling the tools to work the soil. The feed for that power was produced on the farm. This 160-acre unit produced and reproduced its own life. Up to World War II about 70% of the population lived on the farm.

After the war ended, capitalism began taking over the farming. Tractors began replacing the horses. Where it took nine weeks to produce five-pound broilers the natural way, chickens for the market were now being produced in five weeks. In feeding cattle, the natural three-pound gain per day became, in crowded feed lots and with hormones in the feed, nine pounds per day. This is why meat eaten today has no taste. Quantity reduces quality. This is all about time, producing the most in the smallest amount of time.

I read in an article on farming: "If we were meant to be agriculturists, we would have had longer arms! That's why we have embraced fossil fuels so readily, because when we moved from that forest to the field, it wasn't fun. And that helped us develop an encoded language of behavior through systems called religions, loaded with oughtness. You oughta do this and you oughta do that and you oughta do the other thing. But those encoded languages of behavior broke down when fossil fuel became abundant. You don't need to be so faithful when you have a lot of oil, but you've got to be faithful when you're running on sunlight."

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Black World

Rwanda, genocide and France



by Lou Turner

After experiencing the most barbaric genocide the world has witnessed since World War II and the greatest refugee crisis in the post-war period, Rwanda is on the verge of plunging into another catastrophe. Like previous episodes, the criminally inept UN and a criminally opportunist French foreign policy have conspired, all in the name of "humanitarianism," to thwart the efforts of the new Tutsi-led government in the Rwandan capital of Kigali to restore life to the ravaged country.

The bitter anomaly is that Rwanda will become the victim of a humanitarian aid-created disaster. The million or so mostly Hutu refugees still encamped across the border in Zaire have come under the brutal control of the army and militias of the deposed government of former President Habyarimana, whose death earlier this year touched off the genocide of nearly one million Tutsis and Hutus, and the subsequent refugee crisis.

The 30,000-strong army, headed by officials of the former government has, until recently, been protected by the corrupt regime of Zairean President Mobutu, provided material and logistical support by the Mitterrand government (especially Mitterrand's son Jean-Christophe who was primarily responsible for supplying arms to the Habyarimana regime used in the genocide, even as China supplied it with machetes), and is fed and supplied by the UN and other aid agencies. Because the Zairean military is underpaid or not paid at all, it has also begun to pillage refugee camps and expropriate the vehicles and lodging supplied to officials of the former Rwandan government. The seizure of refugee camps and forced mobilization of some 30,000 refugees at the end of November by the Zairean army also indicates an ambivalence in Mobutu's attitude towards the genocidal exile government and military.

This too is tied to the imperialist maneuvers of the French. As one of the "last hurrahs" of his presidency, the ailing Mitterrand convened a Franco-African summit earlier this year to showcase France's neo-neocolonial profile in Africa at a time when the rest of the West ap-

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Can we stop Republican 100-day plan to roll U.S. back 50 years?

by Michelle Landau

Los Angeles—"We're Americans, and we have special rights in this world, because we're a special people, and every politician had better start learning what that means."

Raucous cheering greeted these words, spoken by Ron Prince, campaign chairman for California's anti-immigrant ballot initiative, Proposition 187. Prince was speaking to a packed auditorium of southern California suburban, white supporters following Prop. 187's passage, 59%-41%, Nov. 8.

The crowd was fired up against the Los Angeles School Board which had joined with immigrants rights groups and civil liberties advocates in a legal brief disputing the initiative's constitutionality. The court case challenges key Prop. 187 provisions: the mandated denial of any form of government assistance to undocumented workers and their families, including children's education and medical care other than in "emergency" situations; and the decree that public officials—school administrators, health care professionals, social workers, police—report to immigration authorities all cases of individuals who are "reasonably suspected" of being in violation of immigration laws. (Until the provisions clear the court challenge, they will not be implemented.)

Simultaneous with the court challenge, California's re-elected Republican Gov. Pete Wilson proposed that a version of Prop. 187 be adopted on the federal level. Newt



Latino youth march in San Francisco against Prop. 187.

Gingrich, rising Republican star and incoming Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, proposed that other types of measures could more forcefully "take care of" "illegals." Clearly nothing as "minor" as unconstitutionality stands in the way of the ambitions of the ascendant right-wing faction of the Republican Party, striding

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Editorial

No to betrayal—support Bosnia!

The decision of the Clinton administration to drop its pretense of opposing the Serbian destruction of Bosnia, at the very moment the Serbs launched a murderous attack on Bihac and other areas, has placed the physical existence of Bosnia and the idea of a multiethnic society in the gravest jeopardy. Now that the U.S., along with the UN and NATO, has openly declared a Serbian victory to be "inevitable" and the Serb conquests in their drive for a "Greater Serbia" to be "irreversible," the Serbs have been given a green light to intensify their genocidal campaign of "ethnic cleansing." In light of this the need for revolutionary solidarity with Bosnia is urgent—not just for the sake of Bosnia but for our own future here at home.

As if on cue, the establishment media rushed to justify the U.S. decision by calling the conflict a "civil war" about which nothing can be done and blaming the Bosnians for inviting the latest attacks by daring to launch an offensive from Bihac last month. Most failed to mention that the Bosnians were trying to break a two-year siege of Bihac, which has been without food deliveries since May—largely because the UN capitulated to the Serb blockade of this "safe haven." Nor did they mention that the Serbs have been attacking other "safe havens" with impunity, such as Tuzla—a city which embodies Bosnia's multicultural heritage.

What we singled out over two years ago—that the Western powers decided from the start to allow Serbia to destroy Bosnia's effort to create a multiethnic nation embracing Muslims, Serbs, and Croats—has now become painfully obvious.*

THE 'SHIFT' IN U.S. POLICY

The Clinton administration has now dropped its pretense of opposing Serbian expansion—expressed earlier in its talk of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia and endorsement of limited air strikes against Serbian positions. Clinton's stance is partly due to his desire to avoid an open rupture with his European allies and Russia.

The Western rulers planned for December to be a showcase of a "new NATO" by presenting a formula for eventually taking in several former countries of the Soviet bloc, such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. But the Clinton administration's talk of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia, which Britain and France fervently oppose, threatened the effort to convey the im-

pression that the Western alliance had found new unity of purpose in the post-Cold War era.

Faced with the option of either assisting Bosnia or risk fracturing the Western Alliance, the Clinton administration decided to wash its hands of Bosnia altogether. NATO followed suit at its summit in Brussels a few days later by speaking of its "new mission" while barely even mentioning Bosnia.

The new-found unanimity between the U.S. and West European rulers does not mean, however, that tensions between the two have suddenly ended. Those tensions never centered on Bosnia, but rather flow from the way changes in the global economic situation is producing a growing divergence of U.S. and West European interests. Ever since the Pacific Rim surpassed Europe as America's number one trading partner two years ago, the U.S. has been less willing to make Europe the focus of its economic and security interests. This far outweighs differences over Bosnia, which never concerned matters of basic principle.

This is seen in how each of the West's "peace" plans—whether Carrington-Cutiliero, Vance-Owen, Owen-Stoltenberg or today's "Contact Group" of the U.S., Britain, France, Germany and Russia—centered on various ways of dividing Bosnia into distinct "ethnic cantons." Each of the state powers is willing to have Bosnia carved up between Serbia and Croatia, with a small rump "Muslim" enclave in between.

'ETHNIC CLEANSING'— U.S. TO BOSNIA

Clinton's decision to forego the pretense of opposing the Serbian attacks on Bosnia was also crucially affected by the Nov. 8 congressional elections. The racist anti-immigrant sentiment projected by that election stands in sharp contrast to the vision of a multiethnic society inherent within Bosnia's struggle.

What has obscured for many the connection between the Nov. 8 elections and the shift in U.S. policy on Bosnia are the statements by Republican Party ideologues

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* For the development of our unique position on Bosnia, see our pamphlet *Bosnia-Herzegovina: The Achilles Heel of Western 'Civilization'* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1992).

Memphis women confront elections

by Laurie Cashdan

I left Chicago for Memphis a week after the elections, as the Republican Right brazenly trumpeted its "Contract with America" with its unabashed attacks on poor women and children. In Memphis I met a dimension of the South that stood in stark contrast to not only the racist, reactionary South embodied in Newt Gingrich, the new House Speaker, but also Clinton's spineless capitulations. At the Center for Research on Women at University of Memphis, and among Black women labor activists meeting nearby, something new was emerging.

Women at the Center for Research on Women poured out anger, fear and questions. As feminist scholars who research southern working-class women and women of color, they are all too familiar with fundamentalist and reactionary ideologies and their consequences. After Clinton's announcement on school prayer, one sociologist declared, "That's it. I was trying hard to give him the benefit of the doubt, but I'm through with him!"

Another scholar shared worries about the hegemony Christian fundamentalism is gaining, especially in areas of the South like northern Florida, where she is from.

Woman as Reason

"The talk radio that my mother listens to all day," she told me, "makes Rush Limbaugh look liberal." Such views paint Clinton and any politicians who cling to the vestiges of the welfare state as "communists!"

What worried her equally was whether radical theory, like postmodernist feminism, articulates how to fight the racism seen in the election.

These concerns with reconstituting a radical feminism that can combat right-wing fundamentalism and place liberation back on the agenda takes on new meaning in light of a discussion among several Black women labor activists. The Right revels in thinking they have pounded the last nail into the coffin of the 1960s revolts. Yet they will succeed only if the freedom movements fail to practice the kind of historic recollection capable of working out a new basis to continue those movements.

I found a unique kind of historic recollection taking place in a meeting over breakfast that included workers who became activists only recently when they decided that they had had it with their plantation-style boss (See Howe Sipes story, p. 3), and others whose history extends back to the Civil Rights Movement.

Ida Leachman, vice-president of Furniture Workers Local 282, contrasted the 1990s to the Civil Rights era: "The old way, the oppression and prejudice was out there. Now it's veiled, so you can hardly see what it is. It's under the disguise of democracy. In the old days it was open: 'colored water fountain.' You could see it."

Another problem, she said, is the sell-out politics of Black conservatives—not only Clarence Thomas but old Civil Rights leaders like Charles Evers. "They now say, 'We don't need handouts, we need to get up and go to work.'" Annie Rolack, a worker whose activism began in Mississippi in the 1960s, agreed, adding, "Maybe they made it, but they left me somewhere along the way."

The attacks on welfare mothers especially concerned them. At Sipes, most workers are single mothers who work fulltime yet still have to rely on AFDC. "They're constantly saying welfare, but they're putting people on welfare," argued Leachman. "With the 'two years and you're off' plan, they're creating soup lines. The jobs are going to Mexico. They're using the word welfare and it means women who are lazy, trifling."

"I had an argument with a lady at work," said Rolack. "I was trying to get her to see that the statistics say that there are more white women on welfare than Black women, but she wouldn't believe me." During a recent strike workers at her job applied for food stamps and

Welfare Ecuadoran-style

My story is about a young girl who, like hundreds of thousands in Ecuador, because they were born women and poor, are condemned to be maids. Almost all maids are indigenous people from the countryside. Maria started working as a maid in the city at the age of 15. She worked cheerfully, seven days a week, 14 to 16 hours a day, with four hours off on Sunday. She made just enough money to buy her clothes and to pay for transportation to her home town once a month.

After five years, Maria got a boyfriend. She felt she had to leave her job because her *patrones* would make her feel ashamed, and maybe cut her free time on Sundays "for her own protection."

When I next saw her two years later, I hardly recognized her. She had lost her front teeth, and her skin was burnt and damaged from two years of selling in the open market, exposed to the equatorial sun. I went to see her later at her rented room. I found it locked, but I heard a sound inside, so I looked in and saw a baby boy crawling on the dirt floor. I got help to force the door, and inside there was also a beautiful little girl, dying on the bed.

I went to find Maria, who was working at the market. We took the child to the hospital, where they found she was in the last stages of malnutrition. When her former *patrones* were told about Maria's situation, they gave her money. But they saw no future for her child.

In Ecuador, there is no system of government support for women with children. Maria got a court order for her husband to contribute to the children, but he laughed at it. The only "welfare" is free distribution of powdered milk and oatmeal from the U.S. It is rumored to be laced with drugs that sterilize women, and is not available in the countryside and shanty towns. —Greta

Medicaid for their children but were denied benefits.

They discussed how racist ideologies translate into welfare practices in Memphis: "White folks make an appointment to pick up food stamps, but Black folks stand in line. It looks like they're the only ones on welfare. Under segregation, some public housing projects were Black and others white. Now they're all Black. The whites live in Section 8 housing. They keep us apart and hurting."

This historic recollection represents a radical consciousness struggling to discover how the future is continuous and discontinuous from the past. After seeing the film, *At the River I Stand*, about the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike, I began to wonder if "I Am a Man"—the sanitation workers' banner—may find new concretization today among southern Black working-class women. The 1968 strike took on historic significance not only because Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed there at the start of his Poor People's Campaign, but because "I Am a Man" posed the absolute inseparability of race, class, and human liberation.

While Black women were active throughout the 1960s, their self-consciousness in the 1990s brings them head to head with the retrogressive reality and ideology revealed by the elections. "All the labor and Civil Rights movements come back to human issues," said Annie Rolack. "That's why I want women to get together. I think it's up to us to start something." It may be that "I Am a Woman" will emerge as the real continuation of "I Am a Man" in the period following these elections.

Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

Hundreds gathered at Harvard University in November, for women living in Haiti to share ideas with women from the U.S. and Canada on women's rights in Haiti. Conference recommendations will be presented to the new Haitian government. The event was sponsored by HAITIWomen, whose founders include Dessima Williams, former UN ambassador from Grenada. Hundreds of women's organizations throughout Haiti, with help from support groups in the U.S., are fighting discrimination against women in Haiti, including dead-end, low-paying, dangerous factory jobs and the use of rape and violence as weapons of political control.

Women's groups in Canada are outraged at the disregard of violence against women and rise in attacks on women's rights, on the fifth anniversary of the Montreal massacre when 14 women were killed. In November, an abortion clinic doctor in Vancouver was shot in his kitchen, after anti-abortionists repeatedly picketed his home. In Alberta, a judge acquitted a man of battering his wife because he had been under the influence of alcohol and drugs. He based his acquittal on a recent Canadian Supreme Court ruling that overturned the conviction of a Montreal rapist who had been drinking heavily.

Feminist theory debate: minimalist dialectics

In the ongoing debate in N&L on feminist theory, our focus is the search for a philosophy to help Women's Liberation move forward again as an inseparable dimension of the dialectic of revolution. In that search, Jennifer Ring's *Modern Political Theory and Contemporary Feminism: A Dialectical Analysis*¹ is an important contribution that demands a serious discussion. Ring's contention is that most feminist theory, "whether radical or conservative" (p. 7), assumes a different masculine and feminine "nature," the kind of dichotomy that offers no opportunity to change the world, she says. Instead, the dichotomy she seeks a way to overcome is that between objectivity and subjectivity.

Ring is attracted to postmodernism's effort to "transcend traditional dichotomies and traditional categories of analysis." Yet she worries that "in shattering all conventions, in arguing that subjectivity and objectivity are inevitably dichotomous...too much may be relinquished," including any solid historical ground for working out an alternative to the past. What Ring creates to "salvage some central traditional philosophic concepts for feminist theory" is "minimalist dialectics" (pp. 19-20).

She especially wants to salvage what is important for feminism from both the Hegelian and the Marxian dialectic, explaining that her "minimalist dialectics" differs "primarily in terms of its professed agnosticism about origins and ends in history, and in its refusal to accept any truth as 'world historical.' It is thus neither idealist nor materialist: it involves the interplay of materiality and ideas, objectivity and subjectivity" (p. 21).

What makes Ring's book important is that she is adamantly not advocating any "particular political substance" but trying to find a "philosophic structure for feminism" (p. 57). The question is whether, instead of "salvaging" the most important philosophic contributions of Hegel and Marx, she has missed the core of both dialectics. Ring presents her study as a question of "epistemology" and rejects any attempt "to impose a political agenda, to rig political outcomes and turn epistemology into ideology" (p. 21).

But the philosophy of both Hegel and Marx is far more than epistemology and philosophy is far from being "ideology." The Hegelian dialectic represents the revolution in philosophy that Marx transformed into a philosophy of revolution. Neither concerns only an "interplay" between objectivity and subjectivity but a pathway to overcoming all the contradictions we face on the way to their



Women from Amatenango, a Chiapas village, rallied for women's rights in San Cristobal Nov. 25.

Anti-gay props squashed

Boise, Idaho—While the margins of victory are disquieting, the November election did see the defeat of noxious anti-les/bi/gay initiatives in Idaho and Oregon. I was in Boise, Idaho, during election week.

Idaho's Proposition One, written by the so-called "Idaho Citizens' Alliance" (ICA)—a group spawned by Oregon's anti-freedom OCA—would have prohibited equal treatment under the law to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, and demanded censorship at public libraries and schools. The alliances forged to fight this, under the name No on One, included library and teacher associations, leading Democratic and Republican politicians, some (but not enough) liberal churches, and the small but capable lesbian, gay, and bisexual community. No on One covered the state with literature and posters articulating the faults of the proposition in regard to governmental control, censorship, and taxpayer expense.

Despite all of these strategic positionings, the proposition was defeated by a mere 3,000 votes, less than 1% of ballots cast. The racist underpinnings of anti-gay initiatives, which are at root hostile to the idea of civil rights—re-framed as "special rights"—and operate on a presumption of a scarcity of freedom, had appeal for some white voters, as I found when engaged in phone-banking.

The need for genuine human recognition of the lives and contributions of gay and lesbian people was deliberately downplayed by the No on One campaign, and contemptuously and vocally rejected by ICA supporters. Despite the narrow victory, these election results, in light of the nationwide developments, do not present a sanguine picture for the immediate future of queer lives. Vigilance, solidarity, further coalitions, and a vision for the future are absolutely necessary.

The positive side of the No on One victory could be seen in the community fostered among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and straight allies, protecting a sense of unity and diversity in the struggle. The ability to organize a sophisticated campaign in one of the largest and most geographically challenging states, and to win, has given the community skills and locations for developing self-defined freedom and growth.

—Jennifer

unity, which then becomes a new beginning for reaching freedom. The "end" each dialectic was reaching for was what Raya Dunayevskaya discovered in Hegel to be "Absolute negativity as new beginning" and in Marx to be "revolution in permanence."²

Of the many provocative aspects of the book, what is especially compelling is Ring's discussion in the chapter on "Hegelian Dialectics" of whether or not there is a "feminine nature" and how to confront "questions about the origin of women's oppression without becoming chained to an abstract concept of an unchangeable human nature." In her chapter on "Marxian Dialectics" she discusses Marx's concept of nature as "historical and dialectical. Far from carrying the limitations of an imposed concept it seems potentially liberating" (p. 156).

She takes up four senses of the nature in Marx—as the natural world of plants and animals; as the human body; chronologically as human "prehistory"; and finally "as a state in the future that is fully developed so that human beings can live a species life." It is a passage that resonates to me with Marx's "definition" of "thoroughgoing naturalism" as "Humanism" in his 1844 *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic*.

All the more puzzling is it then, that Ring discusses Marx's 1844 *Manuscripts* at some length and yet misses that it was there that Marx spelled out that his "new Humanism" was distinguished from both Idealism and Materialism, and was "at the same time, the truth uniting both." He made it clear that this demanded not only the transcendence of private property but a second transcendence for "positive Humanism to arise." It was Marx's translation of Hegel's "negation of negation."

The "negation of negation" is the core of the dialectic of Hegel and Marx that Ring has missed. It has nothing to do with what she critiques over and over as "manipulating the method toward substantive ends judged desirable," but everything to do with following the logic of the Idea of Freedom out to its end. Ring has nevertheless produced a serious plunge into trying to work out a philosophy to help Women's Liberation move forward again. Her book demands a far more serious discussion by us than it has received.

—Olga Domanski

1. New York: SUNY Press, 1991

2. Her category of "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning" was created in *Philosophy and Revolution*; for her discussion of "revolution in permanence" see Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation*, and Marx's *Philosophy of Revolution*.

Czech autoworkers strike a warning

by Stephen Steiger

Prague, Czech Republic—The Czech Republic has only one plant producing cars, a company called Skoda. In order to modernize and privatize the plant the Czech government chose in 1991, from among several foreign contenders, the German car giant Volkswagen as its partner. Volkswagen would own eventually 70% of the shares and also pledged to invest eight million marks to modernize production. The agreement represented the biggest investment action in Eastern Europe.

However, VW cancelled the original pledge, reducing the promised amount from eight to 3.4 million marks. The chairman of the VW board suddenly reminded the Czechs that one of the major advantages that had drawn his company into the republic—the relatively cheap wages of the skilled Czech workers—can be put aside by moving part of the Czech production to Mexico where the wages are even lower.

While the management is pointing to the level of wages being higher than the country's average, the trade unions stress the growing intensification of labor. Czech workers are "yielding" most often the same results as their counterparts in Germany, where the wages are at least a third higher.

TENSION OVER DISMISSALS

The smouldering tension between the management and the workers reached a high point last summer when announcements multiplied about dismissals. The layoffs started with foreign workers—800 Cubans, 700 Poles and more than 1,500 Vietnamese—being sent home. It soon became known that 800 Czech workers should also be dismissed.

Another point of friction was the proposed introduction of what VW called "fractionalization" and "integration." The first term means division of the company into lower-level units independent in terms of management and finance. The second means integrating many contractors' workers into the Skoda plant itself as well as transferring its own workers to some contractors' jobs. This would mean for the Skoda workers to do the same job at a lower salary, as most of the small contracting firms pay their workers less.

It was for all these reasons—to which one more was added: the unwillingness of the plant's management to negotiate with the union—that a one-hour warning strike was called for Oct. 17. More than 90% of the workers took part in this strike.

PARTIAL VICTORY

The union won in that the management began negotiating with them within the next two days. It promised to divide the layoffs over a longer period as well as include those who retire voluntarily or because of age and so on. Those working at the same jobs would be paid the same wage whether their employer was Skoda or another company.

The question is if this victory is not only a partial one. The personnel chief of the plant bragged that since 1991 the productivity increased by 37% and in the future 10% would be added yearly. In other words, the intensification will continue. Volkswagen has become the majority shareholder. The Czech government retained the right of co-decision in questions of investment and number of cars produced, but not workers' rights. Relations between workers and management remain tense.

The outlook for the near future is that about 500 workers should be laid off annually. The plant's trade union will need all the support of the Czech and Moravian Trade Union Chamber, the highest trade union authority of the country, in defending workers' rights. It also will need the support of the public which has been far from unequivocal.



Workers of Skoda during the one-hour general strike. The banner on the building reads: Warning General Strike 1994.

Sinai Kosher apartheid

Editor's note: These stories are from conversations with workers outside the Sinai Kosher Foods plant.

Chicago—The majority of the people at Sinai Kosher are Spanish-speaking with a few Polish. Some of the Spanish-speaking workers speak English and make friends with others. I heard one of the Black ladies say, "I would like us to stick together." The other people say that would be nice, but then another Spanish-speaking person comes around and says, "They'll get you in trouble."

Having the union contract in Spanish and Polish would be nice. There are a lot of foreigners here that don't know their rights. We all need to learn to stay firm and stick together, learn to read, ask questions and think for ourselves, not just follow what the supervisor says.

About 250 people work at Sinai Kosher. Very few are Black workers. How come no Blacks are hiring in here? And once they're in here, they don't stay long. There are only a few Black women in East and West Packaging where they multivac the hot dogs and put them in boxes. The supervisor, Kiran Patel, tells the machine operators to put a Black lady over here and another one over there. The Black women are always kept separated.

The supervisor looks for tell-tales. They get the little light jobs and stuff like that. Here you don't have anyone to talk to about problems like this. The union is just the union; it's no help.

Union-busting by lockout

Detroit—Locked out of their jobs since March 1991, some 50 workers at the National Metal Processing plant in Detroit continue to battle and appeal for aid in their struggle for job reinstatement and back pay. Events leading to the lockout reflect the union-busting patterns experienced by thousands of organized workers.

National Metal, which in 1974 had signed a contract with Allied Industrial Workers Local 267, in 1988 began hiring "employee-leasing firms" to manage the workers and to legally remove the company from responsibility to the workers. In 1990 the third leasing firm, Branch International Services, demanded wage, benefit and representation cuts that the negotiating committee rejected.

In February of 1991 Branch International declared it would not accept the contract provision calling for extension of the old contract if a new agreement was not reached and on March 1, four days before the contract's expiration, proposed cutting the incentive pay scale.

The workers knew the company wanted them to strike, but they insisted on continuation of the negotiations. When they got to the plant on the morning of March 5, they found the gates padlocked, armed guards all around and scabs being slipped in through the back entrance.

Despite decisions by both the Labor Board and the courts upholding the union and the workers, both the company and leasing firm have stonewalled every step in the proceedings, denying responsibility. In the years since the lockout the workers and their families have endured great hardships and need all the help they can get in their battle for justice. Direct contributions can be sent to Locked-out National Metal Workers, P.O. Box 11128, Detroit, MI 48211. —Andy Phillips

Injuries last straw

Grayson, Ky.—We voted in the Fireman and Oilers Union at Cook Family Foods on Sept. 19, 1991. Approximately 300 people voted. The vote was down the middle, with the deciding "factors" being three workers that we said had been illegally fired. The National Labor Relations Board said their votes counted. On Nov. 28, 1993 we voted to strike and went on strike the same day. One striker, although innocent, has been imprisoned for hitting a scab.

Cook Family Foods has been here since February of 1991. When they first opened up, people were happy with jobs coming in, because people were out of work and this area had one of the lower employment rates in the state. People were pretty excited.

After a couple of years, things started happening. Full production was up to 500 people per shift, about 1,000 all together. We broke a production record of 4.6 million pounds of ham in one week. People started getting hurt. A man on second shift was sawing some of the last hams before going home. One of the hams was frozen and, when the blade hit it, it sawed his thumb up the middle. After four days—he was still shot up with morphine—the company wanted him to come to work to do light duty. You can't do any of the jobs with one hand.

From the beginning Cook's was anti-union all the way. When we went in for orientation, the director of human resources talked about how unions were no good and we didn't need them because Cook's was fair. They threatened to fire us if we went for a union. When we found out they couldn't fire us, they put people in bad positions on the line and harassed them until they quit.

They are running the plant with scabs now, but they aren't producing like they were. One thing they did was take away the point system they had set up for us. If you missed a day but you called in, you got two points. If you didn't call in, it was five points. If you were late, you got a half point. If you got 15 points, then you got fired. The problem was the company laid on points because they wouldn't give people sick days. —Striking meatpacker

Contributions which are urgently needed can be sent to IBFO Grayson Strike Relief, P.O. Box 125, Russell, KY 41169.

March, sit-in for shelters

Chicago—Workers from Decatur, Ill., and their supporters sat in the Illinois State capitol building and 31 were arrested Nov. 30. "We were protesting the general mistreatment of people in this state, not just in Decatur," declared a Staley worker about a midday rally that preceded the occupation. Dozens of workers from three embattled unions in Decatur—locked out from A.E. Staley and on strike against Firestone and against Caterpillar—marched to Springfield the day before.

The issue, symbolic of the whole struggle, was the Decatur City Council banning picket shelters from the gates of Staley, despite picketers meeting conditions for keeping the shelters. The governor effectively sided with the Decatur city leaders. "Government as a whole says it's taking a neutral position," said one participant. "Well, they have proven to be siding with the company."

Some 400 people, including Illinois government employees, rallied inside the capitol building. Afterward, the Decatur people went to the governor's office, but he "slipped out the back," said one demonstrator. People sat down and waited until the building closed when police arrested them, roughing up many.

A new group of rank-and-file members from three Decatur unions—Paperworkers, Autoworkers, and Rubberworkers—planned the protest. "We tried this once before, to come up with ideas and come back to the leadership with them," explained one of the activists. "The leadership just did not want to do anything. This time we went ahead and planned something and did it."

—Jim Mills

Boycott Howe Sipes!

Memphis, Tenn.—The most important thing is winning respect and the same rights for everyone. What they do at Howe Sipes, a baseball apparel and jacket manufacturer, is single us out. The plant manager won't ask people in the union, Furniture Workers Local 282, to work overtime. They hired nine or ten new people, and he'll ask them to work overtime or on Saturdays.

The plant manager will let non-unionists or white ladies walk all over the floor and not say a thing. With union supporters, if you go to the bathroom, he'll yell, "What's going on in there?" They'll do anything to make us mad and get us to leave our jobs. A lot of women have left. But those that are left, we will fight till the end.

When they hire new people, they tell them not to talk to the union supporters. They sit at their machines and won't even come to the break room. People know it would be better if we had a union, but they feel they would be fired or singled out if they supported it.

We had a rally during the summer at Sipes' house in east Memphis, where all the executive types live. We went to all his neighbors, passing out leaflets. We've been putting the heat on. They don't like that out there. They want him to end this.

Sipes got a decertification petition going to get rid of the union by picking out two employees, one white and one Black. He wrote down what he wanted them to say. Before that these two ladies never talked. Then Sipes posted a letter saying there's no more union as of now. It was illegal because management can't have anything to do with a decert petition; it has to be started by workers.

Sipes says he's giving us a raise in the base pay and may raise the ticket price. But our struggle is not about money. It's about respect and dignity. It's for insurance we all can afford and for holidays. He won't even recognize Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. And it's for better working conditions.

Sipes is trying to make people feel they are better off because of the decertification petition, but it's because the union is there. The people that signed know something's wrong with what Sipes said because we're still having our meetings every week and we wear our union buttons every day.

—Howe Sipes workers

Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

In my farming days I had a lantern and later there was electricity to power the equipment and lights. The question is: What's after these fossil fuels run out? Even with the best methods of farming, it was not a natural way of life, producing itself, which includes building the soil. I read where in ancient society their method of farming turned the land into deserts.

The method of logging in the Northwest—cutting everything clean—is destroying the natural way of the forest. The building of houses, factories and super roads since World War II, coupled with the logging and methods of farming—what effect does this have on the environment?

I have seen a lot of changes in my 73 years. I have seen running springs dry up, branches and creeks dry up, no water running in them in summer. I have seen virgin forests disappear, muddy roads become concrete. Waste has become more than we used to live on.

This year, 1994, for the first time in those 73 years, fruit trees were in blossom in the spring and bloomed again in the fall. Something has gone wrong with nature. In October my tomatoes were in full blossom, just like in the spring, with new tomatoes setting on. With all these signs, I believe that time is running out for allowing all of the things that capitalism has done to nature. We are running out of time.

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

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Founder of Marxist-Humanism

Editor's note: This summer saw the Aug. 5 Malecon revolt in Havana, with thousands of Cuban refugees taking to the seas and new Clinton-Castro accords on immigration. Under the impact of these events, we reprint Raya Dunayevskaya's analysis of the first three years of Cuba under Fidel Castro that was originally published in News & Letters, November 1962. It can be found in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development, (microfilm #6695).

The sudden transformation of Cuba into a Russian missile base, followed by the even more sudden dismantling of the base, makes it necessary to probe deeply into the matter of what happens after a revolution is won and the heroes from the mountains become the administrators of the state.

This paramount question is not merely a new variation of the old moralistic question about how power corrupts and how absolute power corrupts absolutely. Rather, it is one that concerns the internal dynamics of revolutions in underdeveloped economies that evolved out of small guerrilla bands and came to fruition in a nuclear age which has split the whole world into two, and only two, Big Powers—the United States and Russia.

In contrast to the African Revolutions which, after victory, set out on a course of "positive neutralism," the Cuban Revolution was, after a year, sucked into the Russian-Chinese Communist orbit. Fidel Castro now claims that there is no third road. The truth, however, is that Cuban independence was achieved without Communist help and the first year of revolution revealed an original philosophic as well as social transformation.

Between that first year and the present satellite status, the point of transition was caused, not by a "foreign agent," but by natural affinity between Fidel Castro, administrator, and both the native and world Communists. Let's take a closer look at these three clearly discernible stages that transpired since Fidel Castro came to power nearly four years ago, in January 1959.

THE FIRST YEAR OF REVOLUTION

The first year of revolution unfolded with no dichotomy between philosophy and deed. The banner it unfurled made it as original in ideology as in its indigenous roots. Even Fidel Castro could express it succinctly then. The Cuban Revolution, he wrote, was "a humanistic revolution because it does not deprive man of his essence, but holds him as its basic aim. Capitalism sacrifices man; the Communist state, by its totalitarian concept, sacrifices the rights of man."

The Cuban Revolution was a high stage in the development of freedom in the whole of Latin America. It did more than overthrow the cruel and despotic Batista dictatorship, which was both puppet of American imperialism and tyrant over its own nation. It achieved a revolution in agricultural relations.

Although the State, and not the agricultural worker, is the owner of these expropriated vast tracts of land, the feeling of liberation was exhilarating, and true, when compared with the previous state of servitude to the United Fruit Company.

While no comparable revolution in industrial relations was achieved, the fact that there was little industry in Cuba, and the people had to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, when they didn't even have boots, also made the workers willingly, though not uncritically, identify themselves with Fidel Castro and his July 26th Movement.

The first point of division came when the workers took

A philosophic foundation for viewing Cuba today

"Even where a state like Cuba is protected from the worst whims of the world market and where state planning is total, the price of sugar is still dependent upon the socially necessary labor time established by world production. In a word, to plan or not to plan is not the decisive question. The state of technological development and the accumulated capital are the determinants, the only determinants, when the masses are not allowed their self-activity, which threatens to undermine the stability of the whole globe, and which did gain the Africans freedom. "

Philosophy and Revolution

From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao

(Original edition 1973; new expanded edition 1989; also available in Spanish, German, Italian, Russian)

See literature ad on page 7.

Ideology and the Cuban Revolution:

A study in what happens after...

issue with the State Plan and wanted to make sure of retaining their trade unions. Fidel Castro attended their trade union congress to urge the election of Communists whom he had found to be the most enthusiastic of State Planners and concerned with "rational investment." When the trade unions balked at electing Communists who had nothing to do with their revolution, and had, in fact, played with Batista, Castro declared the congress "a madhouse."

This kinship with the Communists, an attraction of one bossist attitude to another; this sharing of a conception of "the backwardness of the masses who had to be led"; this ordering about of workers to obey planned production targets and get over their "lack of revolutionary conscience and enthusiasm in their work"; in a word, this substitute of the State Plan for the people's needs marks the first divide between the Cuban state leaders and the Cuban workers.

THE POINT OF TRANSITION

It was the beginning of the end also of the independence of the July 26th Movement and the beginning of domination by the Cuban Communist Party whose general secretary, Blas Roca, began to spout forth counter-revolutionary slanders: "The true role of Trotskyism throughout the entire world is well known. In their eagerness to fight the Soviet Union, they went into the ranks of Hitler's apparatus of espionage and provocation and into that of the North American imperialists...Today in Cuba we also have libertarian anarcho-syndicalists."

Such outbursts in Havana and Khrushchev's declaration at the UN prompted us to write in September 1960:

Russia is now trying to make it appear that it ended America's domination of Cuba. It isn't true. To the extent that the revolution is due to any other source than the Cuban people themselves, it is due



to the African Revolutions which preceded it.

By fighting for independence from imperialism and embarking on a new path of development, the African Revolutions also put an end to the isolation of Latin America in the Western Hemisphere as well as to the loneliness, the feeling of helplessness of any underdeveloped country anywhere in the world.

The only thing Russia can rightly claim credit for is hardening Castro's natural petty-bourgeois tendency to solve administratively what can only be solved through the self-activity of the masses. This hardening of the administrative mentality has meant that revolutionary changes notwithstanding, the single element of not creating a form for the release of the creative energies of the masses, of not allowing any reorganization from below, of doing everything from above, that single element of the administrative mentality, which is the hallmark of our age of state-capitalism, was sufficient to begin the rapid descent of Cuba into the quagmire of Russian-Chinese totalitarianism.

At this point the tragedy is assuming tragically comic aspects. Fidel Castro thinks he is "The Leader." In truth, he is being led. He does not even have any comprehension of where in the world's capitalistic complex he is being led to.

That great German philosopher, Hegel, spoke with profundity about just such blabbermouths seeking "self-expression." He said they reflected "an unreflective, incoherent stage of consciousness" characteristic of societies that are no more than a "community of animals."

"An unreflective incoherent stage of consciousness"—what could better describe a Castro?—characteristic of a "society as a community of animals." This is the best contemporary description I have yet seen anywhere of state-capitalist societies like Mao's China.

ENTER RUSSIA

Russia has certainly hit the jackpot in Cuba, and America is eaten up with jealousy. Nowhere, from Alaska to Adenauer's West Germany, does America have so monolithic, anxious, enthusiastic, undivided and blithely unsuspecting a collaborator-victim, 90 miles from the shore of its main protagonist, as Russia has in Cuba.

As if sucked into the jet-propelled Iyushin, the Cuban Revolution has been unable to resist the totalitarian pull of Russian state-capitalism, with the administrative mentality running roughshod over the self-activity of the masses. Suddenly we are face to face with the negative element of a world crisis that will not let go of the newly-freed countries.

Castro fancies that his loud pronouncements against the stupidities of the American State Department "make up" for his "incoherent stage of consciousness."

In truth, they only too clearly show that this "haughty vassal"—to use yet another expression of Hegel's—is so bitten by the state-capitalist

bug—that is, "a passion for bossing"—that he does not even stop to reflect that he is trying to foist on the Cuban people hands made bloody by their crushing of the Hungarian people's revolt. Nothing can wash those hands clean. NOTHING...

This new arrogant administrator may feel sufficiently like a king, now that he has a nuclear power at his side, as to issue invitations to all underdeveloped countries to come to a command performance in Havana. The African countries gave him his first rebuff when they refused to be taken in by this late-comer on the revolutionary scene and his pretensions of "world leadership."

In declining the invitations for a conference in this hemisphere, when they have carried on the struggles for freedom decades ahead of him in Africa, they have given Castro his first lesson in freedom that is not dependent on Russia and China who are only using the Cuban Revolution to further their own ends of world conquest.

There is yet time to escape the world holocaust Mao Zedong is in such a hurry to unleash today, not tomorrow but today, IF Fidel's Cuba will break loose from both poles of capital...*

The two years that have passed since this was written have witnessed Castro's irretrievable entanglement in the Communist web, including also his total acceptance of the Communist perversion of Marxism. Fidel Castro is a man who thinks that if he himself drives the last nail into his own coffin, he thereby remains alive, and, if still alive, then certainly he is still the leader!

THE TRAGEDY OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Far from seeing that when the going got tough between the Big Two Powers Khrushchev would find him to be expendable, Castro was busy "proving," on Dec. 2, 1961, that, long before he got power, he had read Marx's Capital "up to page 370" and "a text of Lenin" and would remain "a Marxist-Leninist to the end of my life." Misnamed as a speech on "Marxism-Leninism," Castro only proves that he has swallowed hook, line and sinker the Communist perversion of Marxism-Leninism. In any case, both the occasion for, and purpose of, the speech is to excuse the final dissolution of the July 26th Movement into the Communist Party, now renamed the Integrated Revolutionary Organization. He has discovered that the single party state is "the ideal government" and that that single party "is a selective party which leads."

It matters little whether, by the time Castro equated "The Revolution" he had made without any party to "The Party," he was also signing away to Russia the rights to missile bases and their operation. There was little left of Cuba that remained in the hands of the working people themselves. The State Plan reigned supreme and thought control was so total that it not only choked off the philosophy of freedom but overfilled the prisons.

Where "the party to lead" dominates one's every thought, and the masses to be led must have no organizations of their own, there the fulfillment of the State Plan takes the place of the liberation of mankind. Where one is busy with power politics rather than the release of human energies for their self-development, there one stifles both the human needs of a single country and the human aspirations of the forward movement of mankind the world over. Where missile bases have sprouted, and may again, there one has buried the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism.

The leadership complex, itself a by-product of our state-capitalist age and its drive for world domination, blinds Castro totally to the creativity of the masses. That, for him, remains an unopened book. Therein lies the tragedy of the Cuban Revolution.

* From "On War and Peace," The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development, microfilm #2780.

Brazil's shantytowns

New York—The military occupation of the favelas (shantytowns) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November was not, as the oppressors claimed, a "progressive operation of asphyxia to drug dealers," but clearly an operation to asphyxiate the Brazilian poor. The military control of the access of the favelas, like in the Jewish ghetto of Nazi Europe or in the Algerian casbah of the imperialist French government, is only one of the conditions that the poor in Brazil must bear.

To "control" one of the favelas, ten light armored tanks and several jeeps with machine guns were necessary. Despite the incredible "operation" only a few arrests were made and a few weapons and small quantities of drugs were found. Who did the military want to impress? Certainly not the Brazilian masses, who had already suffered years of repression during the last dictatorship that was later replaced by a "democracy" that does not seem to be too different.

In the 1960s, the military's excuse to repress the poor was to stop Communism. Today the excuse of the "military-democracy" is to stop drugs. Always, in the capitalist system, the real purpose of repressing the poor is their very existence. In an alienated world, in a world of opposites, the very existence of the poor means struggle—struggle against the system that wants to perpetuate their existence and at the same time wants to destroy their humanity.

—Carlos Varela

Editorial

Stop the betrayal of Bosnia

(Continued from page 1)

like Bob Dole, who criticizes the actions of the Clinton administration by calling for direct U.S. military intervention against Serbia. Dole and the Republicans are motivated not by any concern for Bosnia's multiethnic heritage, but rather by the desire to "demonstrate U.S. military resolve overseas."

Precisely for that reason, Dole and the Republicans are as close to being "allies" to the Bosnians as day is to night. As soon as Bosnia is seen as not fitting into the scheme of the U.S.'s geopolitical interests or aiding the Republicans' effort to gain control over foreign policy from the White House, the "inevitability" of a Serbian victory will suddenly be discovered by these pundits too.

The Nov. 8 elections only made it all the easier to condone Serbia's "ethnic cleansing" because it projects a racist climate in which it has become "politically correct" to undermine efforts to project multiethnic cooperation in the face of racist bigotry.

WHAT TO DO?

The recent events underscore the emptiness of appealing to any state power to aid Bosnia. While we must continue to insist that the arms embargo on Bosnia be lifted, the state powers have clearly shown that they have no intention of standing in the way of Serbia's designs.

But this does not mean that Bosnia's struggle is lost. Despite the talk of an "inevitable" Serb victory, the heroic resistance of the Bosnian people—which includes not just Muslims but also Serbs and Croats who see themselves as part of a common "Bosnian" heritage—may yet forestall a Serb victory. In light of this it has never been more important to aid the struggle through non-governmental person-to-person and organization-to-organization assistance.

But most urgent of all, the idea inherent in Bosnia's struggle must not be allowed to perish. Great revolutionists from Marx to Rosa Luxemburg emphasized the importance of not allowing the principle of liberation embedded in the dialectic of events to go under, even in the face of defeat.

The idea of a multiethnic society may not represent the full articulation of a concept of new human relations opposed to capitalist alienation, but it is a crucial part of

having such an emancipatory concept emerge. What stands in the way of achieving this is not just the rulers, but the failure of their opponents to free themselves



Residents of Sarajevo denounce the U.S.-UN-NATO betrayal of Bosnia

from an array of "mind-forged manacles" about Bosnia.

It is bad enough for the mainstream media to distort Bosnia's fight by referring to the "Muslim" government, the "civil war," or "ancient tribal feuds and rivalries." But what are we to say of "leftists" who mouth such rubbish? It only shows how insensitive those who claim to be "revolutionaries" have become to the most basic aspirations for human liberation.

It is true that in face of the genocidal attacks of the Serbs (and to a lesser degree the Croats) the tendencies within the Bosnian government which would forego the vision of multiculturalism in favor of Muslim exclusivism have grown in the recent period. But that does not change the fact that the underlying drive of the Bosnian struggle remains rooted in a vision of multiculturalism, especially in Sarajevo and Tuzla—the areas that the Serbs have targeted for new attacks.

If we allow the silence and inaction on Bosnia to continue, we will not only promote complicity with ongoing genocide—we will also fail to develop a banner of liberation opposed to the attitudes of racial intolerance and "ethnic cleansing" which is growing right here in the U.S.

—Dec. 3, 1994

Voices of Bosnian women

Editor's note: Three Bosnian women spoke recently to News and Letters Committees:

Chicago—Mima: I would like a multiethnic Bosnia with all my Croat and Serbian friends as well because that's part of my culture, not a purely ethnically clean Bosnia with all Muslims around me. That's not the world that we lived in. And I think we should all fight for a multi-ethnic society because there are a lot more people over there that stayed in Bosnia that are not heard and have no chance to speak of what they want because they are in the situation where they have to fight to survive. And if they have to say that they are all for a Muslim government, they will say that in order to survive.

Ada: The first time in my life that I declared myself a Muslim was in the U.S. In Yugoslavia, when I had the choice of identifying myself as Muslim or Yugoslav, I declared myself a Yugoslav. When the war started, I was asked if I am Serb or Croat or Muslim. I would say I am Bosnian. I have so many friends who are Serb and Croat and mixed. But we would prefer to be called Bosnians.

The identification of people as Serb, Croat and Muslim was part of a purposeful government plan to split Bosnia. We didn't have this separation in Bosnia until about ten years ago. The talk of "ancient ethnic hatred" is not true. I lived in Belgrade for years, and never sensed hostility. For 39 years, I wasn't able to recognize people's culture by their name.

Selma: I started high school in 1991. At that time, Serbian students were beginning to say how proud they were of being Serbs. At first Muslim students were ashamed to say they were Muslims. But when we saw how the Serbian and some Croatian students were treating us, we started calling ourselves Muslims.

Mima: The U.S. was too indecisive. France and England were not interested in what happened to Bosnia. They wanted to help Serbia. The UN helped with ethnic cleansing, by ghettoizing Muslims in "safe havens" and transporting them from one place to another. UN soldiers have been helping Serbian troops all along.

Ada: I still think that the only way to put people together again is to put war criminals on trial. There are still Serbs who are fighting on the side of the Bosnian people. Things are working out now between Muslims and Croats. It will take time, but people can live together again. We don't have to give in to hatred. If Bosnia is divided, there is no chance for peace there. What would you say if someone tried to divide the U.S.?

Philosophic Dialogue

Hegel, Adorno, and dialectics today

Though the importance of Raya Dunayevskaya's lecture "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning" (reprinted in the October and November issues of N&L) may not have been evident when it was first delivered two decades ago, it would be hard to say this in 1994. This is especially so in light of Francis Fukuyama's argument that Hegel's Absolute expresses today's reality in that the "end of history" supposedly posed by Hegel in his chapter on "Absolute Knowledge" in the *Phenomenology of Mind* describes the way today's "post-socialist" world has "put an end" to the historic antagonisms of the past century. The need to critique this spurious notion has raised the question of how the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic poses, not the "end of history," but rather the conceptual ground for a revolutionary new beginning.

This is directly spoken to in Dunayevskaya's discussion of the final chapter of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, "The Absolute Idea." As against seeing this as an "endpoint," she argues that the Absolute Idea is so infected with negativity that it is "the driving force to ever-new beginnings." This ceaseless movement is not driven by "synthesis" but rather by "absolute negativity"—the movement through both negation of what is and "negation of the negation."

Especially striking is her view that Hegel does not limit this movement through double negation to thought alone. She quotes Hegel as saying that the dialectical

mediation needed to reach a new beginning "does not belong to a comprehension by means of thinking." It appears that for Hegel new beginnings emerge when "the negation of the negation" permeates theory and practice.

MARX AND ABSOLUTE NEGATIVITY

This may bring to mind Marx's appropriation of Hegel's concept of "absolute negativity" in his *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In its final essay, "The Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," Marx argues that the "communist" abolition of private property is only a first negation; to reach genuine liberation—which he calls "positive humanism, beginning from itself"—requires a negation of this negation. Through this concretization of second negativity, Marx shows that Hegel's dialectic does not apply to thought alone.

Yet it was precisely this movement through second negativity which post-Marx Marxists tended to ignore. Indeed, it can be argued that the tragedy of the socialist movement is that it stopped dead at first negation by focusing on the mere negation of private property without reaching Marx's vision of "positive humanism." Viewed in this light, Dunayevskaya's call for a direct return to Hegel's concept of "absolute negativity" speaks to the search for new philosophic ground to reconstitute the Marxian concept of revolution.

The difficulty of achieving this, however, is spoken to in her critique of Theodor Adorno. Adorno had a far deeper understanding of Hegel than most Marxists, who dismissed Hegel's "Absolute"—the realm in which "thought thinks itself"—on the grounds that it presumes the "annulling" of objectivity by mere subjective cognition. Though Adorno critiqued Hegel's idea of the subject absorbing objectivity into itself, he denied that this implies the annulment of objectivity.

In his 1957 "Aspects of the Hegelian Dialectic" he wrote, "It is precisely the construction of the absolute subject in Hegel that does justice to an objectivity indissoluble in subjectivity...the dialectic is not a mere method by which spirit might elude the cogency of its object—in Hegel the dialectic literally accomplishes the opposite, the permanent confrontation of the object with its concept."

A similar point is made in his *Negative Dialectics*: "Even to Hegel, after all, subjectivity is the universal and the total identity. He defies it. But he accomplishes the opposite as well, an insight into the subject as a self-manifesting objectivity" (p. 350).

Adorno thus did not dismiss Hegel's concept that true objectivity is a result of subjective mediation. "The real can be considered rational," he wrote in 1957, "only insofar as the idea of freedom, that is, human being's genuine self-determination, shines through it."

WHY ADORNO'S REDUCTIONISM?

So how could Adorno write this and still argue that

"the negation of the negation" is the "enemy" which must be removed from Marxism? Why his insistence that "absolute negativity" cannot lead to any positive result? Why did he even go so far as to introduce "some sort of kinship" between absolute negativity and the holocaust?

By doing so Adorno ends up reducing "absolute negativity" to the "pure negativity" critiqued by Hegel in the section "Absolute Freedom and Terror" in the *Phenomenology of Mind*. Hegel there shows that relying on first negation to achieve freedom without ever reaching second negation amounts to a "mere rage and fury of destruction," a "death that achieves nothing, embraces nothing within its grasp."

Why did Adorno fall for such a "vulgar" reduction of "absolute negativity"? The answer, it seems to me, lies in how he allowed the "death of the dialectic" which he had seen in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s to define the very contours of his thought in the ensuing decades.

Adorno was a serious thinker, one whose "very reason for being" (as Dunayevskaya put it) was dialectics. Yet the retrogression which he saw in the 1930s and 1940s was so severe that it subsumed the expression of any positive emerging from out of the negative. The destruction was so total, the retrogression so awesome, that Adorno could not conceive of how a new expression of "positive humanism, beginning from itself" could emerge from the dialectic of "second negativity"—even when a new stage of revolt arose in the mid-1950s with the East German revolt and Hungarian Revolution, in which the masses unfurled a banner of freedom opposed to both totalitarian Communism and Western capitalism.

If we are to work out a philosophic new beginning today, we must grapple with what prevented Adorno from seeing the need to make a new beginning from absolute negativity. After all, we have lived through a certain "death of the dialectic" ourselves over the past decade, as seen in the endless political retrogression and the profound crisis reached in the radical movements worldwide. Since the voices of revolt are hardly as "loud and clear" today as they were in the mid-1950s to 1960s, it has become even easier than in Adorno's period for theoreticians to skip over the dialectic of negativity altogether.

The question this poses, is will we allow today's retrogression to define the contours of our thought, or will we rise to the challenge of hewing out the philosophic-political concepts needed to speak to and anticipate new forms of revolutionary opposition to come?

As Dunayevskaya wrote in 1984, "The dialectics of revolution keep re-emerging in ever newer appearances, as new forces and new passions are born anew. And yet the dialectic principle of second negativity never changes." The need to work out a new beginning on the basis of this principle underlines the need for more dialogue in N&L on the todayness of Hegel's Absolutes.

—Peter Wermuth

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AFTER THE ELECTIONS—RACISM, THE ECONOMY, AND THE REAL CRIMINALS

Newt Gingrich and the Republicans are the New Malthusians. Here's what Engels wrote about the 1834 Poor Law reform in England: "all relief in money and provisions (i.e. food stamps) was abolished; the only relief allowed was admission to the workhouse...such as to frighten away everyone who has the slightest prospect of life without public charity...the workhouse has been the most repulsive residence which refined ingenuity of a Malthusian can invent."

The same logic is with us today, 160 years later. Life must be made so dire for the poor that they are frightened away from any public assistance. It is the Republican plan to get government out of American life by building orphanages and prisons, prisons, prisons.

Shelley
New York

Although Oliver North did not make the Senate this time with the open shift to the right in the mid-term elections, his chances have greatly improved for an eventual run for the White House. If this time around he already got financial support worth about \$17 million from his right-wing supporters, just imagine the unlimited funds he would have at his disposal when the time will come to run for the presidency!

I heard a telling comment about the present state of "democracy" in the U.S. In view of the fact that these days it takes at least \$15-\$20 million to run a proper election campaign, TV ads, and so on (most or all of it provided by personal interest groups), Abraham Lincoln would have absolutely no chance to be elected. So much for the present state of "American-style democracy."

Laszlo Gati
Vancouver

A lot of workers hate Clinton because he promised change and has produced none. But white workers' rage can too often turn against immigrants, Blacks, women, gays—and even to fascism. White and Black workers face the same boss, pay the same taxes, get screwed by the same union. Why does the anger turn in such different directions? Racism is the key.

J.M.
New York

Ever since Proposition 187 came up there has been a great divide between Chicanos who have been here a year or two and those who have just arrived. Those here for a while think 187 is bad only because they might be reported as "suspected illegals," not because it would hurt us who are illegal. They blame us for their troubles. Can't they see the law may start with us but will extend to them? In saying we can't work and our children can't see doctors they are trying to kill us off, one by one.

26-year-old mother
Los Angeles

The problem is not that immigrants (documented or undocumented) use social services, which are necessary in developing the future work force and the base of this country. The problem is that we are represented by inept and socially irresponsible politicians, like Gov. Pete Wilson, who are incapable of resolving the economic problems today. Those problems are deep, structural and rooted in the economic system itself.

Comite Latino
California

On many occasions, workers from Latin America have told me that they work in NYC from 12 to 14 hours a day, six to seven days a week, and they are exploited by their bosses. They are well aware of this as well as the increasing persecution they suffer as "illegal" immigrants. Nevertheless, many have told me that they feel more "freedom" in the U.S.

The racism that Latin American workers all over this country face makes it difficult to understand how they can feel more freedom. But as a Mexican immigrant working 13 hours a day, 6 days a week, in a fish market in Washington Heights, Manhattan, told me: "In Mexico, working the same number of hours, I couldn't sustain my family. I couldn't even hang out with my friends at the corner without being constantly harassed and beaten by the police." On the

other hand, many Latin American students in the U.S., soaked with a nationalist ideology, think the opposite of the workers. They tend to idealize their countries as paradises. They also experience racism, in different forms, but nobody wants to talk about it. Silence=Death.

Carlos Varela
New York City

With the horrendous prospect of the electric chair facing New Yorkers again, Lou Turner's column (November N&L) "Race—the final frontier" compels us "to face with sober senses" what is happening around us in these United States. The only humanity brought into American life has been through people's struggles against this wretched capitalism. That history is being obliterated and fear is being allowed to fill the void. In its drive to rid itself of those it no longer needs for its future, U.S. capitalism shows what is in store for all workers. Black workers, the unemployed, the homeless, already are a part of that future. It bears repeating that Chiapas, the L.A. rebellion and the struggles of workers North and South send a different message and a desire for a different future.

Too old to be hired
New York

Now that the elections are over and the Republicans have moved in, they are saying the Crime Bill is too soft and we need more prisons and police to take care of the soaring crime rate. I'd suggest that the Republicans and Democrats alike (is there a difference?) who are so anxious to pass a tougher Crime Bill could solve the crime problem by locking themselves up. They are the real criminals and should be charged with crimes against humanity.

Martin Almora
Illinois



Tomiyama Taeko

50 YEARS AFTER HIROSHIMA

This year—when not only has the Smithsonian Institute capitulated to the reactionary pressures not to depict the truth in its exhibit about the bombs the U.S. dropped on Japan 50 years ago, but the government is actually planning to issue a new stamp to celebrate that murderous, inexcusable act—the 1955 Peace Calendar issued by the War Resisters League has become an important act of protest. It is a 5½ by 8½-inch desk calendar with 128 pages and includes messages from the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, anti-nuclear and peace resources, and international contacts. It is called this year: "With Peace on Our Wings: 50 Years of Resistance to the Bomb." It can be ordered from the WRL (339 Lafayette St., NYC 10012) for only \$12.

Anti-war activist
Chicago

In the late 1970s I was active here in the campaign to stop the neutron bomb. That bomb exemplified to me the essence of capitalism's inhumanity: it would kill people, but leave the buildings standing. I've worn a button from that campaign every day since then to remind me of what I'm against.

New subscriber
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

SOLIDARITY WITH BOSNIA

As a voluntary teacher in Tuzla and Zenica, I can tell you that people in Bosnia who cling to the Bosnian idea have a hope, like a candle light in a blizzard that needs shelter until the end of this long dark winter. We (outsiders like me) should not let it be extinguished. The preservation of morality and civility must come both from outside and inside, even though those inside Bosnia are the ones who will determine which course

Readers' Views

HAITI'S STRUGGLE

More than 60 demonstrators converged at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., with banners and signs on Oct. 31 to protest the covert work of the CIA, particularly in Haiti where it has been verified that CIA personnel were present when the coup to overthrow President Aristide was being planned. We didn't get to talk to the Director, but did talk to a public relations representative who made it clear the CIA receives its directives from the State Department. I am filled with rage thinking of those all over the world who have died through those directives. The CIA is an arm of a corrupt state out to destroy countries that do not fit their mold, countries struggling for economic justice and freedom. Haiti is the most recent target.

Outraged
New Haven, Conn.

The editorial on Haiti in November N&L exposes the interests of U.S. industry and the IMF in Haiti and raises a number of questions.

Some who were not "pro-intervention" and did not think U.S. troops would bring democracy saw an opening being created by the Haitian masses when they "seized the moment" and conducted themselves in a way contrary to what the U.S. military intended. I do not know if the Haitian masses agreed with the Haitian Left and were against intervention, but when it happened they attempted to turn it into something different and in that lies the opening some were interested in. Whether the "moment" has passed is another story.

Angela Terrano
New York

At the Marxist-Humanist Forum on Haiti here, a Black graduate student said he knew it sounded reformist, but what could Aristide do except accept aid and the limitations from the U.S. and World Bank, because otherwise didn't it mean that Haitians would literally starve to death? Of course, there could be no "prescriptive" answer. Instead, we spoke of the fact that a significant part of the grassroots movement within Haiti had called for the restoration of Aristide without U.S. intervention. The movement was seeking an alternative pathway forward. It is the lack of posing any liberatory alternative to capitalism that is the most crucial factor facing freedom struggles today.

E. Walker
Oregon

ARTISTS FOR SURVIVAL



Original children's artwork from around the world will be shown by Artists for Survival at the Great Hall of the Boston Public Library at Copley Square during the month of December. Featured will be poignant and tender work on war and peace, the preservation/destruction of nature, urban violence, and a variety of other social issues. The young artists hail from the USA, Bangladesh, Armenia, Russia, India, Tibet, Australia and Ethiopia.

A special attraction will be artwork on our "shalom/sala'am" by boys and girls from Palestine, Israel, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and the USA, done at the "Seeds of Peace" camp in Maine last summer. Any reader who wants to participate in this project through their schools or international contacts should write AFS, Worldwide Building, 144 Moody St., Waltham, MA 02154, USA, or call (617) 891-4235.

Mitch Kamen
Boston

they are going to take.

A phrase like "peaceful co-existence of different nationalities" has been used to explain the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Why does one have to use words like "co-existence" and "different nationalities"? They do not apply to the real Bosnians, whose status is "normal existence of one people." They are Bosnians before being Muslims, Croats, Serbs or others. They are people before being religiously distinguished.

Teacher
Bosnia-Herzegovina

I have become accustomed to hearing some very odd things said about Bosnia by leftists over the last few years, but I was quite stunned by the comments of Noam Chomsky at a lecture last month at Loyola University. Chomsky dismissed the idea that the Left has not responded to the crisis in Bosnia, arguing that there has been plenty of discussion and action on the issue—as if unaware of the minimal amount of support work on this issue in the U.S. Moreover, Chomsky said the one power which is in the position to aid Bosnia is Iran! He said that Iran has a "vested interest" in the future of Bosnia.

I could hardly believe my ears. To the extent that Iran has a "vested interest" in Bosnia, it is to assist the force of Muslim exclusivism at the expense of the idea the Bosnians have been fighting for from the start—the maintenance of a multiethnic society. Asking Iran to intervene in Bosnia is equivalent to asking Stalinist Russia to intervene in the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s!

Peter Hudis
Chicago

THE 'BELL CURVE'

A lot of things heat me up. The Bell Curve spilled the mercury out of my thermometer. Lou Turner (in November N&L) talks about the "racism of middle-class social anxiety rooted in the structural dynamics of current economic reality" as "retrogressively new." The idea that Black brains are genetically inferior to white ones never was discarded but covered by guilt so that the "moral" consciousness and consensus in the post-civil rights period wasn't genuine. Retrogression returns in a historical time of ascendant state-capitalism and intensified class structure.

The New York Review of Books points to the book's "tainted sources." Seventeen of the researchers have contributed to *Mankind Quarterly*, founded by a champion of South African apartheid and bankrolled by the "Pioneer Fund" established by Wickliffe Draper, who was sympathetic to Nazi Germany. Herrnstein and Murray might or might not be answerable for the beliefs of their crowd, but they, more than suspiciously, overlap with *Mankind Quarterly* in re-introducing eugenic thinking into the public policy debate.

Sheila Garden
New York

The Bell Curve by Murray and Herrnstein is racist tripe. From 1954 to 1974 I was school psychologist at Roeper School for gifted children in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., and gave over 3,000 Stanford-Binet tests for entrance, to white and Black children, all of whom were considered gifted by somebody. Of all the white children I tested, 99% scored in the gifted category; of all the Black children 98% scored in that category. Admittedly it was a select group but both groups were select and 1% difference cannot be counted as of any significance.

At Roeper we expected children to succeed and they did. When I was doing my practicum prior to being certified, I was sent to a school with all Black children, staff and administration. Every adult expected those children to fail and they did. Everyone has read of dedicated teachers who took groups of dropouts and turned them into successful college students. It is not Blacks who are dumb. It is our system of education that is dumb.

Margaret
Hawaii

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'HEGEL'S ABSOLUTE AS NEW BEGINNING'

Raya Dunayevskaya's "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning" (Oct. and Nov. N&L) contained the following (Hegel's words in italics): "In a word, this new beginning is both in thought and actuality, in theory and practice, that is to say, in dialectical mediation, which is more than a mere beginning, and is a mediation of a kind that does not belong to a comprehension by means of thinking."

Comprehension by means of what, then?

What constitutes dialectical mediation? For Hegel, it was not "thinking." For Lenin, when he read Hegel's Science of Logic, it was not "party." Dunayevskaya, in many of her last writings, identified it as "dialectics of philosophy and organization," an "untrodden path." Her category, "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning," was at once a new moment in Marxism and a kind of summation. It presented the dialectic as the preeminently contemporary problem.

Victor Hart
New York

The movement from practice and today's reality brings Hegel's Absolutes alive in a way that the reality of the 19th century didn't do for Marx. It doesn't just show that theory or philosophy comes from the masses, but it shows the historic role that philosophy has to play in our reality today.

Graduate student
Chicago

Raya Dunayevskaya's "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning" reminded me that categories of thought are not separated from the day-to-day realities of unfolding history. Someone at work was saying after the elections that there's no alternative. But if you think dialectically you don't get locked into something like the two-party system—you see alternatives. When we become locked into artificial categories of thought, ideas divorced from historical reality—for example, "Free enterprise benefits all"—it is difficult to break out, to see beyond our computer terminals, State of the Union speeches and the national media. A dialectical understanding of history frees

the mind and uncovers alternatives.

The political Left is perhaps even more vulnerable to becoming locked into old categories long since changed into something else by history. I got a real sense of why the vanguard party is unworkable for Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism: In dialectics you've got to think for yourself. There are dogmas in the Left, but not in Dunayevskaya's writings. Marxist-Humanism sees that everyone has the capacity for thought.

George K.
Illinois

When a human being envisions freedom, there is no stop to their efforts to obtain just that. I truly believe that the role of philosophy is to find the way to help people envision freedom. The question on my mind is how these questions can be raised to people who are stuck in a mind-set because of culture, nationalism or religion? How can these questions be raised in today's society?

Latino
Los Angeles

CHALLENGING THE LEFT

Carlos Varela's letter (November N&L) on the International Socialist Organization's (ISO) "critical support" to the woman-hating terrorists of Hamas raised a good question. The ISO also offered "critical support" to the Iraqi regime during the Gulf War. Shortly after, Tony Cliff, the founder of their tendency, offered his views on Israelis and the war:

"The truth is, to get Israel involved directly would have been extremely important...But you can't get it through Scuds..At first, the impression given by the Scuds is that [the Arabs] are strong. So from the start I'm sure the Palestinians applauded. But after 37 Scuds, with only four dead, I'm sure the Palestinians are terribly disheartened. [The Scuds] didn't do anything at all." (Socialist Worker, March 1991)

This sick ventriloquism is what you're left with when you substitute intuition

for Marxist methodology, as Cliff does. Not only is it insulting to Palestinians, but it implies that Tel Aviv should have suffered the fate of Halabja. So the ISO should have no problem with Hamas' bombing of innocent people, except maybe one of scale.

Gerard Emmett
Chicago

RAYA AND ROSA



The question of how the male chauvinists in the German Social Democracy continually undermined Rosa Luxemburg was very solidly argued in Raya Dunayevskaya's Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. But her argument about Marx's Ethnological Notebooks seemed to make a lot out of what were only notebooks rather than a well-worked out argument by Marx. Nevertheless, it is intriguing that Marx was turning more, in his old age, to the study of the "Third World" societies. Dunayevskaya certainly belongs in the "women freethinkers" book on which I'm now working.

As for News & Letters, I like the way you have workers' correspondence and on the spot reports and that you do not "condescend" to your worker/readers, but have challenging theoretical material right along with those reports.

Fred Whitehead
Kansas

I'm sorry but I don't always read Raya's column. She was a brilliant theorist but the writing is very dry. Having said that, I always read her column when it deals with the truly great Rosa Luxemburg. It's a shame that more modern feminists aren't hailing her as the voice for 20th-century women in the industrialized world.

Reader
East Coast

WHAT IS FOUND THERE

I hope you will let Gerard Emmett know how much his review of What Is Found There affirmed for its author that her work is useful. Very few reviews hitherto have let me know that. (In its page of paperback reprint reviews last month the NY Times Book Review made the book sound like a self-help manual!) I felt understood in my deep intentions by Mr. Emmett, and it means a great deal to me that readers of News & Letters might be drawn to my book by his commentary.

The November issue is overall fascinating. You have a coverage of labor news unlike that of any paper I've seen, but this is nothing new...I was very much struck by Franklin Dmitryev's short piece on plague and the idea of white middle-class illusions of "spatial apartheid." It made me think of a recent short story by Nadine Gordimer, in which the small child of a wealthy white South African family, who have erected rolls of razor-wire on the walls of their garden against presumed Black invaders, climbs the wall and is impaled by the razor-wire.

Adrienne Rich
Santa Cruz

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

We are developing a new kind of international solidarity based on a joint organizing strategy through the "Strategic Organizing Alliance" initiated by the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers (UE), and the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT), the only independent labor federation in Mexico. Although our work has been difficult we were able to obtain the first secret ballot election in Mexican labor history. We also exposed the empty promises to protect workers' rights in NAFTA. We need further support. Please pass the word and ask your readers to let us know if they can help sponsor an organizer in Mexico.

Robin Alexander, UE
2400 Oliver Bldg.
535 Smithfield St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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Contains "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," and 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes."
\$3 paperback, \$10 hardcover

BY CHARLES DENBY

- Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal
1989 edition includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya \$14.95

PAMPHLETS

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Black/Red View

by John Alan

Because the cardinal rule of American electoral politics is that the winner takes all the spoils of victory, the Congressional Black Caucus members will certainly be stripped of their chairmanships of the powerful committees they hold by the incoming right-wing Republican Speaker, Newt Gingrich. There is also the possibility, if the reactionaries have their way, that the Black Caucus will be abolished.

This political situation has brought African-American politics to another crossroad in its history. While this crossroad is not as great a counter-revolutionary event as the post-Reconstruction period was, when a "New South" was politically strong enough to banish African Americans from politics for many generations, it appears to be similar to those inside and outside of Congress.

For instance, Elaine R. Jones, the director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Educational Fund, in a New York Times article, revealed that Federal courts have redrawn voting districts in Texas and in Louisiana to abolish former Black-majority districts. She points out that if this trend continues and is finally upheld by the Supreme Court, it "would purge Blacks from Southern Congressional delegations as effectively as the Plessy v. Ferguson decision of the Supreme Court's 1896 'separate but equal' ruling excluding Blacks from southern railroad cars."

However, there is a great subjective/objective difference between today and 1896. Subjectively, the maturity of the African-American masses, with their collective memory of the Civil Rights Movement, the Black mass urban revolts of the 1960s and the African Revolutions, has reached a point of comprehension which knows that freedom is a necessity of life and they have the possibility of achieving it by their own action. The Los Angeles revolt proved that this is a developing concept in the memory of African-American masses, mediated by new experiences of racial and economic alienation.

Thus objectively African-American masses know that the racist reality of this country is not merely an epithet, but is an objective force within American society which determines all African-American social, economic and political relationships within the American society.

This comprehension is inherently a negation of those relationships, including the role played by most Black leaders and intellectuals who believe that the political forms of U.S. capitalism can resolve the catastrophic problem of racism and the permanent economic crisis raging in the African-American community.

The solution is not to become apolitical, but to expose through political activity the nature of bourgeois politics as the organizer and protector of capitalism. Marx thought that this "is a political act" because it organized activity aimed at the overthrow and the dissolution of the "political hull."

These Black political and intellectual leaders have shut out of their thinking the fact that the African-American mass movement, in the words of Frantz Fanon, was an "untidy affirmation of an original idea

Iran's urban rebellions

Once again there are reports from Iran of street protests, this time in Tabriz in the province of Azerbaijan and in Ghaem-Shahr in Mazandaran. Both began as confrontations with the Islamic police forces and rapidly escalated into widespread urban rebellions. Kurdistan, a newspaper of the Kurdish movement, has called these harbingers of future rebellions. Tabriz is the largest Turkish city in Iranian Azerbaijan. It has been central to the struggle for freedom throughout the 20th century.

The Kurds, too, are still engaged in battle with the Iranian military. Iran recently bombed the headquarters of a Kurdish opposition group located 100 miles into the northern Iraqi "no fly" zone.

Meanwhile, in the working-class area of south Tehran, a bomb exploded at a busy intersection last month in the third bombing this year. With unemployment near 40% and high inflation, many are blaming the government's "free market" economic policies for their conditions. Students from University of Tehran staged a protest against "profit-mongers" last month. The students were denounced by President Rafsanjani as anti-Islamic.

These protests might explode at any moment into a popular uprising against the Islamic Republic. The Baseej, the Islamic Republic's 300,000-man anti-riot force, and the army have been combined in surrounding and quelling these protests. Recently a high ranking army brigadier wrote an open letter calling for the clerics to step aside. He has openly called for a military coup d'etat. The regime's response has been surprisingly mild. He has been put under limited house arrest, able to talk freely on the phone with reporters.

While the army's dissenters are treated with kid gloves, Iran's writers are not. An open letter by 150 writers protesting censorship and calling for freedom of the press has been denounced. Islamic police forces were assigned to all copying machines in government offices to prevent the letter from being duplicated. One writer, Saidi-Sirjani, died in late November while in custody. Saidi-Sirjani, who wrote satirical books attacking the clerics' hypocrisy, was jailed for seven months. Before his death the regime published his "confessions," mainly aimed at Iranian scholars and academics in exile.

This kind of "confession" only proves how fearful they are of the million Iranians who live abroad. Although many of those abroad limit themselves to the standpoint of a "civil society," many see the actual conditions calling for a truly new human society. —Cyrus Noveen

Election ends Black leaders' illusions

propounded as an absolute"—an idea to create a new human society by directly challenging American civilization and its ideal political forms.

This uncritical embrace of politics by movement leaders has resulted in a discontinuity in the Black movement, that is, the vast separation between the Black masses and their erstwhile leadership who opted to play a liberal role in U.S. politics, when they realized that



Kentucky racism and unrest

Louisville, Ky.—The recent incident in Lexington, Ky., where an 18-year-old African-American male was shot by a white officer, touching off a demonstration by Blacks, is added to the long list of antagonisms and brushes with white law enforcement officers in Lexington and other cities such as Frankfort and Louisville.

Just a few days after the shooting incident in Lexington, Blacks in Louisville threatened to hold protests during the Breeder's Cup horse race at Churchill Downs in response to police harassment of young Blacks in West Louisville, a predominantly Black section.

The incident in Lexington should not surprise those of us who know the legacy of the South, and particularly of Kentucky. Kentucky was supposedly neutral in the Civil War despite a large Confederate statue standing next to the University of Louisville. But any slave caught within its borders was sent back South rather than forwarded to the North. It was also the last state to outlaw and end weekly public hangings. Noted Kentucky author Jesse Stuart has written many times of how white families would go to church on Sundays and then make their way to the center of town to witness Sunday hangings. All this occurred as a normal event, with a circus-like atmosphere and children in attendance to see the "strange fruit." Most, if not all, of these victims were Black. These actions did not end till the early 20th Century.

But this year Lexington seems to carry the banner of racism by officials and law enforcement pretty high. This past June a police vehicle was accused of hitting a 15-year-old Black male near a housing project. Two officers were slightly injured when angry residents threw various objects at the officers in retaliation. In July, the Lexington police accused over 80 blacks of assaulting a Hispanic woman. Two people were eventually charged with the crime, but only after 78 others were "cleared."

—Patrick Hunt

Gambian appeal

Banjul, The Gambia—As developments in our dear country unfold since Gambian military forces on July 22 overthrew the P.P.P. regime, military rulers are wasting no time in exposing their dictatorial tendencies. The introduction of Decree No. 4 banning all political parties and assembly came as no surprise. This is a weapon of all dictatorial regimes. It was followed by the arrest, detention and trial of some of the regime's political opponents.

The moral crusade they took upon themselves, molesting innocent Gambians by cutting their Rasta-style hair, is a clear indication that they are totally unaware of the fact that the so-called "moral degeneration" is a result of the socio-economic decadence in the country.

They promised to wipe out corruption but insist that their salaries should be kept secret. They promised to wipe out nepotism but still did not deny the claim that Susan Wafa-Ogoo, Memba Tamedu, and others have close relationships to President Jammeh—thus their appointment as ministers.

The unlawful arrest and detention of political opponents have been going on since the day of the coup. Bubacarr Senghore of Moja-G has since been released, after weeks of unlawful detention. The ongoing trial of Sedia Jatta and Halifa Sallah, charged for publishing FOROYAA newspaper, the official organ of PDOIS, is an indication that this military regime is prepared to cross any political opposition to their regime. No matter what the outcome of the trial, the military rulers should know that no dictatorship has survived the will of the people.

We call on all those in support of freedom in The Gambia to demand the immediate and unconditional release of political detainees, and the immediate repeal of Decree No. 4 and all undemocratic decrees.

Send protest letters to: The President of the Republic of The Gambia, Lt. Yaya J.J. Jammeh, President's Office, Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa.

—Committee for the Defence of Democracy in the Gambia

there wasn't going to be an automatic collapse of America's racism, and Black poverty wasn't going to disappear. Since they never understood the subjective quest of the masses for a new society, they never developed the philosophical dimension of the movement. Thus the endless activity of protest became meaningless to leaders while politics opened a door for negotiation and compromise.

The path to a new society begins with an idea. That idea in embryo is already present in the thinking of the African-American masses. The articulation and the development of that idea would be a great historical leap in African-American thought.

Boycott McClintock label

San Francisco—Hundreds rallied and marched on Nov. 19 in support of 12 immigrant women. The women were bilked out of months of pay by a contractor for Jessica McClintock two years ago and hold McClintock accountable. The "Boycott McClintock" rally, held near a McClintock boutique, was called by the Asian Immigrant Women Advocates who organized a mime for the whole crowd to perform. When they held up a sign that appears in one sweatshop—"You cannot go to the bathroom"—we all did the "pee-pee dance." Also a number of young Latinas donned anti-Proposition 187 T-shirts.

One of the immigrant women spoke in Chinese as another young woman translated: "I am one of the 12 who started the Garment Workers Justice Campaign. Who would have thought immigrant women like myself could have sparked such a nationwide movement? Two years ago we lost our jobs when Jessica McClintock ended her contract with Lucky Sewing Co. We didn't even get our \$5 out of the \$175 the dresses sell for. Last December they tried to contribute something to the workers in the form of a charitable donation. They wanted us to sign over our rights. Seven of us refused and our names were published in the Chinese language newspaper.

"Recently Jessica McClintock hired expensive lawyers to sue our campaign. They got an injunction against loud talking on the picket line. But we must tell about the conditions of women in the sweatshops. We will continue until we win our demands. It is for all immigrant women. We want McClintock to sit down and speak with the women who made her rich. We want an agreement that is fair and just. We thank all of you...and know we can count on you in this third year of the campaign."

Boycott women's apparel bearing the labels of Jessica McClintock, Scott McClintock and Gunne Sax!

—Supporter

Black World

(Continued from page 1)

pears to have turned a deaf ear to its deepening crises. Along with having not invited the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front), the new ruling party in Kigali, Mitterrand sought to keep the corrupt Mobutu at arm's length from his African showcase. Mobutu's response was to go out of his way to make a display of his presence at the summit, and his embarrassing of Mitterrand's African policy has continued with his crackdown on France's Hutu clientele inside Zaire's borders.

More outrageous though is France's policy of steering badly needed Western aid away from the RPF while bolstering the genocidal remnants of the Habyarimana regime with humanitarian aid. France's ideological offensive to undermine the RPF demand for a war crimes tribunal (which would expose France's complicity in the Rwandan genocide and explain its tolerance for genocide closer to home, in Bosnia) has sought the reprehensible avenue of claiming a moral equivalence between "genocides," that of the Hutu regime that it continues to support and the supposed "genocide" of the RPF.

"Was there a genocide which stopped with the victory of the Tutsi?", Mitterrand had the unconscionable gall to ask at the Franco-African summit. What he meant, and what he is leading the West and the UN towards making the criterion for aid to the RPF and convening a war crimes tribunal, is that there was not only genocide on the part of the Habyarimana regime but allegedly by the RPF, thus justifying the fears of Hutu refugees in the Zaire camps about returning to their homes.

In the meantime, a well-fed Hutu army, trained by Zairean and French military advisors is amassing on the Rwanda-Zaire border for a resumption of the war. In Rwanda, as things return to normal, the cash-strapped government has received little or nothing from the UN and the West to aid its efforts to repatriate refugees, pay \$6 million in World Bank arrears, or to bring those responsible for the genocide to justice. And in the face of all this, the inept UN Security Council can only wring its hands and announce its alarm "at the indications that (the remnants of Hutu government and military) may be preparing for an armed invasion."

The Somalian human rights activist and writer Rakiya Omaar, whose 900-page study entitled Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance has just been published by her human rights group African Rights, expresses the outrage of Africa at this Western debacle when she declares: "It's so unfair. It's so perverted. It's so disgusting. You keep searching for an explanation." While explanations are surely perverse in an age where genocide has become commonplace, it's high time that we not only explain but change this disgusting, perverted world we live in.

Cross-border solidarity builds maquiladora union

Editor's note: Aurora Pelayo is leader of the Comite Urban Popular and organizer of colonias (neighborhood associations) in Tijuana. Mary Tong is director of the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers based in San Diego. They spoke Nov. 13 at a Los Angeles News and Letters Committee local meeting:

Aurora Pelayo: For the past 14 years I have been involved in many struggles. We have organized 12 neighborhood associations to take care of our basic needs like electricity and plumbing. Even though we do not have academic training, we are helping the workers learn how they can organize themselves.

Between 1980 and 1994 we have noticed over 500 maquiladoras (border plants) in Tijuana looking for cheap labor—in Mexico the average wage is \$5 a day. We are going through a trauma because of toxic contamination in our environment. Women, who are mothers and workers and wives, commonly experience miscarriages at three months of pregnancy. Fetuses are born deformed. We blame our government because we do have rights that are supposed to be guaranteed by the law. The worker does not count on any support from the union because it is just another structure of the government in the factory.

This year over 20 maquiladora factories have closed down. We call them "swallows" because they fly and disappear, and they take the last week's wages of workers. The worker never gets to see any kind of justice.

We have had five workshops to help workers defend their rights, and up to 19 factories involved in our workshops. In one individual factory we may have five or six workers join us.

In 1990, 5,000 families took over land that was not being used. This is an act defended in the Mexican constitution. The struggle was not so much a question of money but the strife that it took and the many *companeros* who were killed taking over the land. We had long marches between Tijuana and Mexicali. It lasted eight days and we did it three times. The last time they would not let us pass. We confronted the governor on the free-

way. We took over the state's capitol. Now we have title to the land and we have water and electricity. But our struggle is far from over.

Sometimes my children tell me they do not want me to be involved because I can get hurt. In fact I was beaten in the face. To get a hundred of us out of the way at one point they needed 300 police. So since most of us were women they did not fight a clean fight.

The government's own data says that we have over 42 million Mexicans living in misery, such as *campesinos* in the San Quentin Valley in Baja California, as well as in Chiapas and the border of Chihuahua. Our "great" president is trying to tell the world that Mexico is wonderful. So we have a rich Mexico, rich for a few millionaires! We have asked the governor and the president to come and have dinner with us and eat the dust that we eat, so they know that there is poverty in Mexico.



Mary Tong: There are about 450 plants employing tens of thousands of women workers in and around Tijuana. In January 1993 there was flooding in Tijuana. Many workers drowned trying to get to work. At Plásticos, a U.S.-based company, workers were not allowed to work for two days for not showing up during the floods.

One of the workers, Jorge Baron, had a drill bit go into his eye. The company took nine days to give him papers to go in for treatment, so he lost his eye. Another worker, Luz Elena Corona, was pregnant and she was put on lifting boxes and was not allowed to take breaks. She be-

gan to bleed and the supervisor would not let her get off the line. So she ended up having a miscarriage right there on the assembly line.

The workers got upset and put together flyers talking about the need to organize around health and safety conditions at the plant. Twelve workers were fired for this.

The workers at Plásticos were seeking to form an independent union and we supported them. Our efforts finally ended with what was the first union election in a maquiladora in Mexico in 15 years. However, workers were not allowed to have secret ballots. They had to vote out loud with a manager standing behind a table with a pad writing down who was voting. Every time someone would vote for the independent union, a photographer would take their picture. It was a tremendously intimidating experience. Halfway through the elections the workers decided to call them off. Not only was it a farce but the only purpose it was serving was to expose everybody who was with the independent union effort.

An agreement was signed with the company that they would not retaliate against workers who had voted for the independent union and those fired would get compensation. However, each of the workers who voted for the union was forced out. They were put on jobs without breaks. Most were put into a room where you do soldering and the doors were closed so you were breathing noxious fumes with no breaks and no ventilation. Additionally, two weeks after the elections everyone who voted for the union had their pay cut by \$7 a week. That is over 10% of what they were making. All who voted for the company union had their pay increased by \$7 a week.

We are concentrating our energies in assisting the building of a maquiladora-wide worker association so that there cannot be the kind of immediate retaliation against the workers as in the case of Plásticos.

"Cross Border Organizing: A Response to NAFTA" is a video that depicts the union campaign at the Plásticos Bajacal maquiladora. It is available, for a \$15 donation, from Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, 3909 Center St., #210, San Diego, CA 92103.

Can we stop Republican 100-day plan to roll U.S. back 50 years?

(Continued from page 1)

forth with Republican control for the first time in 40 years, of both the U.S. Senate and House.

Crowing over the victory of a slew of anti-immigrant, anti-welfare, tough-on-crime, "traditional values" candidates across the land, Republican Party ideologues lost no time in promoting their campaign for a constitutional amendment to "permit" prayer in public schools, and in floating, for serious consideration, proposals as flagrant as confiscating poor people's children and putting them in orphanages. Gingrich contrasted President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton to "normal Americans" (like himself and his constituency), and Senator Jesse Helms warned that if Clinton visited any North Carolina military base "he'd better have a bodyguard."

CONTRACT 'ON' AMERICA

The agenda of the new Republican-controlled Congress centers around the so-called "Contract with America," a policy proposal drafted by Gingrich and signed by more than 300 Republican Congressional candidates before the elections. The contract lists ten major pieces of legislation that the Republicans pledge to introduce within the first 100 days of the new Congressional session: The Fiscal Responsibility Act; The Personal Responsibility Act; The Taking Back Our Streets Act; The Common Sense Legal Reform Act; The American Dream Restoration Act; and more.

Behind these catchy titles lurks a human disaster of chilling proportions. The basic program of the new Republican leadership is to drastically lower taxes for big business, toss a few crumbs of tax relief to the middle class, greatly increase military spending, shred the heart of social programs, and build, prisons, prisons, prisons.

President Clinton's response was to virtually prostrate himself before the incoming Republicans on everything from welfare reform to immigration to school prayer. By December, the Clinton administration had announced policy initiatives that ranged from an end to the protected immigration status of Salvadoran refugees to a proposal to increase military spending by \$25 billion over the next six years.

Meanwhile, key Republican leaders, pushing their advantage, discussed the following elements as part of a "welfare reform" package:

- Reducing the federal budget allotment for assistance to the poor by some \$57 billion over four years.
- Denying any public assistance to unmarried teen mothers and their babies.
- Cutting off AFDC recipients after two years with no job guarantee or safety net other than those orphanages for the children.
- Compelling welfare recipients to work for less than minimum wage.
- Denying government aid to "legal" as well as "illegal" immigrants.
- Repealing the Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983, the Food Stamp Act of 1977, the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, and the National School Lunch Act of 1946.

"It's like they want us to dry up and die," one welfare mother told News & Letters. "If you're a poor, unmarried woman with children—everything is your fault. And it felt this way even before the elections. Now how much

clearer can they make their agenda? They have criminalized being poor."

The mainstream media trumpeted the electoral results as a clear popular mandate for just such a right-wing program, but the facts are considerably murkier. Less than 39% of eligible voters cast their ballots, and of these, just over 50% voted Republican. The Republican "mandate" was the voice of no more than one in five adult citizens.

ELECTIONS, VOTERS, AND THE MOVEMENT

Some 100 million Americans abstained from voting altogether, finding no voice in either Republican candidates or Democrats who tried to portray themselves as tougher—on crime, immigration, the "undeserving poor"—than their opponents. As one struggling African-American mother said, "Which snake in the grass are you supposed to choose?"

In response, Los Angeles saw its largest political demonstration in several decades, Oct. 16, when 100,000 immigrants and their supporters demanded: "No on 187!" "Illegal" workers asserted their humanity and proclaimed the truth of their existence and labor, carrying placards that read: "These hands grow your food"; "These hands sew your clothes"; "These hands care for your children."

Tens of thousands of Latino high school and middle school students throughout California mounted walkouts, rallies, sit-ins, decrying the fact that their lives and futures were in jeopardy: "Our dream is to go to school and be somebody in life, and if this law passes we won't be able to fulfill our dreams"; "We didn't realize that society would turn on us!"

In the Los Angeles area, hundreds of students organized walkouts on Oct. 20; thousands quit classes to march in protest on Oct. 28; and more than 10,000 left school to convene on government offices on Nov. 3. (For more student protests, see page 11.)

On election night, as polling results came in and Prop. 187's passage became certain, a Los Angeles television journalist reporting live from the local headquarters of the "No on 187" campaign noted in astonishment that the mood there was energetic and upbeat. Turning to an organizer for explanation, he was told: "We have only just begun. A whole new movement has been born."

ONCE AGAIN: IT'S THE ECONOMY

And yet that spirit of a new upsurge faltered over the next few days as the harsh reality of retrogression nationally seeped into the stunned consciousness of millions. The white/Anglo electorate in California voted for Prop. 187 by a 63% to 37% margin. The African-American vote was against, but narrowly, 53% to 47%; and in the Latino community a not-unsubstantial 23% voted for the measure. Amongst Blacks and Latinos who voted for the proposition, the reasoning they gave was largely straightforward: concern that undocumented workers are monopolizing unskilled jobs and depressing wages in a period of economic recession.

This was precisely the argument pushed in these communities by the organizers for the proposition in a historic replay of an ideological strategy birthed and rebirthed in periods of economic crisis: Take the focus off the larger, structural causes of the crisis by placing the blame on a vulnerable "Other."

In the U.S. racism has ever been the added, potent poison in that scapegoating, "divide-and-rule" brew. And so it is today, with anti-Latino racism played strong in Anglo—and also Black—communities as the reason to pass Prop. 187, and with anti-Black racism lurking as the "code" within the punitive hysteria laying out simplistic "solutions" to the dilemmas of welfare and crime.

THE BIG PICTURE

By a twist of historic fate, Nov. 9, the day after the elections, also marked the anniversary of "Kristallnacht," "the night of the shattered glass" when, in 1938, Nazi thugs burned and trashed Jewish homes and businesses throughout Germany and Austria, scapegoating the Jewish "race" for the drastic decline in the German economy and national prestige.

That evening, at twilight, some 200 activists gathered in downtown Los Angeles for a vigil, holding candles and piercing the air with their call: "No human being is illegal!" A rabbi explicitly drew the parallel between Kristallnacht and Prop. 187, denouncing the latter both for its attempt to blame undocumented immigrants for California's deep-rooted economic problems, and for its ominous creation of a class of "Other," "alien" beings stigmatized as less than fully human.

The danger of the current historic moment is that it is the right-wing ideologues who have seized the initiative in articulating a comprehensive perspective in response to the prevailing economic and human crises.

The one element of truth within the Republican challenge is that "big government" is not the "answer" to today's economic and human crises. In 1992, the negative impact of Reaganism had become so obvious that even a significant section of the white middle class was willing to go for Clinton and the Democratic Party for a "breathing space." But Clinton could offer nothing but a strengthened version of state-capitalism, at the very moment when the crisis of state-capitalism had become so deep that the system was left without any means to provide the promised reforms as with health care.

The fact that there is no forceful presence of a social perspective articulating a terrain beyond free-market and statist capitalism gives ground to the right-wing to present itself as the "alternative" and savior. To achieve that end Gingrich is compelled to attempt to bury the remains of what he labels the "Great Society, counterculture, McGovern" legacy and return U.S. to the "honesty and work ethic" of the pre-1960s.

In 1992 the rulers had a reminder of how profound social discontent could arise once again when Los Angeles exploded in rebellion and sparked eruptions all across the country. Most frightening to those in power were the joint actions in L.A. by Black and Latino; the effort to divide these two groups has been concerted and somewhat successful ever since.

The void in the articulation of a liberatory alternative to capitalism is a palpable reality; to fill that void is the most urgent need. The task is to articulate a vision that speaks to the underlying discontent and humanism throughout this land and so concretely work out the interplay between that vision and the Reason of the human forces wanting change that a wide, deep, complex, continually moving freedom movement comes to be.

Essay Article

by Ron Brokmeyer

"All over the globe...workers and managers alike wonder if we are heading toward a world in which half the population is permanently overworked and the other half permanently unemployed," writes *Business Week* (Oct. 17, 1994). Why, in spite of this dismal vision of the future under capitalism, is there a collapse of ideas projecting any different future?

Marx forecast the horrors of today's immediate conditions in his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, as he worked out the logic of its anti-human direction. So why is Marx's vision of the future, his re-creation of what Hegel called the "realm of subjectivity or freedom," so unexplored today?

Not even the depth of the world economic crisis seems to shake capitalism's religious faith in the commodity as today's global determinant. However, acknowledging the depth of the crisis is not enough to find a way out of it. This is especially so if one's view is limited to looking "behind" the movement of commodities as it is reflected in all of the economy's indicators. Limiting our vision to merely a look "behind" only reinforces the fetishistic attitude that presupposes the movement of commodities as autonomous objects.¹

What is found "behind" the movement is actually something "in" commodities that Marx claims no chemist will ever detect (p. 177). What is found "in" commodities is an amount of labor time. In today's jargon this means that "productivity" is the mother of all factors determining whether a commodity-producing organization or nation survives.²

While there is no such tangible thing as an amount of labor time, the material embodiment of commodities is made into a pure abstraction through the commodity-form, that is, through a certain mental posture that makes something objective into a pure abstraction. For Marx, this mental posture is an "integument" that gets "burst asunder" (p. 929). It constitutes for capitalist commodity culture what Hegel called, in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, a "shriveled skin" of the mind.³ Without shedding it, there is no growth; you suffocate.

As today's global economic crisis pulls the material foundations out from under more and more people, such ghosts from the past as fascism, tribalism, and "traditional values" are thrown up as the ideological glue to hold civil society intact. The constant dissolution of everything solid in social forms reveals that "behind" the commodity-form is absolutely nothing.

For Marx, the commodity-form is a form of spirit, or, as he put it in *Capital*, a *gestalt* which is a shape of consciousness that is one with its content. Hegel's dialectic of Essence, where he counterposes Form and Content and Form and Matter, gets transcended through Marx's re-creation of Hegel's dialectic of the Notion, or what he called "the realm of freedom or subjectivity," in Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities. To get a closer look at this, we will have to explore further the relationship between Marx's discussion of fetishism and the Hegelian dialectic.

I. Hegel's 'Self-Estranged Spirit' and the Fetishism of Commodities

The commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labor within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this.

—Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 1

The fetishism of commodities appears to be a re-creation of Hegel's description of the emergent bourgeois consciousness found in the "Spirit in Self-Estrangement" section of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Specifically, Hegel's treatment of the discipline of culture, as the absolute-inversion and estrangement of thought and reality (p. 541), is made concrete for capitalist commodity culture.

What Hegel is tracing in "Spirit in Self-Estrangement" is how the self gains an objective existence through relinquishing itself to its own external reality. Lacking a substance of its own, its substance is to be found in its act of relinquishment. Hegel describes this as a doubly atomistic moment in which the individual becomes "absolutely insular, absolutely discrete" as it confronts an alienating reality of its own making, whose "form...is just as impenetrable as itself" (p. 509).

Marx poses a similar problem when he writes of "private individuals who work independently of each other" (p. 165), and who are related through a social relationship between things of their own creation. "Products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own" (p. 165). Thus, individuals in capitalist society have no substance of their own which they do not in some way relinquish to the universal substance in things, in the form of the amount of labor time expended in their creation. It is through this universal substance that commodities relate to each other.

The individual, Hegel shows, nevertheless revolts against this self-repudiation. "What exists as a self on its account," he writes, "has for its object its own self-existence, which is object in the sense of an absolute other, and yet at the same time directly in the form of itself" (p. 541). This object, however, is "not a natural self-less object...[it is] not like a power of an inorganic element which is felt by consciousness receiving its force to be inherently transitory; it is the power over self" (p. 539). It is a social power congealed in objects and dispensed as wealth. In today's ongoing rhetorical and material wars against the poor, this social power assumes the arro-

Commodity fetishism and today's capitalist crisis as Marx foresaw it



gance of a state power and wealth which "overlooks the secret rebellion of the other;...overlooks the fact of all bonds being completely cast aside, overlooks this pure disintegration, in which...the repute and respect for the benefactor are the first to be shattered" (p. 539).

Marx, for his part, identifies the social substance, the congealed social "power over self," in the value form of the commodity, i.e., labor time, or labor as pure quantity, without regard for the form of its expenditure. If the commodity could speak, Marx argues, it would say: "Our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value." Then he points to how this view emerges from economists who say that "value...is a property of things...Riches...are the attributes of man" (pp. 176-77).

Though the commodity is taken as real and objective, as a value it is a bare thought, a bare nothing. As an object whose concrete physical nature and riches are inseparable from the human activity out of which it ushered, the commodity is taken to be subjective and unessential. Both Marx and Hegel are engaged in looking for paths out of this anomaly of self-created nothingness that generates our atomistic existence.

One of the results of Hegel's dialectic of self-estranged spirit is the creation of a recognized objective form of spirit in which everything solid undergoes "dissolution." Spirit cannot, at this point, go back to some imagined "natural state of innocence," but must as "spirit return out of its confusion into self, and win for itself a still higher level of conscious life" (p. 546). What became transparent for Marx is that the constant dissolution of the seemingly solid social forms of capitalism's commodity culture made it impossible to find a better future by going back to something like the "worship of nature" or "the immaturity of man as an individual" (p. 173). The only pathway out, in his view, is for workers, freely associated, to take responsibility for the objective spiritual existence that shapes material life.

Although Marx believed that only freely associated labor can strip away the fetish, that statement, too, becomes an empty result unless one grasps the principle that drove Marx to pose the problem in terms of two conceptual moments of organization, namely, commodity fetishism versus freely associated labor.

Marx's driving principle against the commodity-form is thought's power of the negative which he calls the "power of abstraction" (p. 90), and through which thought comprehends the positive that emerges out of the negation of capitalism's "economic cell form." As a self-developing totality "the object as a whole," writes Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, is a movement of Universal, Particular and Individual. It "is the mediated result or the passing of universality into individuality through specification, as also the reverse process from the individual to the universal through cancelled individuality or specific determination" (p. 790).

Capital is based on the second movement, or the movement from "the special to the general."⁴ Marx begins with the individual commodity's dual nature (use-value and exchange value), which reflects the dual nature of the labor, as concrete and abstract. Thus, the individual embodies both concrete and abstract (purely quantitative) labor, though only the latter, alienated labor, makes up the individuality of the commodity-form.

II. Marx's and Hegel's Notions Contrasted

When the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth if not...the evolution of all human powers as...an end in itself...a situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?

—Marx, *Grundrisse*

The movement of the "object as a whole," in Hegel, is through the negation of the negation. It represents humanity's return to itself out of its externalized objective spirit. In Marx's terms, this means that the relation of the individual to the whole of capitalist society reflects the spiritual form of the commodity (the commodity-form), as a form of externalization in which the return to self does not confirm the individual's true essence as his/her subjective capacities. This confirmation is a necessary moment of Marx's dialectical negation of the

negation, but not of Hegel's. In capitalist society, externalization appears, for Marx, in the form of the commodity production process. Therein Marx found not confirmation but absolutely nothing: "The commodity-form...[has] absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this" (p. 165).

The *gestalt* of the "social life-process" dictates a greater and greater divergence between material existence and any human dimension. The ultimate is reached in the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation as the ever-growing army of the unemployed. The whole history of revolt against capitalism is the history of the re-emergence of the human dimension in the face of a totally detached concept of objectivity.

The retrogression in today's thought makes it imperative to face directly capitalism's concept of objectivity, which is inverted into something outside the concrete activity of the whole human being. This crisis of mind makes philosophy itself objective and demands we confront Marx's view of capitalism's absolute inversion and estrangement of thought and reality.

A problem Marx saw with Hegel's negation of the negation, as Marx expressed it in his original 1844 *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic*, was that it united the roles of negation and preservation of externalization. For Marx the return to self out of externalization was always a confirmation of true human essence but that confirmation was "through negation of apparent essence."⁵ Only if that negation is total, i.e., not still determined by what it opposes (as in the case of atheism or collective property), could there be "positive humanism beginning from itself" (p. 320).

Hegel's dialectic combined the roles of negation and preservation because "knowledge is its single objective relation" (p. 316). Otherness for Hegel is something consciousness poses for itself. Marx's concept of objectivity includes human activity, which means the whole human being, a unity of consciousness and doing which is itself a dimension of nature. In the face of the nothingness of capitalism's externalized individuality, the commodity-form, Marx's negation of the negation turns on the destruction of this "alienated determination of the objective world" (p. 319).

Marx's movement from the "specific to the general" is a total negation whose positive content is the idea of freely associated labor creating a whole new social individual and a new concept of objectivity which is the Marxian dialectic. I say "idea" of freely associated labor because Marx in *Capital* formulated it before the Paris Commune became that idea for him in real life. The power of the "idea" of freely associated labor emerges in opposition to the absurd reality of human relations as "social relations between things" (p. 166).

Without grasping the absolute nothingness of the commodity-form, without grasping just this, there is no way for the positive to emerge from the negative. There is no way for the perennial drive for free association to recognize itself as the absolute opposite of commodity production with which it cannot possibly coexist. There is no way to coexist and avoid being pulled into the vortex of the world market.

In Hegel, the movements of the whole "determine the ways in which consciousness must know the object as itself" (p. 790). In Marx, this self-recognition is a return to self that can amplify the meaning of the emergence of new forms of association in actual history. Self-recognition transforms the very meaning of totality. By totally clearing the decks, and removing any residue of an independent actuality that confronts the subject in its passage to freedom, totality can become a new beginning.

Marx considered the greatest achievement of the Paris Commune to be the "working existence" of such a form, needing only "to set free the elements of the new society."⁶ Freely associated labor is a new objective form of spirit that can take responsibility for the spiritual existence that shapes material life. But in its full development it is also the total individual, i.e., "the all-round development of the individual" realized through overcoming the "enslaving subordination of the individual to the division...between mental and manual labor...[where] labor has become not only a means to life but life's prime want."⁷

Marx's concept of objectivity as becoming is the ongoing objective realization of subjective human capacities in a new fully developed social individual. This is the sense in which the movement of becoming, in Marx, out of the being and non-being of self-estranged spirit, is one in which "man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality."

1. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 167. Further page references are in the text.

2. Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: Harper Business, 1993). See my review of this work, "Fetishism of Capitalist Knowledge," *News & Letters*, July 1993.

3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 565. Further page references are in the text.

4. See Karl Marx, *Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago: Kerr, 1904), p. 9.

5. See Marx's *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic*, as translated by Raya Dunayevskaya in *Marxism and Freedom* (New York: Bookman, 1958), p. 317. Further page references in the text are to this translation.

6. See Marx's *The Civil War in France*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 339.

7. See Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program" in *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 87.

Burma students refuse to be crushed

Chicago—Escaped Burma student activist Yuzana Khin made two appearances at Loyola University, bearing witness to the power of the student-led mass movement begun in 1988 that yet refuses to be crushed. In talks and a dramatic performance she re-created the basis for today's ongoing resistance in marches unfolding over months even after repeated bloody repression.

After a currency devaluation, when people could not even afford to buy food, students began marches in 1988 against the military government which since 1962 had gagged Burma under the banner of the "Burmese Way To Socialism." In spite of arrests, killings and rapes of female students, students from all over, including minority areas in Upper Burma, gathered in Rangoon for two days of demonstrations "till the government falls."

But when soldiers obeyed orders to shoot, only the fortunate escaped. From a hiding place, Yuzana Khin later saw truckloads of students driven away who were not seen again. She called it Tiananmen Square without the television cameras and foreign journalists.

Despite terror and two weeks of curfew, crowds from all Burma gathered to hear Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of the national hero of the eviction of British and Japanese colonialism from Burma, identify herself with the movement for human rights and democracy and call it the second struggle for national independence.

Founding the All-Burma Student Union, which elected as treasurer Yuzana Khin, its one woman leader, led to renewed daily demonstrations, with some soldiers joining workers, students and even farmers at least until the even harsher repression of the State Law and Order Restoration Council from Sept. 18.

Six years later, surviving demonstrators are in hiding in areas of Karen and Mon resistance, some of whom have been fighting for land, language and culture for 40 years. Others are in exile in Thailand and elsewhere. But Burma is not at peace. Families of exiles have even had to disown their own kin or be punished themselves.

The regime is propped up solely by loyal military units, supported by China's billion dollar military aid and by selling the country off. Wealth from clearing rainforest timber or pumping oil—and bloodily evicting Karen peoples to build the pipeline—or any investment is funneled to the military. Yuzana Khin asked for grass roots support for the boycott of Western investors in Burma on the model of the divestment movement against apartheid South Africa.

We were told that Amoco and Liz Claiborne, for in-

stance, withdrew after boycotts began. Unocal and Texaco are still there, but the primary target is Pepsico.

In working out questions of freedom, today's revolutionaries are building on the legacy of what developed throughout 1988. The presence of Mon and Karen members of the government in exile in Thailand recalls movements and organizations that had begun to cross ethnic and geographic lines. And on the roles of men and women, could women students who had risked rape and death in daily demonstrations accept being told to act more like Burmese 'women' within the movement?

—Bob McGuire

Youth in California fight Proposition 187

San Jose, Cal.—Thousands of youth walked out of school the day after Proposition 187, the infamous "Save Our State" initiative, passed. Protests and marches were held throughout the day as students from all the local high schools, most junior highs and even some elementary schools walked out. By mid afternoon, Cesar Chavez Plaza was full of young people protesting the anti-immigrant SOS initiative.

One 14-year-old from Pioneer High School carrying a sign that read "Todos somos ilegales!" [We are all illegals!] said that "The grown-ups, MEChA and organizers from the church tried to limit this all to voting. But even if 187 hadn't passed, Wilson would have found another way to put it in effect. We can't let the grown-ups limit us all to just a movement. It's more than that. It's our rights just to live and survive."

"I can't stop and say that this is a done deal because I see the future and what I see is that it is just getting worse for my people. There is no choice for us but to come together and fight. The people that have papers want to distance us and say that they are only fighting 187 because it will make them get discriminated against. But what about my sisters and brothers who are still new to here? It's them that we have to fight for."

A 13-year-old woman from Foundry High School holding a banner that read "Aqui estamos! Aqui nos quedamos! No nos vamos!" [Here we are! Here we stay! We will not leave!] said that the immigration "problem" is not really about "illegals" using up resources: "The United States comes into countries and takes our land, our people, our natural gas, oil, whatever they can get their hands on. The U.S. only has a small percentage of the people in this world, yet they use almost all the re-

"The idea of a Marxist-Humanist paper, beginning publication June 1955 when McCarthyism was still raging, seems, strangely enough, very todayish. The idea of a struggle for freedom that would make inseparable theory and practice, and have that relation as the determinant, does indeed remain an imperative."
— RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

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sources. How dare they call us wetbacks, say that we are coming in to get their welfare and schools?! At least in Mexico City they had textbooks for all the students."

"Deport Wilson" read the sign of a 16-year-old Asian woman who said, "The media is all blaming us for having walkouts, saying that we distanced the middle class by being too out there. They say that if we hadn't walked out in L.A., blocked the San Mateo bridge, or torn apart a McDonald's in Mexico City, that if we had quietly asked for our rights as people, that we would have been given them. That's bullshit! Even in our own organizations, people I thought were on our side are saying we have to 'peacefully mourn' the passage of 187."

Not all the high schools made it to Cesar Chavez Plaza. Overfeld High and Lincoln High School were both surrounded by police when students tried to walk out. At Overfeld, all the gates, even emergency fire gates, were locked. Students waited two hours for the police to leave and then walked out through a hole in the fence.

—Lynn

'Balkanizing' the schools

Chicago—Republicans who have just won a majority in the Illinois General Assembly have launched a new attack on the students and teachers in Chicago's public schools with an absurd plan to divide the school system into eight districts, each with their own school board. Governor Edgar is seriously considering it as a way to "solve" the \$290-million deficit.

The proposal is to divide the system up along the lines of the old township boundaries which are currently only used in the tax assessment process. One legislator said in a television interview that the funding for each district would be based on the "tax base of each community." In the impoverished Black neighborhood on the West Side where I teach, the teachers interpret this as a cruel joke or a recipe for doomsday.

The district in the downtown area would be the richest in the country. In other parts of the city the schools are already so poorly funded that only a modern day Charles Dickens could imagine the chaos and squalor that would reign after this plan took effect.

Of course, the union contract would be thrown out, and teachers in each district would have to reorganize a new union and negotiate new contracts.

It was not until I had a discussion with some teachers in training at Columbia College that I understood why both the union representative and the administrator who denounced the plan at my school prefaced their remarks by saying "This plan might sound good, but...." These young teachers said that they were so sick of the Board of Education that they did not care about funding or the union. They just wanted to see the bureaucracy broken up. A Black woman said she was all for it because "the school board of a predominantly Black district wouldn't have to teach European studies at all."

The Republicans are packaging this blatantly racist measure as a battle against big government and for greater community control, and ironically it is gaining the support of some of the same Afrocentric people who believe that Black children are being poorly educated because of "a conspiracy to destroy Black boys." Others, however, are calling this the "Balkanization of the Chicago Public Schools." —Disgusted teacher-in-training

Centennial of neglected Capital, Volume III

This month marks the 100th anniversary of the third volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx's greatest work. It was edited and published after his death by Frederick Engels, on the basis of the manuscripts Marx had left.

Volume I continues to be studied widely by working people and students. Volume II's analysis of capitalist accumulation was the pivot upon which revolutionary perspectives were debated within pre-World War I Marxism, and it remains crucial to the critique of underconsumptionism. Yet Volume III has always received far less attention, except among a handful of academic economists.

Ironically, the economists themselves have helped make Volume III obscure by treating it in isolation from the rest of *Capital*. Because it deals with the same subject-matter that academic economists and the business press do—the forms of the movement of capital as they "appear on the surface of society" (p. 117)*—the economists, radical as well as mainstream, turn to Volume III as they try to read Marx as another "economist" and to "apply" his categories.

DISTORTING MARX'S VISION

However, the wrenching of Volume III out of the totality of *Capital* (and Marx's work as a whole) so distorts his thought that it turns him not only into an economist, but into a seriously flawed one. The major interests of economists in Volume III, especially since the 1970s, has been to expose its alleged "logical contradictions" which stem from their own peculiar separation of the appearances explored in Volume III from the essence, capitalist production, studied in Volume I.

Pervading all of Volume III is the exact opposite notion, namely that the surface phenomena of economics are forms in which the perverted human relations of capitalist production do make their appearance:

"[T]he way that surplus-value is transformed into the form of profit, by way of the rate of profit, is only a further extension of that inversion of subject and object which already occurs in the course of the production process itself.... Value, i.e., the past labor that dominates living labor is personified into the capitalist; on the other hand, the worker conversely appears as mere objectified labor-power, as a commodity. This inverted relationship necessarily gives rise [to] a transposed consciousness, which is further developed by the transformations and modifications of the circulation process proper" (p. 136).

ALL FROM SURPLUS-LABOR

As Marx painstakingly develops these "transformations," the incomes of the capitalist class—industrial profit, merchant profit, dividends, interest, rent, etc.—are shown to derive solely from the surplus-labor pumped out of workers in capitalist production. Competition, scandals, and swindles merely determine who, and which class fraction, will get a bigger share and which a smaller one. It is thus in Volume III that Marx reaffirms that "[t]he specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers determines the relationship of domination and servitude [and

is] the hidden basis of the entire social edifice." (p. 927).

Marx's aim, however, is not to dismiss the appearances in the market as inessential. On the contrary, it is in the market that the contradictions of capitalist production are expressed most fully. The contradictory character of the commodity-form (material form and value form) appears innocuous enough in Chapter 1 of the first volume: "an increase in the amount of material wealth may correspond to a simultaneous fall in the magnitude of its value. This contradictory movement arises out of the twofold character of labor" (pp. 136-37). Yet this very same contradictory movement, when manifested in the market, gives rise to the falling tendency of the rate of profit—and to the crises of devaluation, the real form in which this contradiction is "resolved."

Reading these sections makes one appreciate Marx's foresight, his ability to speak to realities we face more than a century later as we endure the third decade of a global economic crisis. This foresight, mystified when explained by reference to his "genius" of "prophetic" quality, is rather a matter of method, as Raya Dunayevskaya argued in *Marxism and Freedom*: "his dialectical method of tracing through to the end all trends of social development" (p. 22). In each volume of *Capital*, Marx draws out capital's developmental tendencies to the fullest.

TAKING IT TO THE LIMIT

In Volume I, he takes centralization and concentration to its limit: "a single capitalist or a single capitalist company" (p. 779). In Volume II, the simplification of class antagonisms is formalized into schema of a closed capitalist society composed of capitalists and workers only. In Volume III, it is the antagonism of use-value and value that is taken to its limit; precisely because machine-dominated production is responsible for the phenomenal growth of use-value productivity, value production is doomed: To maintain the old rate of profit in the face of a decline in the living labor that produces value, "the surplus-labor time would have to increase ... and very soon ... even the full twenty-four hours of the day would not be sufficient, even if it were entirely appropriated by capital" (p. 523).

Capital, Volume III thus discloses that, in confining human development by making human beings "useful" only insofar as they serve this "restricted end, the valorization of the existing capital" (p. 359), capitalist society is unviable. It is hence no accident that this volume is the one in which Marx projects the absolute opposite, "[t]he true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself" (p. 959).

In the past century, we have endured unprecedented terror and barbarism, an unprecedented sacrifice of human life to senseless, inhuman ends. The Humanism of Marx's vision, particularly its articulation of the inseparability of means and ends, remains in urgent need of concretization. —Andrew Kliman

* References to all volumes of *Capital* are to the Penguin/Vintage edition.

How to contact NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CHICAGO 59 Van Buren, Room 707 Chicago, IL 60605 Phone 312 663 0839 Fax 312 663 9069 MEETINGS Call for meeting information | NEW YORK P.O. Box 196 Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163 212 663 3631 MEETINGS Sundays, 6:30 p.m. Washington Square Church 133 W. 4th St. (Parish House parlor), Manhattan |
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Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The November clashes on the Gaza Strip between Yasir Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the fundamentalist movement Islamic Jihad left 14 dead and 200 wounded, as PLO police answered volleys of rocks with live ammunition. The fundamentalists had gathered to protest the jailing of some of their activists by the PLO police in the wake of an Islamic Jihad terrorist attack on an Israeli army post. When the fundamentalists defied orders to disperse, the PLO police began what turned into a massacre.

The result was a day of anti-Arafat riots in Gaza with not only Islamic Jihad supporters, but also followers of the far larger Hamas fundamentalist group taking to the streets. Slogans shouted by the crowds included: "Arafat is a dog. A slave of [Israeli Prime Minister] Rabin and the Americans. He will end up like [assassinated Egyptian President] Sadat." Only after Hamas leaders called for calm did the crowds disperse.

This, the first serious bloodshed between Palestinian

factions since the peace agreement, only seemed to weaken further Arafat's already shaky position. Arafat's "explanation" of the violence caused still more outrage when he suggested that Israeli infiltrators had really pulled the trigger.

The PLO's other response was more muscular. His forces rearmed the Fatah Hawks, an underground guerrilla group from Arafat's PLO faction set up during the Intifada days. They and other PLO supporters then demonstrated, 10,000 strong. Brandishing weapons, they chanted: "Whoever wrongs Fatah, Fatah will open his head." Such "arguments" will hardly undercut the new support going to Hamas, especially since Hamas has adopted (for now) a line of non-confrontational protest against Arafat plus calls for both Palestinian "unity" and an investigation and punishment of the police who opened fire.

A number of factors are causing fundamentalism to grow inside the Palestinian movement. One of them is Arafat's ineptitude and authoritarianism, factors which have lost him the support of key secular intellectuals and

politicians. Always closer to Arab kings, sheiks and dictators than to his own masses, Arafat's political "role models" are probably authoritarian Arab leaders such as Egypt's Hosni Mubarak.

A second factor is that little has changed for the Palestinian masses since the peace accords. Elections have been delayed by Israel, which continues to imprison thousands of Palestinian activists. Israel has also closed off Gaza in response to fundamentalist terrorist attacks, causing unemployment there to rise to a catastrophic 50%. After events such as last February's massacre of Arab worshipers in Hebron by a Jewish fanatic, and Israel's recent deal with Jordan behind the backs of the PLO, it is not surprising that rejectionist sentiment has grown among the Palestinian masses.

A third factor is that less than 10% of the \$2.4 billion promised in reconstruction aid by the U.S., Europe, Japan and wealthy Arab states has actually arrived. Belatedly, Israel seemed to move a bit on implementing elections on the West Bank, and some aid money was suddenly freed up by outside donors. But it is very unclear if real peace is still possible.

Increasingly, the situation seems to be heading toward that found elsewhere in the Arab world. There, corrupt and authoritarian but nominally secular governments such as Egypt's face strong challenges from Islamic fundamentalist movements, in part because the fundamentalists have succeeded in presenting themselves as the only alternative to the given state of affairs.

East Timorese protests challenge APEC

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group of 18 nations came to a "consensus" on Nov. 15 that by the year 2020 they would all meet the goal of "free and open trade and investment." Held in a colonial-era palace outside Jakarta, Indonesia, representatives included rulers from U.S. President Clinton to the Sultan of Brunei. They agreed to a free-trade plan for what would become the world's largest free-trade zone, encompassing \$1.7 trillion of its exports and half of its capitalist economic output. Members include Japan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and other Asian countries, as well as the U.S., Canada, Australia, Mexico and Chile.

While the year 2020 seemed abstractly safe and distant, East Timorese students brought in the world of here and now by defying stringent pre-conference security, scaling the walls of the U.S. embassy and occupying its parking lot. They called for the release of Jose Alexandre Gusmao, a leader of the Timorese independence movement, and a meeting with Clinton. More than 200,000 East Timorese people—over one-third of the entire population—have died under Indonesian occupation since their country was invaded and annexed after declaring independence in 1975. The students' demonstrations also marked the third anniversary of the November 1991 Indonesian massacre of over 200 Timorese protesters in Dili.

The Clinton entourage gave lip service to the issues raised by East Timorese and others in Indonesia, but it had already cast its mold by the earlier agreement to grant China "most favored nation" trade status by "delinking" human rights from economic deals. The U.S. now calls this "commercial diplomacy," which means separating capitalistic growth from the only source which can make it grow—workers. The hot-house expansion of Asian economies is based first and foremost on the exploitation of labor—peasants, especially women, driven into factories, child labor, dismal working and living conditions, and the repression of any independent organizing.

The APEC host country, Indonesia, is a clear micro-

cosm of this development. Suharto, sustained by the military, has ruled with an iron fist since coming to power in one of the bloodiest coups ever in 1965. Before the APEC summit, his regime silenced the press and swept the streets of political dissidents and labor activists. The Jakarta military chief vowed he would "cut to pieces" any protesters.

The Indonesian rulers are still trying to suppress reverberations from huge strikes and demonstrations by



East Timorese student protesters occupy U.S. Embassy grounds in Indonesia.

over 20,000 workers in Medan last April. They were demanding enforcement of the minimum wage (\$1.75 a day, hardly enough to feed one person), an end to forced overtime, as well as the right to organize. Muchtar Pakpahan and others who have led the movement for an independent union, the Union for Workers Prosperity (SBSI), have been tried, sentenced and jailed for their part in the strikes. But no amount of repression has stopped the continuous organizing and protest meetings by workers. As late as October, one month before APEC, over 4,000 workers struck an Adidas shoe factory near Jakarta.

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 in 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 philosophical 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.

Deadly Russian oil spill

Decaying oil pipelines in the Russian Arctic region around Usinsk have created an environmental disaster of huge proportions. Dikes built to retain the leaking oil burst after heavy rains in the early fall, spilling up to 90 million barrels of crude oil onto the fragile tundra permafrost and into nearby rivers. This disaster dwarfs the Exxon Valdez and lesser oil spills.

The crisis was not made public by Russian authorities until well over a month had passed. The oil has contaminated a large expanse, destroying fish and livestock as well as the land itself. In some areas where it has pooled, the oil has ignited and burned. A local environmental activist (which equals "dissident" in Usinsk which is dependent on the oil industry) recorded over 600 accidents in one year on the same pipeline as recently as 1991. Russia has based a crucial amount of its economy on oil, but has no capital to put into repairing its decrepit oil and natural gas infrastructure.

Some observers said oil continued to be pumped full tilt through the leaking pipeline system well over a week after it had begun to gush. Meanwhile, Russia has received very little aid to clean up from the international capitalist community, which is more concerned with how to exploit its gas and oil reserves.

Berber revolt in Algeria

The war between the Army and the Islamic fundamentalists has by now claimed over 20,000 lives in Algeria with no end in sight. Left, democratic and secular forces have had great difficulty in putting forth a third way, a genuine alternative. One possible base of support for such an alternative is Algeria's eight-million-strong Berber community, which has been a center of anti-fundamentalist sentiment. It reacted with fury when one of its most celebrated cultural figures, the singer Matoub Lounes, was kidnapped by fundamentalists in late September. In response, the leadership of the broad-based Berber Cultural Movement threatened "total war" against the fundamentalists if Lounes was not freed.

A few days later, another popular Berber singer, Cheb Hasni, was shot to death. More than 100,000 demonstrated in Tizi-Ouzou, a center of Berber culture. They came out strongly against fundamentalism and for official recognition of the Berber language, Tamazirt. A week later, Lounes was freed by his captors.

The Berber region, which includes the Kabyle mountains, was an important base of support during the revolutionary war of independence against France, 1954-62. But soon after independence was won, the leadership of the National Liberation Front declared "Arabization" to be its goal, which did not include recognition of Tamazirt.

Since then, the Berber community has produced a number of leftist opposition organizations. Islamic fundamentalism has not made many inroads into Kabylia in part because Berbers, although themselves predominantly Muslim, sense that the fundamentalists want to impose an extremely narrow version of Arabo-Muslim culture on the whole of Algeria.

Italy's government shaky

The rightist coalition government elected last March in Italy is becoming increasingly shaky. A massive general strike against government austerity measures, which would drastically cut pensions and other social benefits took place in October.

Scornful of the workers, the government arrogantly stated they would listen instead to the millions who did not strike. Then, on Nov. 21, the government scored poorly in local elections, running behind Left and centrist parties. Although Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia Party lost heavily, the gain reported by another coalition partner, the neo-fascist National Alliance, was an ominous sign.