



# 'Complicating categories' of women's history

by Laurie Cashdan

When the Tenth Berkshires Conference on the History of Women convened in Chapel Hill, N.C., June 7-9, it drew together nearly 2,000 participants for over 200 sessions. This year marked the first time since this conference began in 1973 that it was held outside the Northeast.

The shift dovetailed with this year's conference theme, "Complicating Categories: Women, Gender and Difference." Unfortunately, this theme was not carried through in the plenary sessions, neither of which featured an African-American women's historian as keynote speaker.

## Woman as Reason

note speaker. Nevertheless, that theme proved significant. "Complicating categories" became a political fault line that tested the relationship between feminist scholarship and the larger world of political retrogression and emergent new struggles today.

That was true not only in such volatile workshops as "Feminist Theories of Postmodernism in the Study of Social Conflict," where socialist-feminists faced off with poststructuralists. It also surfaced in workshops on Black women in labor and civil rights struggles, which refigured male and white-centered categories of history.

Several Black women scholars bluntly critiqued the categories of social science at a roundtable titled "Representations and Meanings of Black Women's Work," on how scholarship today either combats or colludes with the political Right. Sharon Harley insisted that studies not based on Black women's own voices misrepresent their lives. Bonnie Thornton Dill, who is founding a Race and Gender Institute at University of Maryland with Harley, added, "Women as workers and women as welfare recipients are made into a dichotomy, with the latter made into a problem about family, not work." Such categorization helps demonize welfare recipients.

If Harley and Dill underscored the danger of accepting at face value research on Black women, a late-evening plenary speech by Tanika Sarkar, an Indian feminist scholar, became an urgent wake-up call for theoretical rethinking by left feminists about how we represent women subjects. Indian feminists contest the western feminist view that women are "hidden from history," she asserted. To justify colonialism, the British made Indian women overly visible in their version of history.

Her sharpest critique, however, was aimed at radical Indian scholars today in subaltern studies who, she argued, also make women overly visible. By portraying peasant women as a premodern, traditional subject that inherently resists capitalism, they come dangerously close to the appeal to "tradition" by the new Right. This evades the actual history of reaction and revolution.

Given this concern, it is important to look at another session on women's history in light of right-wing ideol-

## Protest at Chowchilla

**Chowchilla, Cal.**—On June 8 over 100 people demonstrated outside the women's prison against the inhumanity of the prison system, especially toward women. Formerly incarcerated women who are HIV-positive spoke about medical neglect and the impossibility of obtaining information about HIV/AIDS in prison.

Medical care is practically non-existent in prison, turning a two-year sentence into a death penalty, since some prisoners contract tuberculosis and die from lack of treatment. We call for compassionate release of terminally ill women. AIDS-infected women who have white blood counts so low that the prison itself does not want to deal with them are the only ones even considered for release.

Just because "they" put ever more women in prison does not mean we forget about them. Our banners carried the names of women who died in prison and our demands for medical care, rehabilitation, drug treatment and educational opportunities. Most powerful was the cry "we love you sisters inside!" To paraphrase Dostoyevsky, how civilized we are as human beings is measured by the way we treat prisoners.

One participant reflected: "In the four and a half months since my release from Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW), I have become increasingly impassioned by the desire to be a part of the movement toward changing the conditions of women in prison. I knew that it was important to go back in open protest against the detestable practices of the prison as an institution and of individual officials. The idea was that there would be some healing in those sad and aching parts of me so rubbed raw by what I saw, what I experienced, and what I felt while locked in that prison all those 13 months.

"I was not really prepared for the fear and fury I felt when I showed up on the scene and saw two of VSPW's guards. I knew them both. I felt as if I went back into the whole crazy life again. I had a vivid recollection of all the yelling, name calling, strip searches, standing in the cold for long periods of time, pat downs by male guards which were degrading at best.

"I got through it, only to feel a stronger urge to push for change. I have friends inside who still suffer. I want you to know that I am speaking out about your suffering and I will continue to do so until this treatment comes to an end. I love you all. I am with you!"

We distributed the first issue of *The Fire Inside*. For a copy, send \$1 to California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), 100 McAllister St., San Francisco, Ca. 94102.

—Urszula Wislanka and Dana Ryan

logical attacks today: "Writing About a Visionary Movement in the Get Real World of the 90s: The History of the U.S. Women's Liberation Movement." This session portrayed writing the history of Women's Liberation as a political act against the Right, but also illuminated some theoretical minefields in such a project.

Moderated by Sheila Rowbotham, the British socialist-feminist, the panel of seven included such well-known women as Susan Brownmiller, author of *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975), and Rosalyn Baxandall, an early member of New York Radical Women and Redstockings. Each participant writes on the history of Women's Liberation.

The speakers were especially angered by writers who call themselves feminists yet so rewrite history that they fuel the Right's ideological warfare. Barbara Winslow, for example, a socialist-feminist who co-founded the first Seattle women's liberation organization, repudiated the characterization of feminism as a white middle-class elitist, homophobic, anti-children and anti-sex movement.

The importance of exposing the rewriting of history by not only right-wing politicians but careerist scholars cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, Winslow's assertions about the past did not explain why six out of the seven panelists were white, most of them experienced Left politicians. Susan Brownmiller, whose study of rape has been roundly critiqued by women of color for its old and deadly use of racial stereotypes, attacked younger scholars but applied no such measure to her own work.

Amy Kesselman, a founder of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, did draw out problems that emerged as Women's Liberation unfolded in its early years. Conflicts emerged as "people tried to do things, to apply theories." In New Haven, for example, the Women's Liberation group that came out of the New Left decided to muffle their own stand on abortion rights in order to organize Catholic clerical workers at Yale.

Why would organizing working women not have involved a serious theoretical dialogue with them on all questions of women's liberation and radical change? Was this elitist relation between feminist theory and organizing merely a story about "strategic problems," as Kesselman called it? Kesselman's characterization indicated to me that the writers of the history of Women's Liberation may be applying old categories to the dualities that emerged in the movement—on race, on elitism, or on theory and practice. Debates over the categories of women's history can involve a great deal more than getting the story straight, in a period when it is all too easy to find oneself on dangerous ideological ground.



*Žene u crnom*

## Women in Black

The Women in Black have announced that the Fifth International Meeting of the Network of Women's Solidarity Against War will be held, Aug. 1-4, in Novi Sad in Yugoslavia. Participants are expected from Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosova, Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia, Vojvodina and around the world. The call to participate states in part:

"The war in former Yugoslavia has allegedly ended. Those of us who live in this region know that the war continues. The environment in which we live is permeated with the practice and logic of war and militarism. We are witnesses to a state which performs acts of violence against women in their daily lives. This is carried out with the state's nationalistic-militaristic ideology and propaganda, so that women endure patriarchal violence in both the private and public spheres.

"Once again this year we invite you to join us. Come to share joy in strength, sisterhood and friendship. Together we will create new strategies with which we will change the environment we live in, our lives, ourselves."

Contact organizers by e-mail at: WIB-BG@zamir-bg.ztn.apc.org; by phone/fax: 381.11.347.877.

## Discussion article: 'Queer by Choice'

*Review of Queer by Choice: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Politics of Identity, by Vera Whisman (New York: Routledge, 1996)*

As we embark upon developing new revolutionary feminist queer philosophy (see "Queer Notions" October 1995 N&L), investigation into Vera Whisman's book reveals many insights. She stirs new waters with this landmark feminist comparative study of lesbian, gay male, and bisexual identity, analyzing differences between queer women and men regarding views and experiences of homosexuality. Whisman bravely challenges those interested in queer liberation to begin their theoretical inquiry from a radical and inclusive feminist position open to conceptions of sexuality as a choice.

Diving into questions of choice and sexuality have traditionally been considered taboo in the dominant queer discourse because of claims made by the religious Right that homosexuality is a choice, and therefore those who choose not to change are morally reprehensible and deserve no "special rights." Most queers in Whisman's study, men and women alike, steer away from ideas of homosexuality as a choice because "they consider it a dangerous foray into territory controlled by homophobic discourse. When they repudiate choice, they are saying something positive about homosexuality."

But Whisman contends the claim of, "I had no



## Dykes march June 29

**New York**—This year's Lesbian Pride march drew several thousand women and some men and children, who walked, danced and shouted down Fifth Avenue on June 29. The annual event comes the day before the huge Gay and Lesbian march that marks the anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion.

Las Buenas Amigas, a group of Latina lesbians, was particularly joyful as they walked, calling out slogans and songs that celebrated who they are.

The demonstrators also had a keen awareness of the need to keep fighting for their rights as lesbians, especially in light of recent bias-related murders. On June 1, Lollie Winans and Julianne Williams were found with their throats slashed at a campsite on the Appalachian Trail in Virginia. During the march, women expressed their outrage at these murders by screaming together.

Other activists passed out petitions to the president to change his position against gay marriage. Clinton is supporting the Defense of Marriage Act currently pending in Congress. This law would probably not prevent states from marrying gay and lesbian couples, but would create two classes of married couples—gays and lesbians would be denied federal protections and benefits.

Others rejected further appeals to the Democratic Party, which many gays supported in 1992 only to have it betray all its promises.

—Participant

**Chicago**—At least 500 women took part in Chicago's first Annual Dyke March, organized by the Lesbian Avengers, on the eve of the Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. Speakers made clear that "this is not a parade, it's a march"; its "context is political." The march grew out of the need to confront harassment and assaults on queer women by gay men at previous Pride Parades. Lesbian Avengers and Women's Action Coalition speakers focused on men who grabbed and verbally abused women who marched bare-breasted. It was moving to see a handful of gay men cheering on the march.

Other women I spoke with felt the time had come for "women to organize ourselves because the Pride Parade has always been male-dominated, male-focused, and the men have always set the agenda." Another said that within the queer community there still exists the "pecking order," and many gay men feel "lesbians need to be kept in their place as women."

Candace Gingrich was the first speaker, her presence directly confronting her brother Newt's "Contract on America." Other speakers represented a multitude of political/personal struggles. However, there was a glaring lack of Black and Asian-American speakers despite the significant presence of Black and Asian-American women marching.

It was a high-powered, serious and fun march, where queer women of all colors not only protested ugly, anti-human conditions their lives are faced with, but celebrated the beauty and humanness they find in themselves.

—Sonia Bergonzi

choice," does not challenge the heterosexist status quo, and leaves intact insidious assumptions that homosexual behavior is amoral, undesirable and unnatural. Insisting "I'm this way because I was born this way," does not lead to the total uprooting necessary to create a non-homophobic world.

In addition, many more women than men give accounts of having chosen their sexuality, showing that the dominant coming-out account which claims an innate, consistent experience of homosexuality excludes the experience of a majority of lesbians, as well as bisexuals. Whisman calls for a non-essentialist politics which broadens the range of sexual possibilities while disrupting the assumptions of oppressive social norms.

Refuting the idea that a "scientific" approach which attempts to legitimize homosexuality through genetic findings can lead to more freedoms for queers, Whisman insists, "it is not scientific research but political struggle that will protect gay men, lesbians, and bi-sexuals." Queers can battle heterosexism by asserting that, "homosexuality is a perfectly reasonable choice to make."

What makes Whisman's findings fascinating is how she and those she interviews show creative resistance through choosing to become homosexual or bisexual in the face of extreme pressures to be heterosexual. These

(Continued on page 10)

## Fighting for a normal day at Delta Pride

**Indianola, Miss.**—We start negotiations on the new contract with Delta Pride management at the end of July, and the union has asked all the members to state their top three demands. The first demand that everyone is talking about is that we need a *start time and a stop time* for production, like 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. After the 1990 strike we got it in the contract that all time over 8 hours will be paid at time-and-a-half. We did this so that management would stop working us 10 and 12 hours a day, killing people and making it impossible for working mothers—which most of the workers here are—to take care of our families.

Up until recently, this really cut down on the overtime. But now we have this new management team from Canada running the plant, and they decided to cut the workforce and make the rest of us work longer hours. We have been working about 55 hours a week, week after week. They say it is cheaper than hiring more workers.

This summer they have cut back on the air conditioning in the plant. They say this saves money on electricity, but they don't care what happens to us. The fish are iced down, but we are sweating in 90 degrees. One woman fell out sick this week; other workers are just calling in sick. It's not just the longer hours and the heat. It's also that we are working harder and faster, trying to keep up production and get out of there sooner. One day 49 workers called in sick in the trim department, out of 120 total. We started at 8 a.m., and ran production to 8:30 p.m. We had to do the same amount of fish with nearly half the workers gone. If you weren't sick before then, you surely were sick after.

They have also cut back the total number of workers at all three plants—Delta Main, Delta South, and Belzoni. Last year at those three plants there were over 1,000 workers. Now we have about 750, and we are putting out as much fish. Some of this is because of automation. They have eliminated nearly all the band saws and the manual lines in the kill department and they brought in two new machines—the 156 and the 184—on five different lines. This cut out about 50 or 60 jobs this year. But most of the reduction in workforce is just from longer hours and harder, faster work. They are shortening our lives to make themselves more money.

When we say we want a start time and a stopping time that we can count on to run our own lives, they say they can't do that because we are working with a perishable commodity, fish. They say they have more orders, and more fish to process. But only two months ago, they

closed down the whole Belzoni plant because they said they had a "fish shortage." Which is it? If they hired enough workers, they could give us reasonable hours. But that seems to be the one thing they won't do. What we want in the contract is a normal, reasonable work day, with a paycheck you can live on. But they act like that is out of the question.

Now they have a new money saving trick. They say that on Aug. 5 they will totally cut out the training department. All 62 workers in it, most with high seniority, would have to go back to the line and lose from 70¢ to 90¢ an hour pay. So you could have 12 or 14 years seniority and be back to making \$5.60 an hour.

The pay is still Mississippi poverty wages; we have never ended that yet. And we still don't have any pension plan at all. Workers with 15 years seniority are looking at their future and saying: "I won't have anything to fall back on."

Many people I know are saying we will have to strike this year. Some workers are saying we need to strike just to get some rest. They might be right.

—Delta Main worker, UFCW 1529



Over 6,000 workers struck June 24 over permanent two-tier conditions at New York hospitals and nursing homes.

## From IWW to Pride at Work

**Oakland, Cal.**—Over 200 queer workers, union organizers, and political thinkers attended *Pride at Work*, a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered labor conference in Oakland in June, in conjunction with the San Francisco Pride celebrations. Many workshops concerned pragmatic and reformist issues, such as domestic partner benefits, political action against the religious Right, harassment issues, and gay/lesbian caucuses within unions.

However, important voices of resistance were heard from youth and people of color, especially during discussions of affirmative action. This included some who had helped organize a successful unionizing drive at the largely white, gay male San Francisco AIDS Foundation. Neither the sexuality of the bosses, nor the liberal rhetoric of the unions, rendered them above criticism.

The most inspiring moments connected us to a revolutionary past. Harry Hay, the 84-year old gay Left founder of the Mattachine Society, spoke of his "homophile" group from the '50s and '60s, an early "real" education, received in the fields from the Wobblies when he was a teenager. Hay reminded us that labor, the Left and queers have been linked often in this century, but the astonishing proof of this was given in a slide presentation by the gay labor historian Allan Berube.

Entitled "No Race-Baiting, No Red-Baiting, No Queen-Baiting: the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union from the Depression to the Cold War," Berube's work reflects this militant union's interracial nature, the presence of open leftists, and the acknowledged presence of gay leaders and members, both Black and white, in its ranks during the 1930s and '40s.

He has detailed how the union supported the rights of Black, Asian, queer, and women workers, including a spontaneous strike to protest the exclusion of a Black woman worker from a previously segregated job. As one of Berube's principal informants told him (a white gay man who is still alive and participating in ACT-UP actions): in the union we "took the dignity that was in all of us and built it up—equality was in the air we breathed."

But the question this presentation raised for me is how we can learn from these highpoints of the past, and not only in a tactical sense. The need for a philosophy of revolution was clear during the weekend of pride activities in the Bay Area, including the Dyke March and the Gay Pride March.

The fact that half a million people came to celebrate queer pride, on a record-breakingly hot day, in the midst of a deep retrogression in thought (that dares to attack love and creativity with hypocrisies such as "family values" and "protection of marriage")—this is a striking testimony to the strength and depth of human power. While the humanist unity of Left and Queer thought exemplified in the talks given by Harry Hay and Allan Berube might seem utopian to some, the joyous crowd in San Francisco should serve to remind us that "the ideal and the real are never as far apart as the philistines, in and out of power, would make it appear" (*American Civilization on Trial*, p. 34).

—Jennifer Pen

## Self-limiting Labor Party

**Cleveland Ohio**—A huge banner proclaiming "History in the Making" backdrop the founding convention of a Labor Party held June 6-9 in Cleveland. The 1,367 delegates, more than twice the number originally expected, hammered out a constitution and program under tight bureaucratic control of the endorsing unions that sent the large majority of delegates.

The four original endorsing unions, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; United Electrical; Longshore Workers; and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, were joined just before the convention by the United Mine Workers and the American Federation of Government Workers. Large contingents were also sent by the California Nurses Association and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee.

The self-limiting focus of the Labor Party will be to increase its membership, with union endorsements and grassroots organizing, in order to exert pressure on both major political parties, to support labor interests. Opposition from those who wanted to immediately field their own local candidates and endorse independent candidates who support labor objectives, was beaten back, but they do not bar individual members working for politicians, an undoubted bow to the AFL-CIO that supports President Clinton.

Economic demands that would be impossible to achieve within capitalism, yet which nevertheless assumed the continuation of capitalism, dominated the 16-page program. It concluded a proposal for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing employment for all, a 32-hour week with no pay reduction and a \$10-an-hour minimum wage.

It supported power for worker-inspectors to shut down dangerous jobs, repeal of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act, and a ban on striker replacement. The originally proposed platform supported immigration rights, affirmative action and workers' child care and opposed sexual harassment. Opposition to hate crimes such as church, temple and synagogue burning and Congressional redistricting that dilutes minority representation, however, were left out of the original program and had to be raised as amendments by the Black caucus.

An amendment to add "support for safe, legal abortion" was defeated because the word abortion was considered "divisive." One Detroit delegate exclaimed, "Can you believe this? Our Labor Party is to the right of President Clinton on abortion rights!"

Detroit newspaper strikers received special recognition, and read a statement of their determination to continue their struggle until victory. Delegates voted unanimously for a national march on Detroit in support of the newspaper strikers.

The emotional highpoint, however, came outside of the convention hall on Friday following the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* report that Cleveland Mayor White was seeking state legislation to give him a free hand to privatize public services and oppose the city's service unions. Convention delegates voted to adjourn early and marched a block away to city hall to confront the mayor with chants of "Mayor White Must Go!" and "Privatize, We'll Organize!". The delegates spilled out into the streets, blocking traffic and leaving the totally surprised and unprepared police to stand helplessly by.

At the next LP convention, scheduled for 1998, a review of the progress made in achieving its goals will be assessed. But the failure to project a truly different course for America, compromising on so many vital issues, leaves this nascent Labor Party with serious questions about its future developments.

—Andy Phillips

## No victory at Trailmobile

**Chicago**—The five-months-plus lockout of United Paperworkers International members at the Trailmobile plant in Charlestown, Ill. ended July 1 with a vote to accept a company offer made at a June 26 bargaining session. Less than two-thirds of the local members voted on the proposal though, and of those who did, 30% were against it. No scabs will be retained by the company, but 700 of the 1200 pre-lockout work force will be left jobless by the agreement—and those who are called back will face a reclassification process which will result in lower wages for workers with little seniority.

Local 7591 Vice President Kevin Grant characterized the settlement as a "sell-out." "The International didn't support us like they should have. I'd like to say that I have faith in my President, but I think he felt pressure to settle the thing after what happened in Decatur. He's portraying it as a victory, but I don't see how anyone can call it that."

—Strike supporter

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

Editor's note: We publish excerpts of Dunayevskaya's speech on "Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1986-87," delivered to the national Convention of News and Letters Committees in September 1986, because of the way it speaks to many of the themes discussed in our "Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1996-97" (see pages 1, 5-8 of this issue). We publish here the final two paragraphs from Section A of its final part, entitled "The Single Dialectic in Philosophy," and excerpts from Section B, entitled "The Single Dialectic in Organization." The full document can be found in the Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. 13, microfilm #11035.

For Marxist-Humanists, Perspectives makes Retrospective not just a remembrance of things past, but such an inwardizing and projecting of Marx's whole body of ideas that only then does one fully embark on the new of one's own age, so that the discontinuity with the old is historically justifiable because it now shows its roots in the continuity.

The difficulty that Marxist-Humanists have had with this year—indeed, what revolutionaries have always encountered difficulty with—is the sudden recognition that it is the Universal that is crucial, not the Particular. That by itself is by no means sufficient because the Universal must particularize itself. In fact, to catch the "moment" when the Universal particularizes itself and when it doesn't, is the key to everything.

### The Single Dialectic in Organization

Because it is essential not to let go of the dialectic in the body of ideas and in the concrete perspectives for a single year, it becomes necessary to return to a final look at the Dialectic in Hegel. What may have sounded very abstract when I sent around the page of "Random Thoughts," on the relationship of the first to the last work of Hegel, is what is relevant here.<sup>1</sup> I stressed the fact that all of the ideas that it took a quarter of a century for Hegel to work out were already present, even if only implicitly, in the Phenomenology of Mind.

## Serb intellectuals defend genocide

Prague—Serbian academicians surprised public opinion twice at the beginning of June. At the annual meeting of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, ten of them signed a letter to the International Tribunal against War Crimes in the Hague in which they voiced their support for Radovan Karadzic, calling him "a great leader of all Serbs." Out of 20 signatories of the letter, the best known name is that of Mihailo Markovic, until recently vice-chairman of Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia.

The authors of the letter claim that the accusations of war crimes against Karadzic is not based on facts but is motivated by political and other aims. Karadzic, they believe, cannot be regarded as guilty of crimes against human rights and war laws since he signed as of July 13, 1992, a decree respecting the human rights of prisoners.

The second surprise came from the Academy's chairman, Alexander Despic. He called the problem of Kosova "the most important strategic problem regarding both the present and future of Serbia." Despic was speaking about the Albanians in Kosova who are experiencing a population explosion. According to Despic, this explosion means that in a few dozens years Serbia will be a country of two nations with totally different languages and cultural roots.

—Stephen Steiger

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# Single dialectic of philosophy/organization

It is true that Hegel himself didn't fully grasp that when it first poured out of him spontaneously. Post-Hegelians are still busy talking about its chaotic structure. When something bursts forth from a genius and has no strictly logical form, is hardly more than instinct, everyone, including the genius, is ready to attribute it to the chaotic state of youth. But, in fact, this is where instinct is not just instinct.

Long before he was able to articulate it to his own satisfaction, the essence of the final three syllogisms of Hegel's Philosophy of Mind was in the Phenomenology. What spelling out the structure in the Encyclopedia in syllogistic form — Logic-Nature-Mind — showed was that the Philosophy of Nature was the middle, the Mediation.

That is to say, Nature, not Logic, is the true first. It took Hegelians more than a century to discover that Logic was "replaced," and what Otto Poeggeler said in 1961 is still new and unacceptable to Hegelians.<sup>2</sup> Paragraphs 575, 576, 577 further reveal that a new unity is needed between Nature (Action, Practice) and Cognition. That unity, far from ending it, is a new beginning. The point is that the unity, or totality, is either a new beginning or it is no more than a quantitative summation.

The second syllogism [Nature-Mind-Logic], however, is not the final, not the second negation. With the second syllogism, Hegel still felt that his body of ideas needed to be worked out in full. That is what the third paragraph — #577 — is about. It is the second negation, and Hegel's "Eternity" leaves plenty of doors open. Marx's greatest transformation of Hegel's "Eternity" is "revolution in permanence." You can't just repeat it as a phrase, as "conclusion." That is what first begins a revolutionary's tasks, as it must be concretized for our age.

The unity, or totality, is either a new beginning which determines the end, or it contains the greatest contradiction all over again, as Hegel showed in the very first paragraph of the Absolute Idea. There he referred to Absolute Idea itself as containing the greatest contradiction.<sup>3</sup> In a word, when Hegel concluded Chapter 2 of Section 3, "The Idea," which showed the unity of action and cognition, he said "this is the Absolute Idea" (which made

## VOICES FROM WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS

### States fleece prisoners

by D. A. Sheldon

A new wave of legislative policy has been initiated against California and Iowa prisoners, effectively allowing prisoncrats to deduct 20% of all incoming funds from outside sources allotted toward prisoners accounts in order to pay court-ordered restitution. These funds usually come from family or friends of a prisoner to aid in the expense of hygiene, postage, and other necessities, which prisoners are forced to buy at inflated prices.

By cutting a portion of these funds, the majority of prisoners who receive a small amount, for example five dollars a month from a family member, will suffer increased hardship. Prisoncrats assert they are justified in their actions, stating that all inmates' basic needs are furnished by the state, while confiscated funds could be better used in compensating victims, and paying back attorney fees and court cost.

In reality these funds don't reach their intended destination; instead the State of Iowa, for instance, banks the money in a state financial institution to accumulate interest which is pocket lining for state coffers. Whereas California regulations allow the further collection of a 10% "administrative handling fee" from the initial deduction to pay the expense of stealing 20% in the first place! Furthermore the practice is illegal, because an inmate's prison account is a protected property interest that cannot be taken without due process.

Another way to look at this is that outside sources are being taxed for the right to send money to a prisoner. Eventually other state prison systems will enact similar oppressive policies, once legal challenges filed by prisoners in Iowa and California have been decided. It's predicted the courts will rule in favor of prisoncrats, due to the Federal judges' recent backlash against prisoners' constitutional rights.

Lenin so very happy despite the fact that Hegel was showing that it is only the threshold of the new Idea, and as everyone knows, from the threshold you can either go forward or fall backward). As you may know, that's when I began my fight with Lenin, in 1953, when he said that the final paragraph of the Science of Logic could be thrown out — but at that time I forgave him on the ground that he hadn't lived through Stalinism...

[The category of] post-Marx Marxism as a pejorative made translucent how crucial was that missing link—philosophy, not only for revolutionaries who had not returned to Marx's roots in the Hegelian dialectic, but even for a great revolutionary like Lenin who had, and without whose ground, in the philosophy of revolution, we couldn't have developed the Absolute Idea. Yet Lenin had not grounded himself in that missing link, philosophy, when it came to organization, "the Party." This produced the other new chapter for Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, Chapter 11 — "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates Ground for Organization."

Without the key importance of that missing link, philosophy, we couldn't have fully spelled out the full body of ideas in the succeeding year, especially the section we called "Not By Practice Alone" in our 1984-85 Perspectives.<sup>4</sup> The following year, we were again stressing "organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism."

As the Draft Perspectives for [1986-87] puts it: "Self-discipline is not the absence of discipline; it is the absence of an order to be disciplined. Self-discipline is born out of the Idea of Freedom as Absolute and History as not only past, but history-in-the-making which Marx saw as the actualization of freedom, its struggles throughout human development. The long, hard road to revolution cannot be achieved if History is skipped over; history-in-the-making, as well as in the past, is inseparable from the self in self-determination of the Idea of freedom."

This year the objective situation needed some practicing dialecticians...The need to organizationally concretize philosophy anew each year naturally is given new urgency now that Ronald Reagan's "Changed World" has made counter-revolution so tower over the seething discontent of the masses in the world that the very thought of revolution seems impossible. Here I want to tell you that I have introduced some changes into the title for the book. It is now **Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The Party and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity**.<sup>5</sup>

By organization being kept inseparable from philosophy, we see that there is no way for dialectics to be in two different places, one for organization and the other for philosophy. There is a single dialectic of objective/subjective. It is not ended in that relationship. That is where the task first begins. That is the Absolute Method. No other method will do. This is why Hegel, once he criticized the empiric and critical method as one—the second attitude to objectivity—proved that if any philosopher tried not to go to the Absolute Method, the dialectic, he would regress into the third attitude to objectivity. And that is why Marx never departed from Hegel's dialectic of thought, even in his discovery of a new continent of thought and of revolution. That is what remains the ground of Marxist-Humanism.

1. This refers to Dunayevskaya's "Random Thoughts" on Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, written on June 26, 1986, as part of her work on her projected book "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy." The document can be found in the Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. 13, microfilm #10769.

2. In 1961 Otto Poeggeler, an important scholar of Hegel as well as Heidegger, wrote an analysis of the final three syllogisms of Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, arguing that "In opposition to the usual interpretations of the Hegelian text, I should like to propose the following: that the real science of Spirit is not the Logic but the philosophy of Spirit."

3. At the start of the chapter on "The Absolute Idea" in his Science of Logic, Hegel writes, "The Absolute Idea has now turned out to be the identity of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea; each of these by itself is one-sided and contains the Idea only as a sought Beyond and an unattained goal...[it] contains the highest opposition in itself." See Hegel's Science of Logic, trans. by A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1991), p. 824.

4. This essay, "Not by Practice Alone: The Movement from Theory," is available in The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya (Chicago: News and Letters, 1992).

5. Dunayevskaya's work on this book was cut short by her death on June 9, 1987. Her many notes for the book can be found in the Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. 13.



# TODAY'S CRISES AND THE SEARCH FOR A TOTAL UPROOTING

(Continued from page 1)

from his positions, but rather the extent to which the other candidates appropriated his ultra-nationalism.

What Aleksandr Yanov said of Zyuganov in a recent issue of *Moscow News* could as well be said of all the major Marxist aspirants: "Having traded in his orthodox Marxism [sic] for nationalism, he is poised to play the bloody role of a Russian Slobodan Milosevic."

Given all this, one may wonder what ever happened to the Russian "democrats." They are by now totally discredited, thanks to their illusion that it would be possible to break up the structures of Communism from above. They never tried to rely on the revolutionary action of the masses from below. Thanks to this self-limiting conception the Communist rulers were never driven from their control of production and the state. They instead retained their positions of power, and embraced privatization of industry and free markets as a way to secure their personal control over production.

The emptiness of the alternative to Stalinism presented by the democrats helps explain the present move to the Right. As Otto Lwshel, a columnist for *Izvestia* said, "What is the overwhelming idea that [the democrats] were offering? The Communists at least have a description of a society in the future. I can prove it is a deceit, but they've got a description. The democrats have never volunteered it."<sup>2</sup>

That Russia is now confronting a resurgent statism does not mean privatization of industry will be reversed. Privatization, after all, has largely benefited the old rulers by providing them with personal ownership over the factories and firms which they formerly managed in the name of "the Plan." The effort to strengthen the authoritarian state is fully compatible with retaining much of industry in the hands of private entrepreneurs. The multinationals who have held back from investing in Russia are well aware of this; they know from their massive investments in China how important statist repression is for a "favorable business climate."

As one Russian analyst pointed out, "The degree of state or private ownership of the domestic economy is no longer important to the IMF or World Bank, provided that foreign investments are guaranteed and that the possibility remains of influencing the government's financial policies."<sup>3</sup>

What does threaten to be transformed by the elections are Russia's foreign relations, especially with the U.S. The rise of Great Russian chauvinism opens the door to new conflicts with the West. It should not be forgotten that Russia still possesses over 10,000 nuclear weapons.

Today's situation confirms what we said after the collapse of the USSR in 1991: "While the Russian leaders are [for now] fully willing to bow to the U.S. on an array of fronts, especially since they have the illusion this will help them obtain Western economic assistance...the underlying basis of superpower competition has not been removed."<sup>4</sup>

This does not mean Yeltsin is in for a smooth ride. The social crisis is intractable and becoming deeper. The discontent of the masses is enormous, even if it has not moved in an anti-capitalist direction. As the persistent struggle of the Chechnyan people against insurmountable odds shows, the masses are not going to take Yeltsin's dictates lying down.

## B. High-tech capitalism and sweated labor

The Clinton-Dole presidential election campaign here at home may seem the total opposite of Russia's, since it is hardly generating any degree of interest or excitement. This has less to do with their "lackluster" personalities than with the utter emptiness of their respective political programs.

Unlike 1992, when Clinton ran for president by promising to use the federal government to spur capital investment, job training, and business development in the inner cities, this time around he makes no mention of such issues. In declaring that "the era of big government is over," he has positioned himself so far to the Right as to be nearly indistinguishable from Dole, who says our economic problems cannot be resolved by government intervention. Neither shows the slightest interest in addressing what can be done to resolve the endemic problems of permanent mass unemployment, growing poverty, and declining living conditions.

This can be seen from the fate of Gingrich's "Contract on America." It has not figured as an item in the election campaign so far, largely because Clinton has by now accepted most of it—which is not to say the rules are exactly the same. As the recent Israeli elections showed,

the victory of a far-Rightist backed up by religious fundamentalists can have a devastating impact on gay rights, women's rights to abortion, and civil rights. The Christian Coalition in the U.S. has its own regressive agenda in store for us in the event of a victory by Dole.

Of crucial importance is the impact of such retrogression on Black America. While the administration has taken a kid-gloves approach to white militia groups like the Montana Freeman, it has failed to nab those who have burned dozens of Black churches throughout the South. Just as in the 1960s the complicity of the FBI failed to uncover those who attacked civil rights activists and youth integrating southern universities, so today the powers-that-be cannot muster the strength to take an effective stand against attacks on African-Americans.

This coincides with an unprecedented crisis in the Black community. The U.S. not only has the highest overall infant mortality rate of the eight industrialized Western nations; the rate for Blacks is twice that of whites. As for life expectancy, white men can expect to live an average of 72.9 years, 8.3 years longer than Black men, who make it on average to 64.6. White women live an average of 5.8 years longer than Black women.

Moreover, child poverty has reached the highest level since the War on Poverty began in 1964—soaring to 15 million. Three-fourths of all poor children in our cities are Black or Latino. Black poverty has not only risen to three times the rate of white poverty, but Blacks are five times more likely than whites to live in concentrated poverty areas.

The only "solutions" Clinton or Dole offer to this are: 1) Warehousing the permanent army of the unemployed in the exploding number of prisons with young men taken prisoner in their racially selective "war on drugs." This is creating a situation which leads us to ask whether a new Attica uprising is waiting to happen. 2) Cutting welfare by blaming welfare mothers and teen pregnancy for all our problems. This ignores the fact that many working women have had to turn to welfare since they cannot feed their families on poverty wages.

It becomes clear that youth, especially Black and Latino youth, have become a "throw-away generation." The connections were not lost at the Washington, D.C. rally organized by the Children's Defense Fund at the beginning of June, where one of the hand-lettered signs demanded: "Build Schools, Not Prisons!"

These conditions show that the social crises gripping this nation have become so deep, structural, and intractable that the rulers no longer even pretend that the power of the state can resolve them. They are instead using the state to impose draconian austerity measures, especially against the unemployed and those forced into conditions of low-wage, sweated labor.

Different as the electoral campaigns in the U.S. and Russia may appear, what underlies them both is the intractable nature of the economic crisis gripping the world economy. For despite all the hoopla about the "new stage" reached with globalized high-tech production, distribution, and information, no new era of economic development has resulted from it. Though for the past two decades capitalism has expanded by intensifying the rate of the exploitation of labor through such techniques as "lean and flexible" production, automation, and reliance on sweated labor, there has been no corresponding increase in the productivity of labor—the factor which remains the key to economic growth.<sup>5</sup>

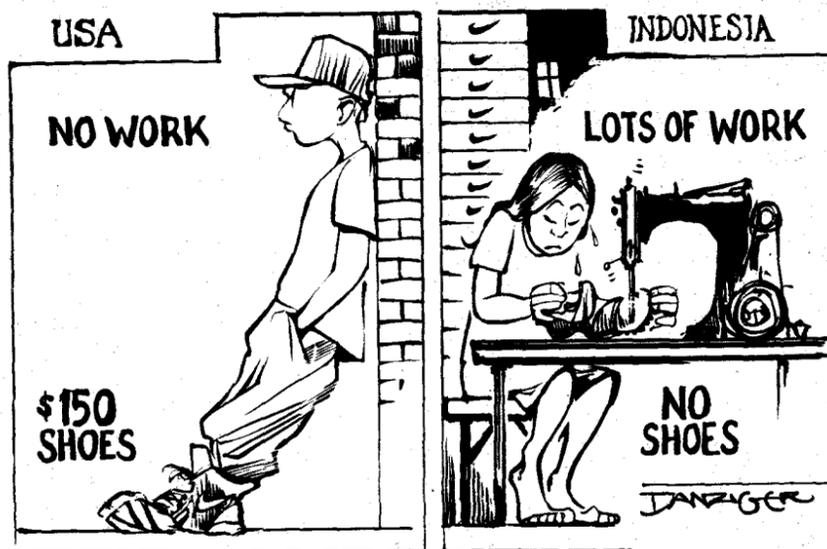
Since 1974, the U.S. economy has grown at an average rate of only 2.3% a year, compared to 4.3% from 1948-73. The rate of productivity growth has dropped by even more—from an average of 2.7% from 1948-73 to only 0.9% since 1974. Nor is this only true of the U.S. Despite all the investments made in computers, labor-saving devices, and high-technology over the past two decades, the rate of growth in the productivity of labor in the world's 16 richest nations fell by 50% over the last two decades. Multifactor productivity—the productivity of labor and capital combined—has grown only 0.3% a year since 1974, only a quarter of the rate from 1948-73.

This is in spite of huge investments in high-tech automation and computerization. When personal computers were first introduced into offices, they were expected to raise productivity. They instead lowered it, even as they displaced workers en masse. Though large productivity increases have been reported in some select sectors of manufacturing, the "high-tech revolution" has not delivered the promised productivity growth there either. In response, the capitalists increasingly rely on such strategies as "just in time" production and "vendor-managed inventories."

With "just in time" production, computer systems are used to shorten the time-span between ordering of materials, production, and delivery of goods. An example is the auto industry. When GM receives a truck with car seats, the seats are already arranged in the exact order of models and sizes matching the cars coming down the assembly line. The driver simply backs the truck into the dock, opens it, and the seats go directly into the cars—when all goes according to "plan." Just-in-time production dictates that a plant have on hand only what it needs for the next 48 hours of operation.

5. See "Workers and the World Economy" by Ethan Kapstein, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1996, to see how even apologists for capitalism admit that the high-tech revolution has failed to produce the desired productivity growth in manufacturing and services.

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO NIKE



This drive to shorten the time-span between delivery, production, and distribution is also leading companies to try to make products that are already ordered, rather than selling what they've already made. Through such techniques as "vendor-managed inventory," the capitalists imagine they can create a "seamless integration" of production and distribution.

Such strategies are aimed at making the worker an appendage not just to the machine, but to an ever-shifting and flexible labor process. Yet the capitalists do not seem able to take account of workers' resistance to such restructuring and speed-up. Marx long ago anticipated these developments: "The flexibility of capital, its indifference to the particular forms of the labor process it requires, is extended by capital to the worker. He is required to be capable of the same flexibility or versatility in the way he applies his labor-power....[The capitalist] pushes to one side all legal and other extra-economic obstructions standing in the way of this versatility."<sup>6</sup>

What drives the capitalists to utilize such strategies is not the "success" of high-tech in boosting the productivity of labor, but rather its failure to do so. Faced with a persistent drag on the rate of productivity growth, capital seeks out new forms of "lean" and "flexible" production as well as new sources of sweated labor. This continued reliance on sweatshop conditions, both in the South USA and throughout the Third World, is nowhere more evident than in capitalism's increasing use of child labor.

This failure to attain the desired rates of growth and profits flows from capital's inner contradiction—its failure to reproduce its only value-creating substance, living labor. Today's realities confirm Marx's contention that capital's crises flow from its inability to give full employment to labor because of the drive to reduce the proportion of living labor relative to capital at the point of production. For even when productivity growth is attained in a particular plant or section of industry through high-tech restructuring, the workers laid off as a result of it are no longer able to find employment in industries that are similarly productive. They are forced into the low-paid, low-productive service sector—or into permanent

(Continued on page 6)

6. Karl Marx, "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," *Capital*, Vol. I (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 1013.

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2. Quoted in "Battling Against his Own Blunders" by David Hoffman, *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, May 27-June 2, 1996.

3. Boris Kagarlitsky, "The Situation in Russia in April-May 1996." (from the Internet)

4. See "Mass revolt, deep crises and pull of old haunt the 'new' Russia," by Peter Wermuth, *News & Letters*, October 1991.

# TODAY'S CRISES AND THE SEARCH FOR A TOTAL UPROOTING

(Continued from page 5)

unemployment. The more capital innovates, the more it encounters barriers to increasing its overall rate of productivity.

Far from being limited to the U.S., this is true of state-capitalism on a world scale. From the birth of state-capitalism in Russia in the 1930s, it has been dogged by the low productivity of labor. Far from being a sign of their "backwardness," it expressed the depth of the Russian workers' revolt. Though Russia did achieve significant economic growth when it came to arms production, over the long run this only accentuated the overall crisis of the Russian economy.

When the economic crisis became especially acute in the 1980s, a host of solutions were offered by the Russian rulers, for overcoming the low productivity of labor. Mikhail Gorbachev's approach upon coming to power was to follow that of his mentor, Yuri Andropov, by seeking to raise labor productivity by: 1) increasing investments in machine tools and electronics, and 2) exhorting the workers to work harder through "acceleration" (*uskoreniye*, also translated as "speed-up"). When this failed to put a dent in the problem, he coupled this with a call for "restructuring" of industry (*perestroika*) through "market incentives." The idea was that by freeing up prices, privatizing industry, and moving away from a centrally planned economy, the managers of industry would find the key to unlock the riddle of low productivity.

It was Yeltsin who implemented this with his "free market" shock therapy starting in 1991. But it has not led to any serious rise in the productivity of labor. This shows that as important as the events of 1991 were in bringing down the hated totalitarian regime, the move toward a market economy failed to take Russia beyond the confines of the contradictions endemic to state-capitalism. State-capitalism hung on, only now with a free market mask.

In the same period in which the fetish of the free market swept through Russia and Eastern Europe, the fetish of high-tech dominated discussion in the West. Yet high-tech has failed to provide capitalism with the means to grow on an ever-expanding scale. So intractable is this crisis of accumulation that no technical or governmental "fix" can resolve it. The various forms by which the rulers respond to this crisis—in the U.S., declaring that "the era of big government is over" while building more prisons, whereas in Russia, declaring that a stronger state is needed to handle the dislocations resulting from economic collapse—reflect the extent to which the tech-

nological restructuring has failed to extract capitalism from its internal barriers to self-expansion.

When the economic crisis in Russia brought forth a new generation of rulers grouped around Yuri Andropov in the 1980s, Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., wrote: "No, it is not in 'high technology' that one can find the great contradictions wracking capitalism, private as well as state. One needs, instead, to dig deep into the basic capital/labor relationship. Though the Russians, too, don't know how to overcome it, they do have a name for the current 'low productivity' of Russian labor: 'unemployment within the factory gates.'"<sup>7</sup>

Dunayevskaya concluded that far from representing the "beginning of a new era," Andropov's ascendancy reflected "the final stage of state-capitalism's degeneracy." In light of today's realities, we can add that far from representing some qualitative new stage, high-tech capitalism is instead revealing the final stage of state-capitalism's global degeneracy.

Nowhere is this degeneracy more evident than in the Third World—and most especially in Africa.



Sam Shilowa, general secretary of COSATU, and Mandela.

## C. Africa falls off the map

Today's apologists for capitalism like to point to the "booming" economy on China's coast, the rapid industrialization of Indonesia, and Malaysia's construction of the world's tallest office building as proof of its ability to develop the technologically underdeveloped world. They neglect to mention that such development is a strictly regional phenomenon, arrived at only under specific conditions. Indonesia, for instance, became a haven for international capital only after a three-decade long period of intense repression which reduced wages to half that of China's.

Though China and the Pacific Rim are now major engines of the world economy, Africa has been totally written out of even regional capital development. Capitalists no longer pretend to be interested in developing Africa; instead of stimulating any investment, they are pulling out the few they have. Their prevailing view is "Who cares about Africa; it is not important to us; leave it to the IMF and the World Bank."<sup>8</sup>

During the Cold War the West used Africa, not as a haven for capital investment, but as a dumping ground for arms purchases. Now that the Cold War is over, the continent is disregarded altogether. Africa is "falling off the map." Since 1974 wages have dropped by 25% in sub-Saharan Africa, while the number of Africans living in absolute poverty will grow from 200 million to 300 million in the next decade.

It should come as no surprise that the West's indifference to conditions in Africa persists even in the face of

7. See "Andropov's Ascendancy Reflects Final Stage of State-Capitalist Degeneracy," by Raya Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 144.

8. This is quoted in "Africa: Falling Off the Map?" by Thomas M. Callaghy, *Current History*, January 1994.

outright genocide. Neither the murder of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and anti-racist Hutus in Rwanda, nor the ongoing crises in Liberia, Zaire, and Sierra Leone, seem to hold the slightest attention of the Clinton administration. The pattern for this was set with the U.S. response to events in Bosnia. After sitting back and watching as 200,000 were slaughtered there, the U.S.

used the Dayton Accords to solidify the partition of Bosnia along ethnic lines. Just as the U.S. sabotaged the defense of Bosnia's multiethnic heritage, so it now does nothing to stop the genocidal effort to destroy any possibility of a multiethnic society in Burundi.

This disregard even extends to South Africa. Despite Mandela's hope that foreign investment would flood the country with the victory of the ANC, it has not happened. In response, he is calling on the masses to create a "friendly business environment" by accepting lower wages and living conditions.

After a recent trip to Germany, in which he visited with officials who are imposing an austerity program on German workers, Mandela announced that privatization of state assets is "the fundamental policy of the ANC and it is going to be implemented. The responsibility for creating an investor and trade-friendly environment is for us to take." It is clear that South Africa's workers do not intend to take this lying down. Even Sam Shilowa, general secretary of COSATU, the nation's largest trade union federation which is aligned with the ANC, declared that it "views privatization with total hostility, on the grounds that it would perpetuate the effects of apartheid by failing to redress the inequitable distribution of wealth."

The strikes that have broken out in South Africa in response to the threats of austerity, as well as the ongoing struggles against environmental destruction and military dictatorship in Nigeria, express deep sentiments brewing from beneath the surface. As against the way Africa is being written off the map, we must not lose sight of the human creativity which is sure to be released in new freedom struggles to come. As Raya Dunayevskaya wrote in the chapter on the African revolutions in *Philosophy and Revolution*, "The whole point seems to be to hold on to the principle of creativity, and the contradictory process by which creativity develops" (p. 246).

## II. Forces of revolt as reason, philosophy as force of revolt

*Philosophic mediation is the middle that first creates from itself the whole.*

—Raya Dunayevskaya<sup>9</sup>

### A. Facing the specter of retrogression

The need to hold onto the contradictory process by which creativity develops is especially important in light of the fetish of high-tech. For high-tech capitalism has not only generated the illusion that technology has created a "post-industrial information world." It has also obscured new forces of revolt emerging against it.

As we wrote in the Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives 1995-96, "The prevailing view, whether on the part of postmodernists, critical theorists, or independent Marxists, is that the technological transformation of society has reached the point where the subjectivity of the human being has become totally subsumed by the object, that is, the machine. As a result, the effort to relate the idea of freedom to subjects of revolution—whether they be workers, women, Blacks or youth—has been completely abandoned by an array of radical thinkers and activists." Even when subjective resistance is grasped by thinkers, the subjectivity of the idea of freedom itself is totally rejected.

As against this, the events of the past year provide ample proof that capitalism's material conditions continue to be met with new forms of subjective resistance from below. This is especially seen with this year's anti-austerity strikes in Europe. The crisis of European capital has prompted the French and German rulers to openly embark on an effort to reduce workers' wages and social benefits. The massive strikes and demonstrations called in response in France have now spilled over into Germany, where workers have displayed French flags in their banners—a type of internationalism not seen in years.

In the U.S., a new moment in labor was reached with the strike at the Dayton, Ohio GM parts-assembly plant

over outsourcing to non-union shops. For years we have been told that the "high-tech revolution" undermines the ability of workers to effectively challenge capital. Yet the Dayton strike has revealed something very new. The and distribution through strategies like "just in time" production means that any disruption of the supply chain, even if localized, can bring the entire chain to a halt. The ability of a few thousand Dayton workers to shut down virtually all U.S.-GM operations—despite the fact that the union bureaucracy imposed a settlement that largely allows outsourcing to continue—indicates that new challenges to capital are emerging from within the very contours of today's high-tech restructuring.

This can also be seen from other labor struggles, such as the organizing campaigns led by Black working women in the Mississippi Delta and Memphis. It extends to women's liberationists rethinking how to fight the Right in the aftermath of the dialogue reflected in the Beijing Women's Conference, students combatting attacks on affirmative action, gay and lesbian activists mobilizing against homophobic ballot initiatives, and Black youth

asking "where to now?" four years after the Los Angeles rebellion.

Likewise, the fact that "high-tech" capitalism takes the name "neoliberal restructuring" in the Third World has not lulled the masses into complacency. This is especially seen in the rise of new struggles by indigenous peoples in Latin America, largely inspired by the Chiapas revolt in Mexico. Since 1994 a new indigenous rights movement has emerged in Bolivia which unites Indians from the highlands and the Amazonian region; mass mobilizations of indigenous peoples have erupted this year throughout Ecuador; and an organization which for the first time embraces all the Mayan peoples of Guatemala has arisen.

Yet there is every reason to feel that pointing to new subjective struggles arising from today's material conditions still does not get us to the fundamental problem facing us. For even when new forms of revolt emerge, they confront such a void in the articulation of a concept of an alternative to existing society that their very forward movement risks being compromised. The pull to skip over the subjectivity of the idea of freedom is at the core of today's crisis in the radical movement.

The new indigenous movements in Latin America speak to this. At a time when most leftist parties in Latin America have accepted one or another form of "free market" restructuring as "inevitable," indigenous peoples are mobilizing against it on the grounds that it is destroying their communities. Yet the absence of any socialist alternative means that the struggles find themselves immediately confronting the question of whether they have any choice but to operate within the existing system. In Ecuador, it has led a section of the indigenous movement to fall victim to state cooptation. As one Ecuadoran activist in the U.S. said, "In this situation, the question of 'how to begin anew' is so pressing."

This is not just true of Latin America. Throughout the world the forward movement of the emerging revolts is being compromised by the lack of projection on the part of revolutionaries of a concept of a new society opposed to both existing capitalism and state-capitalism that called itself Communism.

For decades radicals resisted assuming responsibility for projecting a positive, humanist alternative to existing

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9. See "On the Battle of Ideas" (October 1982), in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of its World Development*, #7486.

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society. What is new today, however, is that whereas in earlier decades it was possible to harbor the illusion that forward movement can be achieved without assuming this responsibility, today's realities disclose that failure to project a comprehensive vision of what we are for leads to outright retrogression.

In East Europe and Russia the revolts face a reality in which "free market" and statist capitalism are posed as the only alternatives. This is providing the political space for the growth of an array of narrow nationalist tendencies—as seen most of all in the genocide against Bosnia. And in the U.S. the revolts face a reality in which an array of tendencies are promoting the notion of "self-reliance" within the existing structures of capitalism as the only alternative. The most threatening of these for today's freedom movements is Louis Farrakhan's effort to promote himself as a leading spokesperson for Black America in the aftermath of the Million Man March. Because of the void in the projection of a liberating alternative, each of the emerging revolts faces tremendous pressures to accommodate itself to the limits of the given.

To work out "how to begin anew" in light of this, despite our small numbers we must do what we can to assume responsibility for projecting a concept of liberation that points to a total uprooting of existing society.

That concept can be found in Marx's philosophy of "revolution in permanence." Its rediscovery for our age took nothing less than Raya Dunayevskaya's breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutes in 1953 and its subsequent three-decade development in the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. In opposition to the way so many skipped over or narrowed Marx's concept of a total uprooting, Marxist-Humanism restated its meaning for the realities of our age.

Marxist-Humanists emphasized that far from simply critiquing capitalism for depriving workers of the full value of their labor, Marx centered his critique of capitalism on the very mode of labor—alienated labor. Nor did he stop here. He called the man/woman relation the "most fundamental" in society and the measure of whether it was truly free. In doing so he issued a total challenge, not just to capitalism's economics and politics, but also to its very culture. Marx projected a philosophy of revolution opposed to all conditions in which human relations take on the form of relations between things.

This flowed from Marx's demystification of Hegel's concept of absolute negativity. Instead of seeing the "negation of the negation" as the contradiction of philosophy with itself, Marx held that it expressed the "moving and creating" principle of history. Each facet of Marx's challenge to existing society flowed from his critical encounter with Hegel's Absolutes. As Dunayevskaya wrote in *Marxism and Freedom*, "the vision of the future [is what] Hegel called the Absolute and which Marx first called 'real Humanism' and later 'communism.' The road to both is by way of 'the negation of the negation'" (p.66).

This was not just true of the young Marx. It was true of the "mature" Marx of *Capital*. It reached its fullest expression in his last decade (1872-83). Far from being a mere search for the "origins" of class society, Marx's studies on East India, colonial Java, the American Indians and Australian aborigines in works like the *Ethnological Notebooks* was part of an effort to dig out, as Dunayevskaya noted, "how total, continuous, global must the concept of revolution be now."<sup>10</sup>

The projection of this philosophy of revolution in per-

10. Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 187.

manence remains "the absolute challenge to our age." For history shows that without a philosophy of revolution, even the most creative movement from practice not only cannot meet its goal, but can fall prey to the pull of retrogression. Combatting this by projecting what Marx's Marxism means for today as restated by Marxist-Humanism defines our organizational role.

The fact that today's struggles confront the specter of retrogression does not mean the masses are backward. New forces constantly arise, and with them, the dialectic of negativity comes to life ever anew. But that does not mean mass revolts cannot be diverted from their aim if the role of an organization rooted in Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence is left unconcretized.

## B. The pull of the Practical Idea

Our effort to combat the tendency to skip over the subjects of revolt must not take the ground of what we oppose. For it would be the gravest error to try to combat the dismissal of mass subjectivity by acting as if Practice represents the transcendence of contradiction.

The pull to pose revolutionary Practice as sufficient to create a new society confronts us everywhere. It can be seen in those promoting some new version of a "party to lead"; in those who act as if mass discontent with the present state of affairs can by itself chart a course to a new beginning; and in those who do see the need for dialectics but who skip over or leave unconcretized the relation of organization and philosophy, thereby acting as if the unity of theory and practice simply comes by itself. Far from being true only of others, the tendency to act as if Practice is the resolution of contradiction remains the most basic problem facing Marxist-Humanists.

The objectivity of this tendency is directly spoken to in one of the most important philosophic developments in Marxist-Humanism—Raya Dunayevskaya's reexamination of Lenin's 1914 *Philosophic Notebooks* in 1986-87. Though it may seem accidental that working out our perspectives for 1996-97 coincides with the tenth anniversary of this new point of departure, today's situation discloses the need to view who we are and where we are going in light of this 1986-87 reexamination of Lenin.<sup>11</sup>

Lenin was one who did see the need for revolutionary theory, and who did grasp the importance of Hegelian dialectics—so much so that he engaged in a profound study of Hegel's *Science of Logic* in 1914 and concretized its dialectic in analyzing the new objective stage of monopoly capitalism/imperialism and the new subjective force of national minorities resisting it.

Yet because Lenin became enamored of the Practical Idea as the key to forward movement when reaching the next-to-last chapter of the *Science of Logic*, the Idea of Cognition, he refrained from developing the dialectic of thought in its final chapter, the Absolute Idea. It isn't that Lenin was wrong to note the prominence Hegel gives to the Practical Idea. It's that he read this one-sidedly, by stressing Practice at the expense of the Idea of Theory. In doing so he failed to develop his own insight that "cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it." As a result, he never related the dialectic of absolute negativity to organization.

11. Dunayevskaya's 1986 reexamination of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* is developed in the Introduction to the 1991 edition of *Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) entitled, "New Thoughts on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy."

# TODAY'S CRISES AND THE SEARCH FOR A TOTAL UPROOTING

Lenin also overlooked Hegel's warning that unless Practice unites with Theory, the transition to the Absolute, or the new society, is not assured. Hegel even implies that retrogression will occur if that unity is not achieved. Yet Lenin remained unfazed by this warning of retrogression because he was so taken with the idea that Practice is the key to resolving contradiction. By failing to penetrate the dialectic of Hegel's Absolutes, he failed to fully prepare his and succeeding generations for grappling with "what happens after the revolution."

In light of the aborted and unfinished revolutions which we have witnessed in our time, Lenin's emphasis on the Practical Idea is clearly insufficient. Yet it was not only Lenin who became enamored of Practice as the resolution of contradiction. That was also true of the greatest Marxists after Lenin. The detailed discussion of Dunayevskaya's critique of Lenin contained in Kevin Anderson's *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism* provides new ground for exploring this.

This new work shows that even when such creative Marxist thinkers as Georg Lukacs delved into Hegelian dialectics, the concept of practice, of activity, predominated over the dialectic as a whole. He too refrained from delving into Hegel's Absolutes, stressing instead "The concrete superiority of the practical over the theoretical idea."<sup>12</sup>

Far from being a concern of some bygone era, the tendency to stop short of the dialectic of absolute negativity by stressing the priority of the Practical Idea has everything to do with the origin and persistence of today's retrogression.

One event which proved of crucial importance in the emergence of today's retrogression was the counter-revolution from within the revolution in Grenada in 1983. The main responsibility for the counter-revolution in Grenada—which gave Reagan the excuse he was looking for to invade—clearly lay with the Stalinists who took up arms against their own co-leaders. But the responsibility also lay with those who opposed Stalinism from the Left, such as the followers of C.L.R. James.

This is because those who followed James "evaded the task of philosophically restating Marxism for one's own age" by shifting that whole responsibility "to the shoulders of the proletariat, to 'practice.'" <sup>13</sup> By acting as if a revolutionary new beginning comes from practice, instead of through an energetic dialogue between the practice of the masses and a philosophy of liberation, they left the revolution unprepared to answer the question, "what happens after" the seizure of power.

It isn't that the events on tiny Grenada literally remade the map of the world. It's that the counter-revolution which emerged from within the revolution, and which opened the door to the U.S. imperialist invasion, showed that the revolutions of the post-World War II era had failed to work out a pathway to a new society. On a global scale, the banners of liberation under which an array of revolutions and freedom struggles were fought proved themselves wanting, because a relation between theory and practice that could realize the idea of freedom was left unconcretized. The failure to overcome the internal barriers to the self-development of revolution provided political space for capitalism to restructure and reorganize itself—and get away with it.

The key to the emergence of the retrogressive changed world of the 1980s was therefore not the objective changes in capitalism, as much as the contradictions within the revolutionary movements. The persistence of this stage of retrogression in the 1990s suggests that a revolutionary new beginning cannot arise unless a new relation of theory to practice that projects a liberating alternative to existing society is concretized.

For this reason, we cannot afford to harbor the illusion that the pull of the Practical Idea is no longer with us. In some respects it may seem strange that its pull persists, given the failure of so many revolutions. Yet the reason this remains such a problem is that even when dialectics was approached or dealt with in a serious way by radicals, philosophy remained unconcretized when it came to organization. A loophole was thereby left in the effort to project philosophy as an actual force of revolution. By failing to realize philosophy through a new relation between dialectics and organization, the movement has been left without historic proof that a philosophy of liberation can be a force for transforming society. For this reason, each time a new crisis point arises, radicals get pulled back to dependence on the Practical Idea as the only feasible alternative.

Far from being true only of others, this is the fundamental problem facing us. For as Dunayevskaya wrote in one of her very last writings, while Marxist-Humanism has worked out an historic body of ideas, we have not yet organizationally worked out philosophy as the absolute

(Continued on page 8)

12. See Kevin Anderson's *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 177-84.

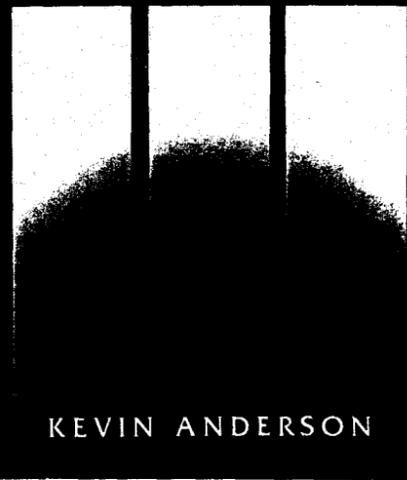
13. "Grenada: Counter-Revolution and Revolution," by Raya Dunayevskaya, in *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*, by Lou Turner and John Alan (Chicago: News and Letters, 1986), p. 91.

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## TODAY'S CRISES AND THE SEARCH FOR A TOTAL UPROOTING

(Continued from page 7)

opposite to the elitist "party to lead."<sup>14</sup> Unless we do so, we will not just remain stuck at the threshold of the Absolute—we will be thrown far backward.

### C. Absolute negativity and philosophic mediation

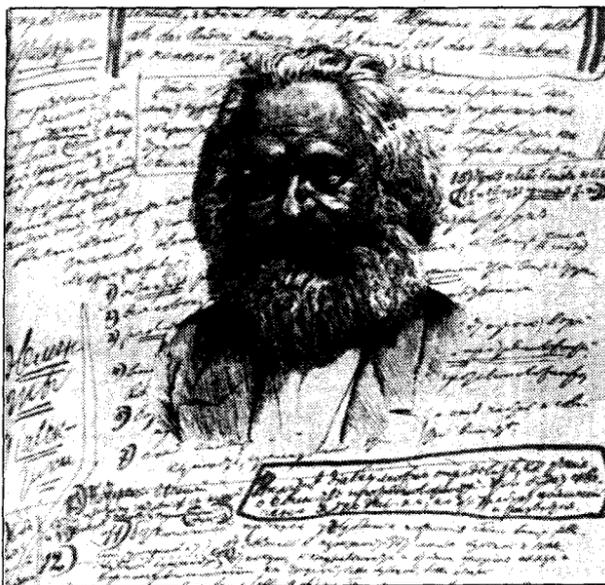
To meet the challenge of concretizing philosophy organizationally, we must come to grips with the positive which emerged from Dunayevskaya's 1986-87 critique of Lenin—her return to the "philosophic moment" of Marxist-Humanism, the 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," this time seeing them as the "ground and roof" for working out the dialectics of organization and philosophy.

The 1953 letters did not only represent a return to Hegel's concept of absolute negativity. They also opened the door to achieving the link of continuity with Marx's Marxism by demystifying Hegel's concept of absolute negativity for today's freedom struggles. The importance of these letters for today flows from the need to assume

14. See "Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy" of June 1, 1987, *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1989), p. 15. This book also contains Dunayevskaya's 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes."

organizational responsibility for the projection of Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence" inseparable from the dialectic of philosophy.

A new publication issued by revolutionaries in India, containing six chapters from Dunayevskaya's *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*, speaks to what this can mean. The editors say they issued this book because "an emancipatory vision as an alternative to the capitalist order and its barbarism is not emerging globally even six years after the state-capitalist dictatorships collapsed...it is therefore crucial to develop a total philosophy of revolution for total human liberation. Marx's philosophy of revolution is crucial to the working out of this total philosophy and therefore it is necessary to rediscover Marx's Marxism for our age."<sup>15</sup>



Lithograph of Marx superimposed on page of manuscript from Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks on Hegel's Science of Logic* on which he gives his 16 point summary of the dialectic.

They especially emphasize how Marx singled out not alone the class struggle but also the need for new man/woman relations. This is crucial because, as they note, no revolutionary subject can truly be free "unless it has first eliminated all relations of domination and subordination within its own ranks." We must add, however, that Marx did not only extend his critique of the mode of production to a critique of the family, alienated man/woman relations, racism, and national oppression. He also dug into Hegel's dialectic "in and for itself," in his 1844 "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic." Marx there projected a New Humanism "which distinguishes itself from idealism and materialism, and is, at the same time, the truth uniting them both." By holding firmly to the Hegelian dialectic, Marx projected a concept of revolution centering on the need for a total uprooting.

Thus, while Marx's thought was deeply rooted in subjects of revolution, Marx's Marxism is a totality that does not stop at a mere summation of its parts. By being firmly rooted in Hegel's dialectic, he projected a vision of a total uprooting which each of these forces desperately needs in order to meet the task of transforming reality.

This is what post-Marx Marxists failed to live up to. It isn't that they didn't know Marx had a concept of "revolution in permanence." It's that because they separated that concept from Hegel's dialectic of absolute negativity, they proved unable to re-create his concept of a total uprooting. The entire history of Marxism shows that it is impossible to restate the fullness of Marx's challenge to existing society unless we become deeply rooted in the Hegelian dialectic.

Internalizing and projecting Marxist-Humanism's unique contributions on the Hegelian dialectic as exhibited in his *Phenomenology of Mind*, *Science of Logic*, and *Philosophy of Mind* is of foremost organizational importance. What Hegel called the "eternal Idea" in paragraph 577 of his *Philosophy of Mind*, and what Marxist-Humanists call Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence," is nothing less than the mediating determination in the dialectics of organization and philosophy.

15. See "Dialogue from India: On the Dialectics of Women's Liberation," *News & Letters*, May 1996.

## III. Philosophic-political-organizational tasks for 1996-97

This defines the importance of our foremost tasks, from which all our others must flow—our work in creating and projecting a new book containing some of Raya Dunayevskaya's major writings on the Hegelian dialectic.

The writings being considered for this book range from the 1949-50 philosophic correspondence during the Miners' General Strike, to commentaries on Hegel's major works, to analyses of such thinkers as Fanon, Lukacs, Korsch, Adorno and Kosik. It will also include two especially critical determinants: 1) The text of the "philosophic moment" of Marxist-Humanism—the 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes; and 2) A series of 1980's writings which explore the meaning of Marxist-Humanism.

By including these writings this new work will test us on our ability to project Marxist-Humanism on the basis of the founder's philosophic self-comprehension of her body of thought. Far from such reflection upon the meaning of Marxist-Humanism leading to some "closed ontology," the act of thought concentrating itself upon itself provides the direction for working out what Marxist-Humanism means for the future. Our effort to have our work on this book become an organizational endeavor

or will test our determination to break down the division between philosophy and organization.

This is what must permeate all our other tasks, beginning with the development of a Marxist-Humanist Statement on the Black Dimension. Its importance is borne out by the need to comprehend how the changes in U.S. economics, politics and ideology over the last two decades have impacted Black America. We aim to present the Black Dimension not as a passive object of these changes, but rather to discern the new forms of revolt being engendered in the shell of the old. This has always defined our approach, as seen with *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*.

At the same time, our Statement aims to directly speak to the crisis in thought confronting Black America. Precisely because the Black Dimension represents such an important force in the transformation of U.S. society, our work on this statement calls for no separation between economics, politics, and philosophy.

The need for this integrality also underlines our newest publication—the expanded edition of *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western "Civilization"*. In projecting the meaning of the new subjective force of liberation contained in Bosnia's struggle for multiethnicity

and generalizing the lessons of Bosnia for freedom struggles elsewhere, especially in the U.S., this book shows how we tried to meet the challenge of becoming continuators of Marxist-Humanism by posing politicalization inseparable from philosophy. It is a central part of our pre-convention discussion.

A key expression of our determination to go "lower and deeper" into the revolutionary layers of U.S. society is our work with prisoners, which reached a new level of intensity this year. We are aiding in the creation of a new pamphlet, written by prisoners, which will expose the true nature of the conditions facing them.

We will also soon have in hand a new edition of *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*. In focusing on how Marxist-Humanism developed the dialectics of revolution for the specific realities facing women's liberation, it illuminates the methodology of relating dialectical philosophy to all forces of revolt. The new edition also underlines the importance of the Archives of Marxist-Humanism. Our work in preserving, collecting, and donating those writings not yet deposited at Wayne State University remains the most critical test of whether we are on the road to becoming continuators.

We have also reached a critical moment in the development of *News & Letters* newspaper. Over the past year we have developed new analyses of objective events as well as eliciting new voices from below, both of which will need further development over the course of 1996-97. We will need to pay special attention to how our newspaper will take up direct discussions on philosophy, the battle of ideas, and the "dialectic proper," in the spirit of the discussion of a new kind of paper that truly becomes a philosophic and organizational as well as political organ.

This integrality underlines the importance of organizational growth. We reached a new stage in this over the past year, with the development of a new local of *News and Letters* Committees in Memphis and Mississippi. The work to establish this local has brought us into contact with a new generation of Black worker-activists hungering for a way to work out a new beginning that would not be rolled back. They sensed in our organization the projection of ideas that could aid their self-development as thinkers and activists. This reflects the extent to which our organization can be a catalyst and propellant in working out new beginnings when we successfully internalize, concretize, and project the Marxist-Humanist body of ideas.

Internationalism has always been key for us. The availability of all of Marxist-Humanism's major works in Mexico; the new Slovakian edition of *Philosophy and Revolution*; the forthcoming German edition of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*; and the translations underway of Dunayevskaya's major works into Chinese all testify to the need to deepen our international relations, including with in-person trips.

The hardest test of all is for organizational growth to reach to the level of the Marxist-Humanist concept of organization. The unity of philosophy and organization is not the easiest thing to work out, given the division of mental from manual which so defines every facet of society. Yet achieving this is the only way to engage in the kind of philosophic-political-organizational labor that can make an historic contribution to the task of transforming reality.

—The Resident Editorial Board

"Challenging, passionate, witty and deeply learned, Dunayevskaya's voice speaks in this new edition to a whole new generation. It was never more needed."

— ADRIENNE RICH, author of *Dark Fields of the Republic*

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**THE ISRAELI ELECTION**

The razor-thin election victory of Mr. Netanyahu overnight turned a basically secular country into a potentially fundamentalist nightmare. By handing over the direction and control of Israeli politics to the most reactionary elements in that land, the Israeli vote has not only endangered peace with the Palestinians and other Arabs, but has given impetus to rekindling acts of terror against Jews, worldwide. It was a suicidal act.

Alarmed  
Canada

In the second year of the intifada, Netanyahu spoke publicly about advising the Cabinet to take advantage of the world's focus on Tiananmen Square to expel all Arabs from Eretz Shrael. He told a university audience that Shalom's ministers rejected his idea but he still advocated it. The mainstream press ignored it, but it was a formula for genocide. Even Pat Buchanan never came out for rounding up every Mexican at gunpoint and herding them over the border. Why isn't Netanyahu's fascist mind-set fair copy for the mainstream press? Even Thomas Friedman, who called the election a "disaster" and a victory for the assassin Yigal Amir, is careful not to rake too much muck about "our strategic ally, the only democracy in the Middle East"—actually a segregationist state posing as a democracy which the U.S. is financing to the tune of millions of dollars.

Ibn Fareed  
California

I know that the recent Israeli election is nowhere as grim as the counter-revolution in Germany in 1918-19. But what came to my mind as I heard the election results and saw the religious extremists dancing in the streets was what Raya Dunayevskaya quoted from Rosa Luxemburg then, about those who thought their ascendancy would bring "order" to Germany: "You stupid lackeys! Your 'order' is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will rear its head once again and, to your horror, will proclaim, with trumpets blazing: I was, I am, I will be!"

Revolutionary feminist  
Memphis

**ZAPATISTAS' INTERCONTINENTAL CAMPAIGN**



In January the Zapatistas proposed an intercontinental campaign against "neoliberalism" with a summit to be held in Chiapas between July 27 and August 3. Continental meetings to prepare for it were proposed for America in La Realidad, for Oceania in Sydney, for Asia in Tokyo, and for Europe in Berlin. One took place in Berlin over Easter, and a second from May 30 to June 2, where 1,000 people took part. The only other meeting I know took place was that in La Realidad in April.

There, subcommandante Marcos — following the theme that "it is not necessary to conquer the world, it is enough to create it anew" — said: "We have to overcome the lament and develop new ideas and ways...We have to provide space for memory, for history, the mirror that reminds us what we were, shows what we are today, and promises what we can become...The mighty powers of the world have not yet developed arms to destroy our dreams, so we will continue to dream. Do not idealize us. We are not the new world. Zapatismo is not the new world. It is an attempt, an organization, a decision to fight to change everything including ourselves."

European correspondent  
Prague

**WHAT IS REVOLUTION?**

The word revolution comes from the word revolt. It's a sudden change and rebellion against the full circle. What is the full circle? The seven G's? Corporate America? Those in power of the world banks who can hire gunmen to handle their affairs? Those in Washington—the president, Congress and the Penta-

**Readers' Views**

**THE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY AND TODAY'S STRUGGLES**

Reading Dunayevskaya's Archives column in the June issue of News & Letters reminded me of a Mayan legend about creation that says to be human is to show a truthful reflection of ourselves. My understanding of Hegel's "negation of the negation" is that it brings about change of the inner self, and questions power relations in themselves. It is not about just wanting to be in control. Dunayevskaya tried to practice new relations by practicing the committee form of organization with the aim of getting to second negation. For these ideas to develop we have to move away from egotism and attempt a deeper change. Machismo is very strong in Latin America and must be confronted.

Peter Hudis' review of Meszaros' *Beyond Capital* also points out that we can get beyond capital to new relations only through the negation of the negation.

Mexican revolutionary  
Los Angeles

Peter Hudis' essay on *Beyond Capital* implies that even those who do see the need for philosophy can fall into the trap of putting social analysis before the creativity of cognition. They take philosophy for granted as if it doesn't need to be recreated, or as if working it out can be put off until after the "concrete" is dealt with.

Franklin Dmitryev  
Memphis

That Meszaros' students so close to much of what Marxist-Humanism says makes his mistakes very sobering. Peter Hudis' essay shows how easy it was for him—despite all that "affinity" and despite all Meszaros' thoroughness—to go off the tracks and turn away from Marx and Hegel "in order to secure a 'firmer material base.'" It shows how important it is for our own footing to be sound and for us to make sure we "start from the Absolute."

Women's liberationist  
Tennessee

gon—who have all the armed forces at their disposal? Or is it a combined effort of all of them? In simple terms a revolution is an uprising of the people who have been oppressed by their government, who have been overtaxed, unemployed and consistently thrown in prison for frivolous crimes. A revolution serves one useful purpose: to get back civil rights and humane treatment that somehow got lost in the shuffle of conservative idealism of only a few wealthy people.

Prisoner  
Oklahoma

The Republicans are smart enough to figure out that a revolution is required to really affect change in any way. There's no way I can win my battle with any real, too. I just don't understand how anyone can be "single-interest" or (my least favorite term) "special interest." It's all too tightly woven to pull out one thread and consider the job done.

Young feminist  
Chicago

**REMEMBERING EAST TIMOR**

July 17 marks the 20th anniversary of President Suharto of Indonesia's signing of a document called the Bill of Integration—a legislative effort to deny the people of East Timor the right to national self-determination by unilaterally declaring it Indonesia's 27th province. This piece of paper is central to the Indonesian government's "integrasi" campaign—that is, the two-decade-long fiction that the East Timorese people are backward and yearn to be part of Indonesia for their own betterment. But the more than a quarter of a million East Timorese lives lost since the 1975 Indonesian invasion attest to the fact that an idea of freedom is alive in the towns and countryside of the eastern half of the island and that the resistance to oppression will continue as long as necessary.

Young activist  
Chicago

I've recently begun to read News & Letters again. I moved away from anyone in the Left for a long time, because I became very disgusted after the negotiations between the guerrillas and the government in El Salvador. But I'm feeling the need to be in touch again, and think things through. One cannot be alone. I want to both learn, and contribute some of my thinking. Philosophy is very hard for me, but little by little I am trying to understand.

Central American revolutionary  
California

Maya Jhansi's column on child labor, called "The maturity of our age," (June N&L) showed the relationship between philosophy and youth's everyday struggles. I particularly liked the way she interpreted the 13-year-old Canadian youth's statement: "One of the best things about being young is that we still have our imagination. We still think we can fly." In contrast to the kind of humanism and idealism that thephony humanitarianism of politicians the world over, she reminded me of the way the Constitution of News and Letters Revolutionary force, as "the ones whose idealism combines with opposition to existing adult society in so unique a way that it literally brings them alongside of the workers as builders of the new society."

Revolutionary  
Chicago

I only learned of Shainape Shcapwe, the Marxist-Humanist Native American columnist, in the In Memoriam to her in the June N&L. I liked very much the quote from her 1985 article, where she debated with Ward Churchill on his interpretation of Marxism. It seems she was trying to jam together the Native American struggles with a philosophical revolutionary approach.

Youth  
Los Angeles

**FUNDRAISER VS. BRUTALITY**

The annual "Steppers Fund-Raising Affair" will be held on Saturday, Aug. 31, at Kennedy-King College, from 9 PM to 1 AM. The supporters support the victims of police brutality and their families, and are working with others to fight against the violations of civil and human rights. Tickets are \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door for an evening of music, dancing, refreshments and old fashioned fun. For more information call 312/298-0055.

Steppers supporter  
Chicago



**NEW EDITIONS OF RAYA'S TRILOGY**

Kevin Anderson's report from Europe was one of

the more inspiring writings about that part of the world in a long time. Yet he states "in 1997 or 1998 Argument Verlag is planning to publish a German edition of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, the first new translation of Dunayevskaya's writings to appear in Europe since 1981." Tsk, tsk. What about the Russian and now the Slovak translations of *Philosophy and Revolution*? Please let all readers know that these works are now available in Europe!

Reader  
California

**BREAKING DOWN ALIENATION?**

Cedrick Gardner's "No Longer Management and Proud of It," in the June issue of News & Letters shows that when someone sees his problems reflected in the paper it breaks down the alienation under capitalism. A lot of times we

are told there is something wrong with us rather than with capitalism.

Gene Ford  
Los Angeles

"Workshop Talks" has been opening up a discussion everywhere. I liked the distinction made in the June issue between a worker's natural tendency to humanism vs. the humanitarianism of the bourgeoisie. Yet even if workers had full control of production I'm not certain it would be such a flowering in light of the racism and exclusionism on the job today vs. Mexicans, Blacks, etc. The whole point of "team" and why some workers jump for it is that workers really want to participate and have some kind of mental engagement. But they're trying to socialize everyone on the basis of the corporate need and not "everyone according to his need."

Clerical worker  
Oakland, Cal.

The reaction to high gas prices revealed contradictory attitudes to energy consumption here. Many Oklahomans actually welcome higher crude oil prices since it allows marginally-producing wells to continue. Unemployment among experienced oil-field workers is high in this area. At the same time, the vehicle registration fee system subsidizes older, gas-guzzler vehicles by taxing newer, more fuel-efficient, less-polluting vehicles more. Unfortunately, there is still the practical difficulty many people face in being able to afford gas for their cars, regardless of any level of Federal or State gas tax.

Reporter  
Oklahoma

**FOUNDING CONVENTION**

The platform that the bureaucrats presented at the founding convention of the Labor Party is really only 25% better than the same old platform that the AFL-CIO leadership has been trotting out for the last 30 years.

Worker delegate  
Cleveland, Ohio

By refusing to take any position on abortion rights the Labor Party is trying to appeal to sexist men. It is forgetting about women, who are more than half the work force. To stop the pro-choice amendment to the party's platform the leadership of the endorsing unions started a rumor that all the Mexican farm workers would walk out of the convention if the amendment passed. But I went up and spoke to the women in FLOC, and they said that was completely false.

Socialist feminist  
Seattle, Wash.

At the Labor Party's founding convention the only thing that impressed me about Don Wages, the president of OCAW, was his ability to dominate a microphone for hours at a time.

He promised to "fight all the way to hell and back" to defend the first amendment rights of those of us selling radical newspapers—as long as we were anywhere except at his convention. Despite his eloquence, he failed to chase us out of the corridor that led up to the convention hall.

Jim Guthrie  
Chicago

**WHY HELP N&L TO CONTINUE?**

I have enclosed a contribution in the hope that you will be able to continue on. Your paper is very helpful to me because there is so much confusion about what Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, DeLeon, Dunayevskaya and others have really written. The confusion comes from lack of basic information and deliberate dis-formation by the ruling patriarchs who are threatened by revolutionary ideas. Some of the Left have given up, but I feel I am just beginning to understand.

Retired worker  
Wisconsin

**Readers—Have you sent your contribution to help N&L stay in the fight?**

## Black/Red View

by John Alan

*Violence, so much a part of American history and particularly of southern history, has been an important factor in maintaining the two worlds of race.*

—John Hope Franklin, 1989

Arsonists torched more than 30 African-American churches in the South this year. The fires of these burning churches not only gave a terrifying illumination to the nights of the rural South, they also lit up the politics of race in this country. President Clinton, in an attempt to counter the charge that he was doing nothing to stop the arsons, went to South Carolina and stationed himself close to the charred ruins of a Black church to call for sanity and racial tolerance.

Clinton, in all of his public statements regarding the torching of Black churches, carefully avoids the use of the word racism while reiterating over and over that there is no evidence of a conspiracy. At the White House conference of Southern governors he offered a "copy-cat" theory for the burnings.

Robert Dole, reflecting the racist views of his Southern conservative supporters, called Clinton's concern with the torching of Black churches a bowing to the pressure of the southern Black ministry. Ralph Reed, the ultra-conservative leader of the Christian Coalition, spoke out against the burnings on NBC's "Meet the Press." He admitted that most evangelical Christians were on the wrong side of the racial issue, "the most central struggle for social justice in this century."

All of these people, though they were politically compelled to respond, want to avoid the fact that America was born in racism and is still a racist society.

Clinton's "copy-cat" theory would have validity if he dared to show that these fires were motivated by years of racist politics attacking Black unwed mothers as bankrupting the nation and affirmative action as a program that gave jobs to "unqualified" Blacks. It is this kind of racist politics which gives "copy cats" their needed security to burn Black churches in the night.

African Americans can relate current church burnings to the lynchings and burnings in the South not too long ago. At that time, the lynchings were certain that the national government would do little to stop them because they knew it agreed with their racist ideology, even if it didn't condone the lynchings.

Ralph Reed's intervention has all the earmarks of a politician pouncing on an event to use it for his own ends. Like Rev. Joseph Lowery, one should be wary of a reactionary who comes with gifts and confessing the sins of his followers. In any case, it is doubtful that Reed has changed his conservative position on abortion and other right-wing issues. Thus, if Reed is true to his political position, is he attempting to find unity with the conservative trends in the Black churches, such as those elements that are opposed to abortions?

Of course the Black churches have elements of conservatism. But racism, unemployment, poverty and social dislocation have traditionally made the churches a voice of the Black underclass and, at times, a militant expression of the Black struggle for freedom. It is easy to see that it is this social role that makes them a target for racist arsonists.

President Clinton has expressed his outrage but will

## Racist church burnings

he do much to track down those who are responsible without continuous pressure from the Black community and people who want a nonracist society? This question is asked within the context of the present sharp political and judicial swing to the right in this country.

At no time since the days of post-Reconstruction have African Americans experienced such a judicial and legislative annulment of protections that would assure them equal representation in Congress and equal opportunities for jobs and higher education. Clinton has shown that he bends with every movement from the right. And as far as the right wing is concerned, torching Black churches is only worth mentioning to make political hay.

## Cabrini-Green protest



**Chicago**—Over 100 residents of the Cabrini-Green housing project rallied at City Hall on July 1 to protest the city's latest plan to "privatize" the project in order to clear the area for high-income residents.

The Daley administration has been trying for years to dismantle parts of Cabrini, one of the most notorious of Chicago's segregated public housing projects. Though such proposals are usually dressed up in rhetoric about its high-crime rate, the real reason for them is that it lies adjacent to what has become a prime real estate area.

Under the latest plan, five high-rises will be torn down, land owned by the Board of Education in the surrounding area will be sold off to private developers, and several new low-rise buildings will be constructed. What angers many residents is that only a small percentage of these units will be set aside for low-income residents.

The City's stake in all this is obvious. Some estimate that the city could gain up to \$1 billion through the sale of land adjacent to Cabrini if the "privatization" of sections of the project leads to an influx of upper-income residents. "I'm not against them tearing down some of these rat-holes so they can build new apartments for us," one Black man commented. "I just don't think it's right to tear them down for the sake of replacing us with rich folk who can live anywhere they want."

"This is right of out Bosnia," one resident said. "The only difference is that they have a name for it there—ethnic cleansing. Here, they want to push poor Black folk out of the way without even giving it a name."

—Peter Wermuth

## Black World

(Continued from page 1)

We made some important strides in transforming the plantation conditions of Black Life and labor, and we elected some Black political officials. The problem is that except for a very small group of people, no one was thinking about making freedom real, compared to this idea of absolute negativity that Raya says Black struggle and thought is so deeply rooted in.

A very important aspect of absolute negativity is that because it is all about the method by which human beings transform reality, either in the exploitative way that capitalism has them do, or in the revolutionary way that they spontaneously do when fighting for freedom from under capitalist domination, absolute negativity allows us to see the future in the present. So once the struggle to make freedom real is not compared to this idea of absolute negativity, we are deprived of a vision of the future. This kind of deprivation is as bad as being deprived of decent food, shelter and a job.

Naturally, this is not to say that nothing has been accomplished, or that no progress has been made. On the contrary, that is the one thing we have going for us, and also what requires so much work to uncover and to recognize. As you know, this is a great deal of the work that is presently going into the writing of what we are calling for now, "The Marxist-Humanist Statement on the Black Dimension."

This brings up another important aspect of absolute negativity. Every immediate situation or question that comes up, whether on the job or in the political and social world, has a past. That is what Hegel means when he says that every immediate thing in what we take to be the status quo is not so immediate or simple as it seems, but has undergone what he calls mediation.

By mediation Hegel doesn't exactly mean what happens when workers' disputes with management are "mediated." There, the outcome is more often than not a result that submerges or covers up the real conflicts and antagonisms between workers and management. The

## Absolute negativity

immediate result that workers are left with is either: we won a little something, or we lost something (often it's more than workers can afford to lose). The immediate results or facts therefore hide the conflict and the struggle between the two opposing sides. That is also why each immediate fact, situation, or issue we have to deal with must not be taken at face value. A human struggle of some kind has gone on behind every immediate situation that we think we are seeing for the first time.

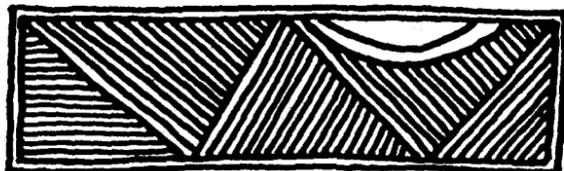
Understanding this question of mediation is also what Hegel calls our first or immediate negation of the immediate situation or problem we face. Because you already know that absolute negativity involves a double negation, a negation of the negation, you can see right away that we have to find out what's involved in getting beyond this first negation to the second negation.

(Continued next issue)

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## George Jackson today

**Los Angeles**—This Aug. 21 will be 25 years since the murder of George L. Jackson at San Quentin Prison, during what the prison administration characterized as an escape attempt. At that time Jackson was on trial along with Fleeta Drumgo and John Cluchette, two other prisoners, for the murder of a prison guard.

Jackson was facing the death penalty if convicted, since he was already serving one year to life for a \$70 robbery. At the time of Jackson's death he had already done 11 years, 8½ years in solitary confinement for that particular crime, but throughout Jackson's life, he had spent a large portion of his 29 years behind prison walls, from a juvenile offender on up. In a certain sense, George Jackson grew up in the system, as was stated by a Chicano convict friend, L. Talamantez, who went through that same system with Jackson: "George Jackson had a very bad reputation with the administration as being a Black thug, pressuring other prisoners and stuff. You could say San Quentin made gangsters out of all of us."

Jackson had over a period of time become a legend within the California prison system, of being a powerful and feared individual within the underworld where everything that goes on within the streets goes on behind prison walls, from drugs to murder and prostitution.

When the turning point in Jackson's thinking took place, I cannot be sure. But I think the source for that break can be found in the letters for family and friends that conveyed his feelings of hate for the system so powerfully; these can be read within his two books, *Soledad Brother* and *Blood in My Eye*. These two books still have powerful messages for the youth today.

Jackson knew that he needed a weapon to fight the administration with. Organization was one source of power in the joint. Many groups began to spring up, separate groups of Black, Brown, and white, who began political education classes to cement a philosophy of political action.

"I was angry. I was in prison and I looked around for something that would really bother these cats. Well, I couldn't find anything that bothered them more than a philosophy. I gave everyone a chance. I gave Adam Smith as much attention as I gave Karl Marx. But Smith's whole point was to justify the bourgeoisie and because that was his aim, his conclusions were strained. The things I read in Marx made more sense" (quoted in *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement* by Eric Cummins, p. 157).

So the need for philosophy was important as a weapon, as a powerful physical force in the process of organizing and transforming the "Black criminal mentality into a Black revolutionary mentality," which was demanded in order to fight the system.

The fighting spirit of George Jackson still haunts the California prison system today, where the laws, like "Three strikes and you're out," have increased sentences, to 25 years to life. The prison system is busting at overflow. The anger is reflected in internal gang wars among Black, Brown and white, while the true enemy is within the system of capitalism itself, and the rich go free and the poor are incarcerated in the ghettos and prisons.

The reality of any newfound Black movement within this country cannot ignore or forget the massive imprisonment of our youth. We face a culture of imprisonment. As Jackson recognized, the Black criminal mentality must be transformed into a revolutionary mentality, and to reach that we need a philosophy of revolution against the bourgeois mentality that even plagues the poor who feed upon each other.

—Gene Ford

## 'Queer by Choice'

(Continued from page 2)

pressures are especially intense for women because of economic concerns. Whisman draws out the radical humanism in lesbian accounts of making the "right choice."

One lesbian says she "chose to be happy... Life [with a man] would have been mediocre. I could've made it work if I'd wanted to. But I would've never been able to feel free. To fly, in life." Many women find a form of freedom in choosing a lesbian sexuality. Another woman speaks of how being heterosexual is not a choice in a society which forces boys and girls into gender roles upon birth. "I think it would be nice if change could be made so that all people could be fully human and heterosexuality could be a choice."

Queer theory which rests on deterministic assumptions necessarily regards the current state of anti-human separation and degraded relations between men and women as "natural." It misses the enormous wealth of possibilities in store for humanity if we take responsibility to work at overcoming all alienating divisions.

For many women, choosing to be lesbian is to resist the patriarchal insistence that female sexuality be defined by male desire. But conceptions of choice are not only radicalizing for women. One gay man told the author, "I tend to think the choice is all important, freedom of choice... I sort of believe in this possibility of infinite instantaneous liberation from any kind of past, in a moment of absolute choice."

As feminists and queers striving to understand our roles in the transformation of society on new human grounds, debate and dialogue on questions of choice and sexuality is paramount.

—Julia Jones

We invite readers to continue the dialogue on revolutionary feminist queer philosophy through writing for *News & Letters* or informal bulletins put out by the Bay Area Local. See addresses, p. 4.

## Youth

by Kevin Michaels



I became a committed revolutionary in the summer of 1992. I was living in New Orleans at the time and, after half a dozen years

of disunity of activism, I decided that the class and racial divisions of American society could only be overcome by an organized challenge. I met a member of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) on a picket line with striking grocery workers and was attracted by his paper's characterization of Stalin's Russia as a state-capitalist society which had nothing to do with socialism. I joined the ISO shortly thereafter and began two years of fairly intense political activity.

I relished the energy and commitment of the people I met, but early on began to chafe at the manner in which the ISO's participation in the struggles of working people was conducted. We acted as if we always had the answers and, since we were "building the socialist alternative," we weren't interested in what the human beings confronting capitalist society had to teach us.

My experience took place in small branches of the ISO, with few other leftists to challenge us. Occasionally, I would hear stories that the ISO's conduct of meetings in larger cities was less than democratic and included the physical barring of other political groups from public meetings. I shrugged them off; half not believing what I heard, half blaming it on the sectarianism of other groups.

But my growing distaste with the elitism of the party-to-lead form of organization and the stale journalistic treatment of the human activity of revolt in the ISO's paper convinced me to seek out a new relationship between thought and activity, a relationship that I discovered was being developed by News and Letters Committees. My witnessing of a public ISO meeting in Chicago

in which the floor discussion was handled so undemocratically that two News and Letters members in attendance had to verbally challenge the chairperson to be permitted to speak hastened my departure. I had come to realize that, even if you call Stalin's Russia state-capitalism, you still have nowhere to begin anew unless you return to Marx's Marxism.

Once I left I felt a freedom to actually begin the difficult activity of thought necessary to develop towards the new type of revolutionary that our retrogressive era demands that we become. My membership in News and Letters Committees is now part of that activity.

The advertisement last month of the ISO's "Socialist Summer School" in Chicago seemed to me an opportunity to challenge the truncated Marxism that permeates my former organization. I hoped to take the floor in a public meeting announced in a local arts and entertainment paper at which Chris Harman, a leader of the ISO's parent organization in Britain, would be speaking.

Two fellow News and Letters members and I went to the University of Illinois at Chicago campus to distribute our paper and attend the evening meeting. We were met with hostile glances outside the building in which Harman's talk was to be held. Things became more serious once we entered.

We were met at the foot of the escalator leading up to the auditorium by a group of a dozen ISO members who physically blocked us from advancing. We were told that we would have to put our papers away or we could not enter the meeting. The demeanor of the people facing us reminded me of parking lot fist-fights after high school basketball games in my home town.

When we told them that we refused to comply with their restrictions at a publicly announced meeting and insisted upon our right to take part in a civil manner, more people joined the security squad and crackling

walkie-talkies began appearing. One of the ISO members informed us that the right to free speech did not apply here and that the evening's meeting was solely an occasion to build his organization.

After about 30 minutes of this type of confrontation, six police officers appeared, dressed in bulletproof vests and combat boots for the possibility of a Bulls win in the final championship game that night. The ISO had actually done what I had heard rumors of years before. They had called upon the special bodies of armed men of the bourgeois state to prevent other revolutionaries from attending their meeting. We were escorted off campus by the police.

What does this incident reveal about the ISO, about its attitude towards the power of ideas and its attitude towards its own members and contacts? It shows that they fear being challenged by thought's power to shape the world. It shows that they actually fear that their members will be influenced by a body of ideas which makes no separation between theory and activity and will go to any means to prevent them from hearing those ideas. Most of all, it shows the bankruptcy of separating what you are for from the way you conduct your revolutionary activity. If the ISO will rely on the bourgeois state to help police the minds of its members, what kind of future for humanity can they hope to project?

I hope that the members and contacts of the ISO who witnessed this event will realize that there can no longer be a separation between theory and practice. The retrogression which this incident typifies must be of the utmost concern for all those who struggle against capitalism's barbarism. I urge all those around the ISO who truly want to project an idea of freedom which can overcome our anti-human society to join News and Letters in the work of developing a new relationship between activity, thought and the human subjects of revolt.

## As Others See Us

# Notes on the Practical Idea and the Russian Revolution

by Sam Friedman

*Every act of becoming conscious  
(it says here in this book)  
is an unnatural act.*

—Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*

Kevin Anderson's *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism* focuses on an analysis of Lenin's reading of Hegel after the beginning of World War I; the uses he made of his insights into Hegel; and the ways Lenin's reading of Hegel did and did not influence Western Marxism. Here, I want to pick up on a few of my disagreements with Anderson's argument and to see where they lead in terms of political implications.

Let me start by saying that Anderson's book is terrific. Unlike many analyses of Hegel and Marxism, it is coherent. Beyond that, it lays out an analysis that is comprehensible, sensible, and useful. Furthermore, even where it seems to me to be wrong, its clarity and strength make it possible to see how an understanding of these mistakes or omissions can be corrected and the political implications of this.

One of the major mistakes Anderson makes is one where he has good company, including both Lenin and Raya Dunayevskaya. Anderson sees Lenin as having been led by his reading of Hegel to an analysis of imperialism that sees the working class as containing a workers' aristocracy that is the root of reformism. As capitalism moves into its monopoly phase, new forms of subjectivity, including both nationalist movements and the socialism of the lower sections of the working class, become the new opposition and, in the Russian Empire at least, the new and successful revolutionary subject. Anderson, following Dunayevskaya, sees this as a brilliant example of how Marxists who understand Hegel can analyze the dialectics of capitalism and act to end this hideous system.

Unfortunately for their arguments, Lenin, Dunayevskaya, and Anderson are historically wrong about the theory of the labor aristocracy. In brief, the movements throughout Europe (and the United States) at the end of World War I involved both the "labor aristocracy" and workers from lower strata, and if anything it was the "aristocratic" workers who led in the formation of soviets in Russia, the radicalization of Glasgow, Berlin, Paris, and Turin; the railroad and building trades radicalization in France; and the Seattle general strike. Furthermore, near-revolutionary episodes in France (1968), Italy (1969-70), Portugal (1975), Hungary (1956), Poland (early 1980s) and the workers' movements in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, have all also followed the pattern of having "aristocrats" as an important, in some cases primary, part of the radicalization.

One question that we need to consider, then, is what are the political and philosophical implications if Anderson, Dunayevskaya, and Lenin were wrong on this issue. Does it mean that the entire analysis of imperialism was wrong? That Lenin's analysis of imperialism (still one of the best theoretical refutations of those who oppose affirmative action and other programs against racism) was wrong? That the dialectical analyses coming out of their reading of Hegel were wrong? I suggest, instead, that their error was in not taking the implications of Hegel far enough—that is, that they retreated to a "vulgar materialist" analysis in seeing the contradictions within the working class as primarily based on eco-

omic divisions among workers rather than being subjective (i.e., political). Lenin, to his credit, nonetheless acted in practice in full recognition of the primary of the political divisions among workers, and this enabled him to develop the politics of 1917.

Perhaps the core of my argument here flows from asking myself "What was Lenin thinking about when he wrote about the Practical Idea?" Lenin writes, "What is necessary is the union of cognition and practice," and Anderson (p. 81) goes on to note that Lenin's thought here involves "the development of self-conscious subjectivity aware of its own actuality." Anderson then notes (p. 82) that Lenin omits to write down some of Hegel's key ideas, including "But what is still lacking in the practical Idea is the moment of consciousness proper itself, namely, that the moment of actuality in the Notion should have attained on its own account the determination of external being. Another way of regarding this defect is that the practical Idea still lacks the moment of the theoretical Idea." There is somewhat of an insufficiency in Anderson's discussion of this point, however. He does not seriously discuss who or what it is that Lenin sees as being subjective. Is it the working class as a whole? The working class as a divided, dialectical process? The party?

I suggest that, for Lenin, the Practical Idea meant the party—the party, it is true, in dialectic with the working class, and the party as a dialectically-changing formation, but nevertheless the party. Here, Anderson and Dunayevskaya would then probably say that the problem is for the working class to "get philosophy"—that is, that it "lacks the moment of the theoretical Idea." Furthermore, they would correctly emphasize that "getting philosophy" requires philosophical knowledge, creativity, discussion, and hard work on the part of organized revolutionaries. My analysis of Lenin, however, is that he focused on the need for a party, and for that party to have the politics it needed, for his whole life (while, as Dunayevskaya and Anderson have pointed out, downplaying the role of philosophical knowledge and discussion in the party and the class).

Sam Farber's *Beyond Stalinism* (1990) offers some useful insight here. His book showed that Lenin's party lacked a theoretical notion of socialism. History since then has indeed taught us many lessons about the essence of socialism as being workers' democracy. The Bolsheviks lacked this understanding; and Farber shows in great detail how this lack led them astray time after time. Carrying the argument about philosophy a step further, if the party is the practical Idea, then, for the Lenin of State and Revolution, the soviet is the Notional concretization of the working class as a subject for itself.

Let me try to pull the threads of this article together. What is the dialectic of revolution? First, revolution remains primarily a question of the working class (in a broad sense—those who sell their labor power to live) becoming a revolutionary subject and taking power over the fate of humanity. Second, this involves a dialectic of reform versus revolution within the working class; and this dialectic is subjective, is political, rather than a mechanical question of economic status (such as labor aristocracies). Workers do not all move to a revolutionary position at the same time. Instead, political and philosophical struggle are needed among workers—albeit among workers whose situations differ by workplace, oc-

cupation, and time. Revolution thus involves a struggle over politics within the working class as a fundamental aspect of the struggle against the bourgeoisie and the state: first, for the formation of workers' councils and then for the taking of power by these workers' councils. This dialectic is furthered if the revolutionary sections of the working class organize themselves as revolutionaries to take direct action (strikes, general strikes, street battles, etc.) before and during the upsurge in class conflict; and to win the great majority of the working class to understand that the seizure of power is needed.

Where a revolutionary working-class party has not been organized (and strong) before the revolutionary situation erupts, the result has been defeat, as in East Germany in 1953, in France in 1968, in Portugal in 1975, and in Poland in the early 1980s. On the other hand, the mere organization of a working-class party that is subjectively revolutionary is not a guarantee of victory either over the state or over the possibility of counter-revolution, as is indicated by the failure of the working class, in spite of the strength and revolutionary will of the anarchists, to take and hold power in Spain in the 1930s; and by the failure of Russian workers to keep power due to a combination of objective situations and their subjective lack of understanding of workers' democracy as the key to socialism through the formation of a self-developing working-class subject.

What does this mean politically? To me, it suggests that we need to form a revolutionary workers' party. Is this the dreaded "party to lead"? Yes, at certain moments. The organized revolutionary tendency within the working class needs to be able to take initiatives, to be able to speak to the working class as a whole, to be able to help the workers as a whole to organize and win general strikes and form workers' councils, and to be able to win the great majority of other workers to a politics, philosophy, and action for socialist revolution.

It does not mean that the party has to be top-down, or monolithic, or undemocratic. Furthermore, it does not mean that the party (or parties) have to be philosophically united. Indeed, it is my strong suspicion that we need to have parties (or a party) that are open to widespread discussion about the meaning of the dialectic, of what we will do after we take power, etc. It also does not mean that, if we have one party predominant at the moment of the seizure of power by the workers' councils, that this party should necessarily stay dominant after things stabilize (or even until then.)

In conclusion, then, I am struggling to develop a concept of dialectics and politics that will help us in what we all want: a revolution in which the commodity form is overthrown, workers negate capitalism and their own alienation, and the essential core of the "new subjectivities" can be freed to undergo necessary continuing struggles under conditions where the interests and consciousness of the great majority (the now-in-power working class) are aided by the ending of oppression and the salvation of the planet. Anderson's book is a useful and brilliant help in our search for this politics, this dialectics, this philosophy. It is not enough, however.

\* \* \*  
Sam Friedman is author of *Teamster Rank and File: Power, Bureaucracy, and Rebellion at Work and in a Union*. Further discussion of Anderson's book as well as a response to Friedman's comments will appear in the August-September N&L.

## Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Nearly every event in Bosnia since the Dayton "peace" Accords has been determined by the fact that the two greatest perpetrators of genocide, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic, have been granted impunity from past and future crimes. This includes their patron, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. Nothing is more indicative of the pre-ordained hollowness of the U.S.-NATO imposed so-called "peace" than the fact that U.S.-NATO authorities have bent over backwards not to hunt and arrest Karadzic-Mladic, despite the fact that they are the two most wanted war criminals in Bosnia.

As the UN-sponsored, U.S.-funded war crimes trials opened in The Hague, only a handful of low ranking soldiers and self-styled butchers were actually on trial, out of the over 75 actually indicted in absentia. They had been arrested in Europe, not Bosnia. The only officer arrested, Gen. Djordje Djukic, who planned and carried out the deadly shelling of Sarajevo, was later released on "humanitarian" [sic!] grounds because he had terminal cancer.

Supposedly the tribunal, the first held since those at the end of WWII against German and Japanese war criminals, has broken new ground by defining mass rape, overwhelmingly of Muslim women, as an "official" war crime. But the de facto sanctity provided to Karadzic-Mladic makes a mockery of this proceeding.

One court official described the proceedings: "Not only do most of the accused and all of the commanders stand beyond reach, but the court is being blocked from amassing the necessary evidence to try suspects. No power, whether within NATO or the individual governments, shows any willingness to assist in the operation."

## Dissidents rally in Burma

In defiance of Burma's military dictatorship, Aung San Suu Kyi and thousands of supporters held a conference and rally for the National League of Democracy (NLD) at the end of May, on the sixth anniversary of the 1990 election which the NLD won overwhelmingly, but was suppressed by the regime of General Ne Win.

Over 250 delegates were arrested leading up to the conference and only 17 actually attended. San Suu Kyi was vilified in the military-controlled press as a "snake" and a "sorceress." Still, 10,000 people came to hear her speak at her house in Rangoon where she had been under house arrest from 1990 until last July, yet continued to speak out each week.

The military quickly outlawed public gatherings, but another 5,000 supporters demonstrated on June 8. The NLD has proposed a new constitution which outlaws military rule. The Ne Win regime has countered with its own planned constitution, as well as more repressive laws and arrests. The military fears most the kind of explosion that erupted in 1988, when workers and students led a revolt against the generals.

# War criminals still walk free in Bosnia

And the court alone does not have the clout to see justice through."

The Clinton administration has raised the threat of reimposing economic sanctions on Serbia to pressure Milosevic to remove his agents in Bosnia. But Clinton is loath to undertake any action which would upset the U.S. timetable for Bosnian elections in September, and the beginning of a U.S. troop pullout before the U.S. presidential elections. They have pressured the Bosnian government, Western European officials and U.S. authorities in Bosnia to certify that conditions exist for "free and fair" elections by Sept. 14.

The recent city elections in Mostar show a different reality. Nationalist Croats and Muslims, under the eyes of several thousand NATO troops and election observers, manipulated the elections to maintain the city's division into Croat west and Muslim east. Elections under these conditions are simply the further codification of Bosnia's partition.

In Sarajevo, where the concept of multiculturalism

was fought for so intensely, the increasingly narrow nationalist Bosnian government issued a decree to take over tens of thousands of apartments which it handed over to Muslim refugees for the countryside. There have been at least 400 reports by Serbs of beatings and intimidation when they tried to return to their homes in Sarajevo. The so-called "right to return" by refugees, under the Dayton Accords, throughout Bosnia is being met with similar intimidation and actual death.

Any Muslim, Croat or Serb who tries to reestablish the reality of multiculturalism is being met with harsh circumstances. In the Mostar elections, Josip Musa, a Croat who ran for city council with Muslim support, said, "Anyone who is not an extremist is forced to campaign covertly. And those of us who called for a united Bosnia and a return to civilized society are not even given a voice, much less a chance to run."

The stench of war criminals walking the streets of Bosnia has permeated the air. It will not be cleared until they have been removed and justice delivered.

## Protests escalate in France



June anti-racism rally in Marseilles

In addition to continuing labor unrest in France, as seen in the 40,000 workers who demonstrated for "full employment worldwide" on June 25 on the eve of the G-7 economic summit in Lyons, other protests took place in June. On June 22, over 100,000 participated in the largest-ever lesbian and gay rights demonstration in Paris. Called by "Lesbian and Gay Pride," much of this year's demonstration focused on demands for the legalization of lesbian and gay marriages.

The week before, 6,000 anti-racist demonstrators took to the streets of Paris to oppose the conservative government's ever-tightening restrictions on immigrants and asylum-seekers. While not as large as some had expected, the demonstration included an unusually strong participation by sub-Saharan African immigrants, many of them facing eviction from their homes if government plans to raze 20 immigrant workers' hostels in the Paris region go ahead.

There were large contingents of immigrants from Senegal, Turkey, and the Caribbean, a number of leftist and

anti-racist French groups such as the Movement Against Racism, Anti-Semitism and for Peace, as well as a militant delegation from ACT-UP. The call for the demonstration stated in part: "We denounce a Europe which, while every day walling itself into a besieged fortress, reduces itself to viewing 'the foreigner' as the cause of all of its problems."

Finally, on June 9, 10,000 demonstrated in southeast France against the ecological damage which would be caused if a plan to build a Rhine-Rhone canal were to be put into effect.

## German unrest continues

At the end of June, as Chancellor Helmut Kohl rammed his anti-labor austerity package through the Bundestag, up to 200,000 workers showed their continuing determination to fight via brief work stoppages, human chains, and car caravans.

Two weeks earlier, on June 15, the largest labor demonstration since 1945 took place when more than 350,000 workers from all over Germany converged on Bonn to protest Kohl's plans for massive cuts from the government budget for sick pay, health care, and other social benefits for working people.

At the June 15 rally, workers slogans included "We don't want a two-tier society." Also, in a slap at the U.S. government's draconian policies toward workers and the poor, including its failure to even enact a health care plan, the demonstration chanted, "No to the Americanization of society."

In another sign of discontent with the status quo, thousands of lesbian and gay activists, as well as leftists, disrupted Pope John Paul II's June 23 visit to Berlin. Instead of the planned slow triumphal ride along the famous Unter den Linden boulevard, the Popemobile suddenly had to pick up speed to avoid a barrage of eggs and tomatoes.

Some demonstrators were dressed as condoms, while a nude lesbian protester was arrested for attempting to approach the Pope. For his part, the Pope ignored petitions from progressive Catholics to rehabilitate Martin Luther and to change church policy on contraception, women's rights, celibacy and other issues, although even he did not dare to read aloud on German soil a preposterous part of his prepared speech which referred to the "resistance of the entire church" to Nazism.

## Crisis in the Arab world

The June 25 terrorist attack which killed 19 U.S. troops in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, was the second such incident in less than a year, and it once again appeared to be the work of Islamic fundamentalists.

Saudi Arabia, the world's major oil producer and Europe's major supplier, is a reactionary absolute monarchy in which all leftist and democratic organizations are banned. The monarchy has long used a version of Islamic fundamentalism as a legitimating ideology.

Recently, groups of ultra-fundamentalists have been challenging the regime because of its corruption, its ties to the U.S., and its supposed "laxity" in enforcing Islamic law. The fundamentalist opposition has grown in part because of deteriorating economic conditions and in part because of continuing outrage of the U.S.-led Gulf War. Many of the fundamentalist terrorists in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere were originally armed and trained by the U.S. and Saudi Arabian governments during the war in Afghanistan.

All of these events are occurring in the context of the election of the rejectionist Benjamin Netanyahu by Israeli voters in May, something which has created tremendous anger and bitterness throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Only days before Dhahran, Netanyahu had arrogantly spurned the rather moderate position taken by the Arab summit in Cairo.

All too often nowadays, anger at social and economic conditions in the Arab world is being channeled and organized by reactionary fundamentalist groups. In Morocco recently, one saw a rare glimpse of another way of giving vent to that mass anger through a class struggle against capital and the state. On June 5, a one-day general strike to demand a raise in the minimum wage and an end to firings of union activists was massively followed all across the country. There was also, on the same day, a spontaneous uprising of some 2,000 youths in the slums of Tangier, who battled police and set banks on fire.

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