

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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WORKSHOP TALKS

Frontline resistance, then and now

by Htun Lin

Nineteen soldiers from a reserve unit from Nasiriya, Iraq, serving in the supply and transport mission for coalition forces refused to deliver contaminated fuel from a convoy which they felt was inadequately protected from attacks by insurgents. These soldiers called it a "suicide mission," because the convoy lacked adequate armor, properly working vehicles and an adequate force to guard the convoy.

Revelations of the disappearance of 400 tons of explosives from occupied Iraq and the reappearance of Bin Laden on election eve buried developments in this story. It reminded me that real voting is done with one's feet, with one's committed actions—actions which indicate that we are ready for real lasting change: the kind of revolutionary change that could be carried out only by workers.

Never underestimate the power of committed action carried out by rank-and-file workers or soldiers in the frontlines. Private Joseph Darby caused an avalanche of exposes of the tortures at Abu-Ghraib, by simply refusing to stay silent. But Darby was abiding by the military's own written code of conduct. The 19 soldiers who refused to follow orders are challenging the military occupation of Iraq at a whole new level.

Many young soldiers in Iraq express frustration towards a lack of not only clarity in their mission—not knowing who is exactly the enemy, but also a feeling of having been abandoned to do an impossible job without adequate equipment, protection or direction.

Ms. Lessin, mom of one of the 19 soldiers, said, "People are saying, 'This is the same thing that happened to my son,' and if the Army tries to spin this as 'just a few bad apples,' people need to know that these are common problems and what these soldiers did required a tremendous amount of courage."

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BLACK/REDAVIEW

African-American vote

by John Alan

George W. Bush began his road to the White House in 2000 by having many African Americans in Florida falsely purged from voter rolls because they were allegedly released felons. In addition, "butterfly ballots" took many more votes away from Gore. Florida's Supreme Court ordered a manual recount of the votes. Bush immediately appealed the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court, which then ordered recounting to stop.

It is very clear to most African Americans that Bush won a victory in Florida because African Americans were disenfranchised. Now, four years later, Bush was in a tight race with another Democrat, John Kerry, and both candidates needed African-American votes to win. According to an article in the September-October 2004 issue of *The Crisis*, Bush made a direct appeal to African-American voters.

At a meeting organized by the National Urban League in Detroit, Mich., "Bush tried to win over the audience by using diversity as an olive branch. He told the crowd that his administration boasts several prominent African Americans, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson and Secretary of Education Rod Paige." As far as the masses of African Americans living in the inner cities, this racial diversity in Bush's cabinet means nothing to them.

Of course, Bush would never bring a Martin Luther King, Jr. type personality into his cabinet. That would be opposed to his administration's vision of a new period of dominant American imperialism. Neither Colin Powell nor Condoleezza Rice ever speak in the interest of the masses of African Americans. If they dared to speak openly and critically, they would have to explain why President Bush refused to address the conference of the NAACP or why, according to *The New York Times*, the Internal Revenue Service "has begun reviewing the tax-exempt status of the National Asso-

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LEAD — EDITORIAL

Bush 'mandate' promises economic and social crises

by Olga Domanski
National Co-Organizer
News and Letters Committees

The danger posed by George Bush's electoral victory on Nov. 2 is two-fold. One is that he will pursue his reactionary agenda both at home and abroad more ruthlessly than ever, now that he will claim a mandate denied him in 2000 when he took the White House by blatant theft. The other is that the forces who worked so hard to unseat him will now fall into retreat and depression or even turn to a politics of desperation.

It would be impossible to blame the defeat on not working hard enough. The success of the effort this year to get out the vote brought a record turnout to the polls, no less than 120 million. But that turnout reflected the equally determined work of both Republicans and Democrats. Nor can the defeat be laid solely at the feet of outright Republican electoral corruption.

That is not to say that there were not plenty of "dirty tricks" that seriously impacted the electoral results. Greg Palast, a contributing editor to *Harper's Magazine*, who investigated the manipulation of the Ohio vote for BBC Television, found that if Ohio's discarded ballots had been counted, Kerry would probably have won the state. The same was reported for New Mexico. However the level of the corruption was kept in check by the massive attempt to prevent the kind of vote stealing and disenfranchisement that characterized the Florida election in 2000 (complete with Republican goon squads) which had brought the press to characterize it as nothing less than the stench of fascism.

The fact that the race in Ohio was so razor thin makes it important not to accept the spin of "mandate" that Bush is giving his victory. Though Bush obtained the largest number of popular votes of any presidential



Post-election protest in Pittsburgh against four more years of Bush.

candidate, Kerry won very nearly as many—55 million—despite all the attacks on him as a "dangerous liberal."

Nor can it be ignored that the huge number of people who voted against Bush would have been greater still if many had not been disenfranchised. The

men and women who have been thrown into this country's dungeons and stripped of any voting rights (a dozen states do not allow freed citizens with felony convictions to vote) could easily have changed this from a razor-thin win for Bush into a clear victory for Kerry.

Most important of all, the war in Iraq shows both the

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Haiti descends into police-military rule

All signs point to a renewal of police-military dictatorship. Masked police have been carrying out assassinations and arbitrary arrests of supporters of the deposed leftist government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Father Gérard Jean-Juste, a longtime campaigner for the poor and the oppressed, has been arrested on murky charges. Jean-Juste is a well-known figure in both Haiti and Miami, where he headed the Haitian Refugee Center. His arrest was surely meant to send a signal that anyone, no matter how prominent, was vulnerable.

On Oct. 13, masked police burst into Jean-Juste's church in Port-au-Prince, right in front of 600 neighborhood children gathered for their twice-weekly meal. "When we saw the police start to hit the priest with their guns, we started to yell for help," 14-year-old Erseline Louis told *The New York Times*. For speaking out, Louis was shot in the leg.

The latest wave of violence began on Sept. 30, when Aristide supporters marched in Port-au-Prince to demand his return. Although their march was banned by the U.S. and French-installed interim government, several thousand Aristide supporters showed up anyway. Gunfire erupted between police and marchers, with three police killed. On the same day, a pro-Aristide march in Cap-Haitien also resulted in a confrontation.

Since then, rather than negotiate with the opposition, police and UN occupation troops have continued to arrest hundreds of Aristide supporters. Armed former military men swagger through the streets and have taken control of many neighborhoods and towns, with the tacit support of the government and the international peacekeepers.

Human rights groups have noted that interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has called the former military thugs who helped overthrow Aristide "freedom fighters." Among them is Louis-Jodel Chamblain, second in command of those forces, a major figure in the murderous repression during the military regime of 1991-94. After Aristide was restored to power in 1994,

Chamblain was convicted in absentia of the 1993 murder of Justice Minister Antoine Izmerly. This August, Chamblain was acquitted after a new trial that lasted less than 24 hours.

In September, Tropical Storm Jeanne devastated Gonaives. Decades-long cycles of poverty, corruption, ecological damage and exploitation made the local people vulnerable to a storm that would hardly have damaged a more developed country. A few days before Jeanne, the much more serious Hurricane Ivan had swept through Florida, Cuba and several other Caribbean islands. Ivan's death toll was 119. Jeanne, the much lesser storm, killed 1,900 Haitians, left 900 more missing and presumed dead, and uprooted 250,000. Such are the results of centuries of neglect, capitalist exploitation and oppressive local rulers.

It would be easy to lay the blame for these events at the feet of Haitian reactionaries or U.S. and French imperialism, and leave it at that, as most progressives have done. Tragically, however, Aristide and those around him share some responsibility for Haiti's present situation. After his return to power in 1994, it was none other than Aristide who squandered Haiti's best chance in 200 years to create a new, human society.

He did not renew the grassroots movement, aptly named Lavalas (flood), which had brought him to power. Instead he fell into demagoguery and elitism. He used armed thugs to intimidate even Lavalas members who dared to make criticisms. Eventually, this opened the way for his overthrow by reactionaries, which occurred last February.

—Kevin Anderson

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Struggle against Shari'a in Canada

by Mary Jo Grey and Terry Moon

A horrific threat to women in some Middle Eastern and African countries—Shari'a law—is now haunting the lives of Muslim women in Canada. But not without a fight.

It started when the province of Ontario passed the Arbitration Act in 1991, diverting some civil and family

law cases to arbitration by religious groups, supposedly to relieve their overloaded court system. Then, in the fall of 2003, promoters of political Islam (Islamic fundamentalism) created the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice as arbitrators in what would be a Shari'a court in Muslim communities in Ontario. This is the first time Shari'a has legal validity in a western country.

The driving force behind this, Syed Mumtaz Ali, proclaimed: "a Muslim who would choose to opt out [of Shari'a]...would be guilty of a far greater crime than a mere breach of contract—and this would be tantamount to blasphemy or apostasy," crimes punishable by death in many countries. So much for choice. Under Shari'a a woman's testimony counts for half of a man's; daughters receive half the inheritance of sons; men are automatically awarded custody of children over seven; women have no right to choose a husband, clothing, a residence, and cannot travel without their husband's consent. As we saw in Nigeria last year, only a global outpouring by women's and human rights groups saved Amina Lawal from execution by stoning, after she was convicted of adultery by a Shari'a court.

Considering that reality, it was shocking that organizations like the Canadian Council of Muslim Women were not consulted about having Shari'a courts in Canada. Council President Alia Hogben said her group

WOMAN AS REASON

is strongly opposed and is lobbying hard for Ontario to change the Arbitration Act. Opposition has been growing worldwide, with demonstrations in September in Ontario and British Columbia, and at the Canadian embassies in England and Ger-

many.

One of the strongest voices of opposition is Homa Arjomand, coordinator of the International Campaign Against Shari'a Court in Canada. As a human rights activist in Iran, she barely escaped (on horseback through the mountains) with her husband and two young children in 1989, before she could be arrested, imprisoned and executed by the Islamic fundamentalist government.

Today, as a social worker near Toronto, she helps abused Muslim women and children. According to Arjomand, battered women coming from Islamic countries—who often don't speak English, lack education and are isolated in their communities—receive no government help, and, again, face oppressive Shari'a. "We must separate religion from the state," she insists.

DANGER OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM

Some charge that supporters of Shari'a are getting away with these abuses by using cultural relativism. Iranian feminist Azar Majedi, speaking in Canada at a demonstration on International Women's Day (IWD), spoke for many there: "Culture has come to take precedence over human rights, equality, liberation, rights of individuals, children's rights and women's rights—concepts and issues which have long been argued and have prominence in modern and civilized civil societies....There is no justification for assigning such a prominent status to culture, which overshadows any sense of justice, equality and freedom and the achievements of long battles fought by freedom-loving people and socialists for more than two centuries."

While acknowledging that Iranian women have been "victims of political Islam," she declared: "But we are not mere victims. We belong to a vibrant, dynamic, strong, and progressive movement, which has fought political Islam not only in Iran, not only in Iraq, and not only in the Middle East but also here in the West. We have raised the banner of freedom and equality not only for women but for humanity and are fighting to push back religion to its rightful place—that is to the private sphere."

GLOBAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The internationalism of this movement is seen in how women at IWD contended: "It is an extension of the same movement in Iraq [to impose Shari'a in Canada] that has threatened to kill Yanar Mohammed of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq."

An outspoken supporter of the Arbitration Act is B'nai Brith Canada, a Jewish human rights organization. Exactly whose human rights they are interested in was brought out by Evelyn Brook, president of the Coalition of Jewish Women for the Get (divorce) in Montreal, who expressed grave doubts that Jewish women could trust a Jewish religious court.

The former Ontario Attorney General Marion Boyd is finalizing her review of the Arbitration Act, at the request of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty. Her report and suggestions for changes is due as we go to press. At the same time, Salam Elmenyawi, head of the Muslim Council of Montreal, is holding talks with the Quebec justice department to bring binding Shari'a arbitration to Quebec.

Why is this cancer spreading in the West? The truth is that religious fundamentalism is not a foreign doctrine that's relegated to the Middle East, Africa, or developing countries. It resides in style in the U.S. and other so-called "Christian countries." This is seen, for example, in how the U.S. and the Vatican happily join hands with repressive theocratic states like Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iran when it comes to driving women back to the dark ages, as well as stifling all movements for human liberation. The absolute opposite of such retrogression is not Western governments which easily succumb to arguments of cultural relativism. The absolute opposite is a new truly human society and those committed to fight for it.

WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

The Republican-controlled Michigan Senate has passed a 13-bill package requiring classes in premarital education or a 28-day waiting period before people be issued a marriage license. Parties to a divorce would have to take classes and fill out a questionnaire. Proposal 2 on the November ballot defining marriage as between "one man and one woman" passed. It turns the clock back on all domestic partnerships in the state.

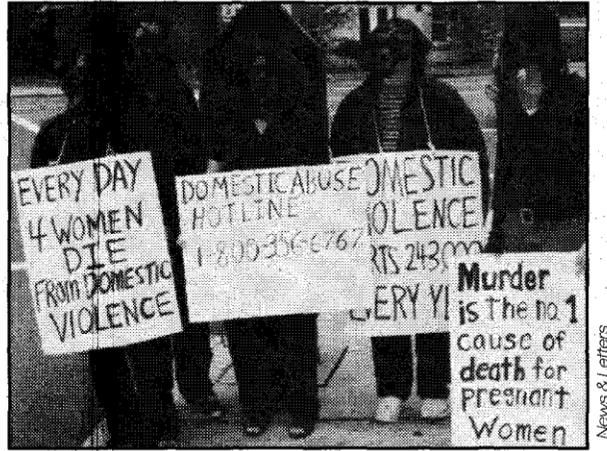
Two Sudanese activists who called for an end to the conflict in Darfur have been arrested. Buthayna Mohamed Ahmed—a member of the Sudanese Women's Union—has not been charged, allowed medical treatment, or given access to family or a lawyer.

Information from Women's Human Rights Online Bulletin

Stop the violence!

MEMPHIS, TENN.—October being violence against women awareness month, several women from the Memphis Women's Action Coalition (WAC) stood on a busy street corner two mornings last month with a coffin and signs with statistics on violence against women. We dress all in black as we are mourning those who have died because of domestic violence. Every year this is a moving experience because women stop to talk to us.

This year one woman got out of her car to talk and when we explained our demonstration she said, "Talk



about terrorism!" While we had no signs equating the terrorism Bush wants us to fear with the terrorism that many women experience every day, her comments made clear that she saw the incredible violence women endure from those who supposedly "love" us as a terrorism every bit as horrible as what comes from those we think of as terrorists. We experienced this in another way when, after our explanation, another woman said sadly, "Oh, I know about domestic violence." These experiences show this demonstration's importance as there is no doubt that many women who drive by experience violence in their lives and in this way they know they have support and a place to go for help.

In creating our signs, the statistic that showed me the depth of the problem is that the number one cause of death for pregnant women in the U.S. is murder.* Other signs read "Domestic violence hurts 243,000 every year," "Every day four women die from domestic violence," "For every incident of domestic violence reported, six are unreported." We also had the Domestic Abuse Hotline phone number displayed.

Despite the carnage—in Memphis 14 women died from domestic violence this past year—the Memphis Domestic Violence Prosecution Unit was almost eliminated and in January the specialized Domestic Violence Court will be eliminated. This lack of will reveals the disregard national, state and local governments have for this issue that reaches into so many women's lives. We know if anything is to change, it will be because we made it happen.

—Memphis WACer

*A Buried Statistic: Murder is the leading cause of death for pregnant women," by Kari Browne, *Ms. Magazine*, Fall 2004.

Margaret Sloan

In 1973, when helping to found the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), Margaret Sloan said: "We are often asked the ugly question, 'Where are your loyalties? To the Black movement or the feminist movement?' Well, it would be nice if we were oppressed as women Monday through Thursday, then oppressed as Blacks the rest of the week. We could combat one or the other on those days—but we have to fight both every day of the week."

In demonstrating that the Black movement "has been the keystone of all American history," Raya Dunayevskaya, in her work, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, quoted Sloan and the NBFO's statement of purpose: "We will encourage the Black community to stop falling into the trap of the white male Left, utilizing women only in terms of domestic or servile needs. We will remind the Black Liberation Movement that there can't be liberation for half a race" (p. 103).

Margaret Sloan-Hunter, African-American lesbian feminist poet, died last month at the age of 57 in Oakland, Cal. Born in Chattanooga, Tenn., from the age of 14 she showed her passion for civil rights, joining her local CORE chapter in Chicago. There she organized tenant unions, rent strikes, and worked against lead poisoning. At 17 she founded the Junior Catholic Interracial Council; later she participated in open housing marches led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

She welcomed the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement and was one of the first editors of *Ms. Magazine*. She toured extensively, speaking on the relationship between the Women's Liberation and Black Liberation Movements. Sloan-Hunter embodied what Dunayevskaya said was unique about the Women's Liberation Movement: "...not only did it come out of the left, but it was directed against it, and not from the right, but from within the left itself" (p. 99).

The movements for freedom—Black, women's, lesbian—have lost a thinker and fighter, but the struggle continues. Her family requests donations be made in Margaret's name to: Charlotte Maxwell, Complimentary Clinic, 5691 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609.

—Terry Moon

Chicago colleges union-busting fails

CHICAGO—After three weeks of walking strike picket lines at all campuses of City Colleges of Chicago, the multi-campus system of community colleges in Chicago, full-time teachers got a contract minus the poison pill provisions that forced them to walk out. While on strike, picketers at Malcolm X College sounded off on the issues: "They demanded that we increase our course load from 12 hours a week to 15—at no increase in pay. Of course we won't work for free, but I really don't want to talk about. They put that demand in just to guarantee that we would reject it, because they want to break the union. "It is the same thing with the salary increases they are offering. If we wanted to start kicking in more for health care than our total pay increase, we wouldn't need a union to do it.

"The college heads have been counting on keeping classes open without us. They have been bragging repeatedly that 70% of the teachers are part-timers—the so-called "adjunct" faculty—who are not in the union. They are counting on all those part-timers to cross, and they have actually ordered students to come to class.

"We don't have any statistics on how many classes are actually being held, we are just teachers. But from what we can see looking in through the windows from the picket line, not many classrooms are in use. Those classrooms that do have a teacher in them have just one or two students, or at most a handful."

Even the college administration had to recognize the support the strike was receiving from students and part-time faculty alike. Students not only stayed out of classrooms in droves, but demonstrated before the college board demanding a settlement with the teachers. The lame response was, why aren't you protesting against the union too.

So many part-time teachers refused to cross the picket line that the administration tried to play hardball once more by threatening to hire replacement workers for the adjunct faculty that had not been crossing the lines. They admitted the effectiveness of the strike by stating that, without a settlement, they would have to cancel the rest of the semester and refund students' tuition.

The tentative settlement eliminates, among other provisions, the demand for increasing course load from



News & Letters / Jim Mills

12 to 15 hours. It brings to an end this attempt in a union town by an institution controlled by Mayor Daley to crush a union.

—Bob McGuire

Other America marches

CHICAGO—Between 7,000 and 10,000 people attended the Million Worker March on Oct 17. It wasn't actually a march, but a rally with a litany of speakers and some amazing performers. There were many workers of color, and a lot of young people and women.

Many of the demands touched those who came to the march: adequate health care, amnesty for undocumented workers, getting rid of free trade agreements, caring for the environment, good education.

I wasn't excited about the more self-congratulatory remarks by some of the national organizers about bringing people to Washington. A quarter or less of the speakers were pushing some sort of electoral politics, but that was not the nature of the rally. The ILWU Local 10 people who initiated the call for the Million Worker March were sometimes authoritarian in how they organized and controlled the rally.

The media nightmare for the march was to call it "Million." It made people's expectations unrealistic. I wasn't disappointed I didn't have high expectations, but hoped that I would be pleasantly surprised. We in Chicago were realistic because we soon found out how hard it was to get people to commit to getting on the bus. This was very close to the election and people and mainstream unions were wrapped up in the election.

I saw a lot of people that I know from around the country—San Francisco, Philadelphia, New York and Virginia—from work defending Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Our contingent from Chicago had a lot of anti-authoritarian youth. The Wobblies brought a significant group to the bus. The IWW, after two previous attempts to organize bike messengers, are gaining some ground in Chicago. They are also trying to organize retail workers in other cities—a lot of under-organized workers.

One young person's work brought people to the march. He talked on a regular basis to the Congress Hotel strikers to invite them. We raised money to sponsor them specifically. They invited him to a HERE local union meeting because he had built up a relationship with them. The head of the local union was pissed off, because the local had already "discussed the issue" of the Million Worker March at a previous meeting. The MWM was considered a plague to some unions because of the mainstream unions' focus on the elections.

The national organizers were highly critical of the people organizing locally in Chicago. We pulled off a small action at the AFL-CIO national delegates meeting in Chicago asking them to support the march. We weren't even protesting their lack of support—which some in Chicago were disappointed that we didn't do.

In the end, there were a lot of paper endorsements of the March. The postal workers were a significant exception nationally and organized their own bus from Illinois. Once the national union got behind it, the local postal union got in touch with the organizing committee here in Chicago. The postal workers took a stand along with AFSCME locals and the Black Caucus of the Teamsters who donated money to our bus from Chicago.

I think their positions come from the prominence of Black union members among the city, postal and government workers. They are threatened with privatization right now, so they are very motivated. Organizations like Jobs with Justice and US Labor Against the War I would have expected to support the march took a "neutral" position or worse.

People from various groups came to meetings only to influence what we did without actually doing anything to organize for the march. We also had more authoritarian people spouting orders about what we should do, while not actually doing it. This contrasted to community organizing I have done to support Mumia and other struggles over the years.

I also saw how messed up existing labor organizing is, including the more progressive unions. This is not the end of organizing locally and supposedly nationally. But what form it takes is still a question. We are having meetings in the weeks ahead to figure that out.

—March organizer

Toiling in Bangladesh

CHICAGO—Two Bangladeshi women garment workers spoke at DePaul University along with a former garment worker, now president of the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity (BCWS). Their tour, organized by the National Labor Committee (NLC), sought solidarity in demands on U.S. companies like Wal-Mart, Disney and Kohls.

Robina Akther said: I'm about 18 years old. Two years ago I went to work at the Western Dresses factory in Dhaka, and I had to do 120 to 150 pieces an hour. After just seven days, the line chief slapped me four times, screaming that I was not making my target.

In the first six months I did not have a single day off. I got paid seven cents an hour. Eighty percent of the workers are women 16 to 20 years of age. When workers reach 30 or 35, the minute they have trouble with their eyesight, the factory forces them to leave.

The other day we went into a Wal-Mart store and I found the clothes that my co-workers and I sewed. Please help us win our rights.

Maksuda said: I had to go to work in the garment factories when I was 11 years old. Later at the Lucid Garments factory in my seventh month of pregnancy, I became sick. I asked my supervisor if I could take a break. He said, "Leave the factory if you don't want to work." Then he violently kicked me in the stomach and I fell to the floor. My co-workers picked me up and went to the production manager. My daughter is now almost two years old. To this day, she has a bruise on her head and we have to be very gentle with her. If you touch it, she cries.

The law says we should be paid for six weeks before the birth and six weeks after. But the management said, "We do not have the law of maternity leave."

We don't want a boycott. We need these jobs. But we want the companies to stop beating us, and torturing and abusing us. The companies should pay us our overtime correctly and not cheat us as they always do.

Sk Nazma, president of BCWS, said: At the Pantex factory just outside Dhaka, the workers were being forced to work five hours overtime a day with no overtime pay. Instead of the legal 48-hour week, the company said the regular workweek would be 66 hours.

On Nov. 3, 2003, the workers went on strike. They blocked a shipment of garments from leaving the factory. The factory owner called in the police, who opened fire, killing six or seven workers. A 13-year-old girl was shot in the stomach.

Charles Kernaghan, NLC senior associate, challenged the audience to reject the capitalist idea that the economy operates according to natural laws, outside of human creation, but was unable to escape its logic when he stated: "If the giant corporations would only agree to pay 25 cents more per garment, we could lift 1.8 million Bangladeshi garment workers and their families out of misery and at least into poverty." (See www.nlcnet.org.)

Kernaghan knew that corporations wouldn't agree to pay 25 cents more per garment. In fact he said he asked a U.S. company to increase pay by one cent per garment and the company said it had planned to cut pay by two cents. His proposed solution was to get U.S. consumers to pay 25 cents more per garment.

His desire to foster solidarity between Bangladeshi workers and U.S. youth was limited to a "consumer relationship with the U.S. consumer" on top: "Young people here in the U.S. have the key to unlock misery because the basis of the struggle today is in the market place."

This position fails to recognize that capital's degradation of the human being cannot be abolished by increasing wages and securing worker rights, which are nevertheless needed. It also limits the potential for conceptualizing revolutionary solidarity that can transform human relationships around the globe, including the miserable conditions of life and labor that exist here, within the U.S.

—Sonia Bergonzi

Rights for immigrants

LOS ANGELES—"Este es mi tierra, este es mi lucha" (this is my land, this is my struggle) was the leading message by groups of protesters in 5 Points Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles. The Central American Resources Center (CARECEN), Latinos Against War, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and Centro Community Service Organization were among the sponsors of this march. This colorful march was accompanied by traditional Aztec dancers carrying the American flag.

Gov. Schwarzenegger's policy of not giving drivers' licenses to illegal immigrants has created chaos for immigrants who have to drive to work and to take their children to school. Police raid in the barrios have the immigrant community under siege. But the struggle for drivers' licenses is part of the larger issue for freedom and equality.

One little girl's message was, "My dad works hard, he deserves his rights." Another man's placard said, "Is my vote going to be stolen?" "Bring the troops home now" extended the multiplicity of the messages in a time of repression by Bush's administration.

The marchers over the last four years have proven that despite the possibility of passing the USA Patriot Act to limit the freedom and rights of people, it is impossible to imprison the ideals of freedom itself.

The idea of freedom cannot be warehoused in our heads; it needs to be communicated. Not to voice our stance is to play into the hands of the undemocratic rulers who do not want the average man to talk to each other about politics or the idea of freedom.

—Manel

WORKSHOP TALKS

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When workers directly involved in war production go on strike and refuse to follow orders, the military calls it a "mutiny." It is so serious, it could carry a penalty of death. That's because the generals and civilian apparatchiks who maintain the structures of "law and order," especially in times of war, know that there's a fine line between mutiny and revolution. It's the spark which they fear could set off potentially explosive social unrest.

PORT CHICAGO

That was also the case 60 years ago in another military production incident—the "Port Chicago Mutiny" of 1944, when Black enlisted men were court-martialed for refusing to return to work where over 300 of their comrades had died and over 400 injured in a devastating munitions explosion, while they were at the docks loading two cargo ships headed for battle. Fifty men were eventually convicted. To this day, the families of these men refuse to accept a pardon, and continue to demand exoneration. They say that this was not a mutiny but rather a labor strike, protesting unsafe working conditions set by white officers commanding Black sailors in a segregated Navy.

Today's soldiers accused of mutiny in Iraq face a similar unjust situation. It is in the context of resisting unsafe work-conditions which we must defend the 19 resisters. Today's military, unlike the days of Port Chicago, has been "desegregated." Yet the poor, Blacks, and minorities overfill its ranks with disproportionate representation.

Bush vehemently denies that he'll bring back the draft. It indicates how deep the opposition to his war is—those who "voluntarily" serve as part of the "economic draft" are showing signs of insubordination. To date, thousands of soldiers who have already served a tour of duty are refusing to obey orders to extend their tours.

Workers on the frontlines of war or of production are familiar with speed-up and unsafe working conditions, whether they work in Chinese assembly lines or American chemical factories, producing commodities for trade or commodities for warfare. In war, as in production, we are the ones performing the duties and the ones doing the suffering and dying.

ECONOMIC DRAFT

Workers often take up extremely hazardous jobs, like the military, because there are not many options left. In Iraq, many Iraqis are joining the new army, in spite of the threat of assassination. The ranks of America's own army are filled with economic draftees, unable to find adequate employment in the civilian economy.

The new revolts within the ranks in Iraq and the new level of interest on the part of young workers in this election can radically transform the movement against permanent war and terror endemic to militarized capitalism. Only by reclaiming our own labor will we see fundamental change, and no longer continue to die in capitalist wars of the future.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note

2004 marks the 30th anniversary of a forgotten revolution. Spurred by the anti-colonial struggle in Africa, in April of 1974 the Portuguese people overthrew the fascist regime that had burdened them for decades and launched a thorough-going attempt to revolutionize society. We reproduce here excerpts from a Political-Philosophic Letter written by Raya Dunayevskaya after a November 1975 right-wing military coup brought the revolutionary process to a halt. This piece originally appeared in the Jan.-Feb. 1976 issue of *News & Letters* titled: "Under the whip of the counter-revolution: Will the revolution in Portugal advance?"

The truth is—we must begin at the beginning—that even under Spinola's "leadership," the Portuguese revolution did not begin as no more than an ordinary coup d'état. Not only was Spinola not the real leader, but neither was the whole Army. Rather it was the revolutionary sections of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA). Thus, whereas at the start the young officers organized on so narrow and reactionary a level as opposing the new conscripts becoming officers, once they organized new cells in the army, both the leniency with which the guerrillas treated them when they were captured, and the education that was being carried on in the national liberation army began changing the nature also of the MFA within the Portuguese Army.

The leaflets of the FRELIMO in Mozambique, the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, and MPLA in Angola may not match the fraternization leaflets that the Bolsheviks wrote in 1917, but they certainly were an entirely new ground for fighting in Portugal, 1974. In urging the Portuguese soldiers to go home and make their own revolution, the national liberation forces were raising questions, including the role of women, that the "advanced" Portuguese had not even heard of.

Because of its narrow beginnings, the radicalization of the MFA was underestimated by the Old Left, some going so far as to consider it no more than a "Bonapartist caricature." Others thought that the MFA's 5th Division, which was responsible for propaganda work and called for "cultural dynamization," was but an expression of pure and simplistic Maoism. But, in fact, with all its mistakes, this never approached the sheer dementia of Maoism in Portugal, headlining its paper: "Revisionism in power means social-fascism in power."

A deeper look at new beginnings will, of necessity, lead us to the spontaneous mass movement: land seizures by revolutionary sections of the poor peasantry as well as the great proletarian strikes, of which there were no less than 100 the very first month after the overthrow of the fascist regime—the youth as well as Women's Liberation Movement, which has been paid least attention, though it is a pivotal force.

When the SP-CP in 1969 organized the Democratic Women's Movement, it was strictly limited to economic issues....Still [it] kept eyes turned away from "feminist" issues, such as right to abortion, or other man/woman relations, though some Portuguese men were backward enough to oppose their wives using contraceptives because it could supposedly make them impotent! Even when women were complaining they were as afraid of their men at home "as of bosses in the factory," it did not move those "advanced politicians" to change the nature of their organization. The Women's Liberation Movement (MLM) thereupon arose on new ground, ground that didn't separate philosophic foundation from feminism or class struggles.

NEW FORCES OF REVOLUTION

Amilcar Cabral [leader of PAIGC], back in the 1960s when [the] Portuguese economy seemed to experience its greatest "development" with the multinationals moving in on Portugal, said that Portugal, as the weakest link in world imperialism, "could not afford neo-colonialism." The only ones who seemed to listen to the African revolutionary were the Portuguese students, whose strikes came to a climax in 1968 and were against conscription as well as for academic freedom.

The more foreign capital began to move into Portugal as a safe haven for profits and low-paid labor, the more contradictions undermined the regime.

Take the question of the 1973 Middle East War with the accompanying quadrupling of oil prices. On the face of it, it seemed to have no relationship to anything happening in Portugal. But, in fact, fascist Portugal...had built the showy Lisnave dry docks because they expected a most profitable tanker business.

The complex at Sines was based on refining and petrochemicals and the expansion of motor vehicle assembly plants. But where a 25% increase in tanker business was expected, a 10% drop in oil purchases was the consequence of the quadrupled oil prices. The Western economic crisis, which was global, deeply affected Portugal, facing defeat in Africa and massive unemployment and strikes at home.

The human factor of this equation was not only the suffering. Some new forces of revolution were born. First, no less than one and one-half million (out of a population of 8.5 million) had seen service in Africa where they had been politicized by the national libera-

Remembering the 1974-75 Portuguese Revolution and its relation to Africa

tion movement. Secondly, the miserable condition in Portugal sent Portuguese workers to West Europe. By 1974 no less than 900,000 Portuguese had emigrated to West Europe, with 700,000 in France and 150,000 in West Germany. This move to the big cities abroad for employment was glossed over as if it meant economic development at home. Actually, the great number that left agriculture—there was a drop from 50% to 30% in agricultural production—meant not industrial development at home, but agricultural collapse.

All these factors brought the women into production—industrial, agricultural—and into unemployment. They were the first to be hit by unemployment which, by 1975, numbered no less than 500,000. The women who established the MLM did not think that all their problems were "solved" by the existing parties and unions. Which doesn't mean they didn't actively participate in all of them. It does mean, as was proved all over again at the May 1, 1975, demonstration where they were attacked by the CP and other so-called Left men who did not stop from also attacking their children, that not only was an autonomous movement of women necessary, but the Old Left had to answer



"Fascism no More"—a main slogan of the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-75, which indicated that a different world is possible.

today: what happens after the revolution on the most fundamental man/women relationship?

An MLM leaflet, calling for equal pay for women at the Via Longa brewery and Pao sugar factory, was forced to state: "It is not only the bosses that are exploiting us; it's our own comrades that are refusing equal pay."

Or take the question of agriculture and the most reactionary Catholic hierarchy. Ironically, the entry of foreign capital—U.S., West German, Swedish, Dutch, French—built up not only big industry, like the Lisnave shipyards or the new airport at Farno, but also (in this case West German capital) an irrigation scheme in the Alentejo, which is exactly where the majority of workers were women, where the greatest activities, including the seizure of land, were the most militantly fought for by women. Along with the militancy was the demand for a philosophy to fight against the ideological power of the Catholic and fascist tradition which had forced women into submission to God, man, family. They have a long tradition of strikes, arrests, imprisonments. Whether it is in the Alentejo district, where out of 10,000 unemployed, 8,000 were women, or in the cities where, besides industrial struggles, women are very important in health care service, or in ideological struggles, where surely one of the most revolutionary groupings, Proletarian Revolutionary Party/Revolutionary Brigades (PRP/BR) is headed by a woman—Isobel do Carmo—there is no way to escape the new, the pivotal role of women, the youth both on campus and in the army, or the poor peasants. On Feb. 9, 1975, 30,000 farm workers in Alentejo demanded confiscation of the properties of the owners attempting coups.

Instead of keeping away from "feminist" questions, the Old Left better learn to recognize new forces of revolution and new ways of emergence of those forces. Before the April, 1974 overthrow of the fascist regime, undercurrents of revolt arose among women, from literature to actual class struggles.

Thus, *New Portuguese Letters* (published here as *The Three Marias* and by no means "just literature"—though great literature it is) pose questions of human relations far more profoundly than the Old Left had. Their freedom from jail was by no means due only to the overthrow of the Caetano regime, but to the protests by the international women's liberation movement. The symbol the women's movement, in agriculture especially, had chosen was Catarina Enfemina, assassinated by the National Guard during a strike for the eight-hour day.

Women became especially important in 1973 when a labor shortage sent them into textiles and electronics, and directly into the fight against multinationals: Timex, IIT, Plessy, and the garment industry (where Swedish capital owned 15 of the 25 major companies). It is in textiles, electronics and shipyards where the grassroots workers' movement first erupted, and where

none questioned the militancy of women workers. But they were asking not only for a fundamental change in labor conditions, but for different relations at home.

Or take agriculture. Women's wages averaged only 50 escudos a day, 50 percent lower than men's. Just as in Lisbon, women workers took over a laundry plant to make it a free service so that "working class women will be liberated from housework," so they were among the most active in the peasant seizures of land and cultivating it on a cooperative basis. The peasants came in their tractors to take part in the Aug. 20 political demonstration to unite with the working class tenants and squatters who were occupying houses. At Caixa the peasants occupied the land of the Duke of Lafões and turned that into a cooperative.

DUAL POWER? NON-PARTYISM?

As the mass strikes showed the very first month after the overthrow of the fascist regime, these were no ordinary strikes and some ended in occupation of factories, the most important being the workers occupying the Lisnave shipyards. But while there is no doubt that one of the great developments was that at the Lisnave shipyard complex, neither it nor the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors (CRTSMs) were nationwide.

Of all the parties that arose the one that was the most indigenous and revolutionary, was the PRP/BR. So characteristic of the revolutionary situation is the anti-partyism (*apartidarismo*) that this group, a split-off from the CP, tried to assign priority, not to the party, but to the spontaneous mass organizations. They called for, and were instrumental in organizing, Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors. The critical question became: were they really developing spontaneously and on a national scale? Was it the type of mass outpouring, and an arming of the working class that one could say these instances of self-activity created actual dual power?

It simply wasn't true that there was such a self-mobilization of the masses that actually challenged the new, but very much still the capitalistic government. Nor was it true that even the most "revolutionary" sections of the MFA equaled the armed people, quintessential for a social revolution. And least of all was it true that the Constituent Assembly was anything approaching such high rhetoric. The vote was just a vote, a mere consultative one at that, that didn't challenge continued army rule. To say, as one of the Trotskyist groups maintained, that the Constituent Assembly was a "step toward a workers' and peasants' government," is utter nonsense, reformist euphoria.

By the time Soares' "democracy" won and Goncalves was thrown out of government, it was the end also of the unholy alliance of SP and Maoists, not to mention the Catholic Church hierarchy which is the true winner as the counter-revolution unfolds its fascist face. A new united front of all Left groups (FUR included MES, PRP/BR, LUAR, LCI and others) warned, in its Sept. 10 Manifesto that the reactionary escalation would end in a rightist coup. On Nov. 25 it did.

The first stage of revolution has ended.

DIALECTICS OF THEORY

Let us begin with one of the points raised in the Draft Program of the PRP/BR: "It is also the organization capable of making a synthesis between theory and revolutionary practice."

That cannot just be stated. It must be worked out, beginning with the voices and actions that came from below, and question asked of "what happens after" even as they raised the struggle for workers control of production, CRTSMs, and the ways of self-defense to fight the myriad forms the counter-revolution is imposing, as Portuguese and as part of world capitalism, as it conspires to get back total power.

From the very first proletarian revolution, 1848, Marx had drawn the conclusion, "From the first moment of victory, and after it, the distrust of the workers must not be directed anymore against the conquered reactionary party, but against the previous ally, the petty bourgeois democrats, who desire to exploit the common victory only for themselves."

Instead of quoting endlessly what Lenin said on the Party in 1903—a position he many times revised—why not see how Lenin reorganized his thought when he was first confronted with the betrayal of the German Social Democracy and raised the perspective: Transform the Imperialist War into Civil War, not just as a slogan, but the new philosophic, dialectical question of transformation into opposite. By 1917, "All power to the Soviets" was rooted in the philosophic reorganization and its political expression in *State and Revolution*: that there can be no new society unless production and the state is run by the population "to a man, woman and child."

To reduce that to a question of the Party, the Party, the Party "to lead," as everyone from the Communists, Maoists, Trotskyists (of all varieties) are doing, is to doom the resurgence of the revolution.

Stop to think as well as to do.

ESSAY

by Peter Hudis

The U.S. occupation of Iraq has turned into a quagmire of nightmarish proportions, with many now calling it the most serious setback for U.S. foreign policy since the Vietnam War. This is seen in everything from the way western Iraq has come under the control of Taliban-like fundamentalists to the fact that *ihadists* from neighboring lands are flocking to Iraq to take advantage of hatred of the U.S. occupation and to further their effort to create a reactionary "Islamic state" upon its ruins. Clearly, the U.S. occupation of Iraq—which would have continued even if Kerry won the presidential election—created fertile ground for reactionary and terrorist forces to take root and flourish.

At the same time, many left-wing critics of the war have fallen into an ideological quagmire by failing to acknowledge the reactionary character of much of the Iraqi "armed resistance." Some are even speaking out in its defense. The most egregious examples are recent comments by Naomi Klein and Arundhati Roy, long considered leading spokespersons of the movement against global capital.

TAILENDING FUNDAMENTALISM

At the time of the protests at the Republican National Convention in New York last August, Klein wrote in an article "Bring Najaf to New York": "Muqtada al-Sadr and his followers are not just another group of generic terrorists out to kill Americans; their opposition to the occupation represents the overwhelmingly mainstream sentiment in Iraq."⁽¹⁾ The statement is patently false. Al-Sadr's militia has fought U.S. troops in the name of a reactionary, fundamentalist agenda that opposes women's rights, gay liberation, and workers' self-emancipation.

In April, when al-Sadr ordered workers in aluminum and sanitary supply plants in Nasariyeh to hand over their factories for use as bastions to fight the U.S. military, the workers refused, stating: "We completely reject the turning of workers and civilians' work and living places into reactionary war-fronts between the two poles of terrorism in Iraq: the U.S. and their allies from one side, and the terrorists in the armed militias, known for their enmity to Iraqi people's interests, on the other."⁽²⁾

Klein and others fail to distinguish between the fundamentalist agenda of the Shi'ite and Sunni militias and the views of many independent Iraqis. As Frank Smyth, a freelance journalist who has covered Iraq, wrote, "Neither the resistance groups cheered by many on the American Left nor the governing parties championed by the American Right seem to reflect the views and aspirations of most Iraqi people, who seem to be hoping for the rise of groups independent of both Saddam's regime and the increasingly dictatorial Allawi government."⁽³⁾

Arundhati Roy has also fallen into the trap of failing to distinguish between reactionary and progressive opponents of U.S. policies. She recently wrote in her "Public Power in the Age of Empire": "The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the frontlines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle...Terrorism. Armed struggle. Insurgency. Call it what you want. Terrorism is vicious, ugly, and dehumanizing for its perpetrators as well as its victims. But so is war. Terrorists...are people who don't believe that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence."⁽⁴⁾

Nowhere does Roy mention that these "terrorists" whose "battle is our battle" oppose women's rights, democracy and self-determination for national minorities. Nowhere does she mention that they want to create a totalitarian religious-based state that makes the reformists she rightly scorns, like Kerry in the U.S. or Lula in Brazil, look like angels by comparison. And nowhere does she mention the genuine liberatory forces inside Iraq, like the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions (FWCUI) or the Organization for Women's Freedom (OWFI)—both of which have come under increasingly sharp attack by both the U.S. occupiers and right-wing Islamists.⁽⁵⁾

How can such a vocal supporter of women's rights express virtually uncritical support for reactionary forces in Iraq? She writes of the Iraqi resistance: "Like most resistance movements, it combines a motley range of assorted factions. Former Baathists, liberals, Islamists, fed up collaborationists, communists, etc. Of course, it is riddled with opportunism, local rivalry, demagoguery and criminality. But if we are only going to support pristine movements, then no resistance will be worthy of our purity."

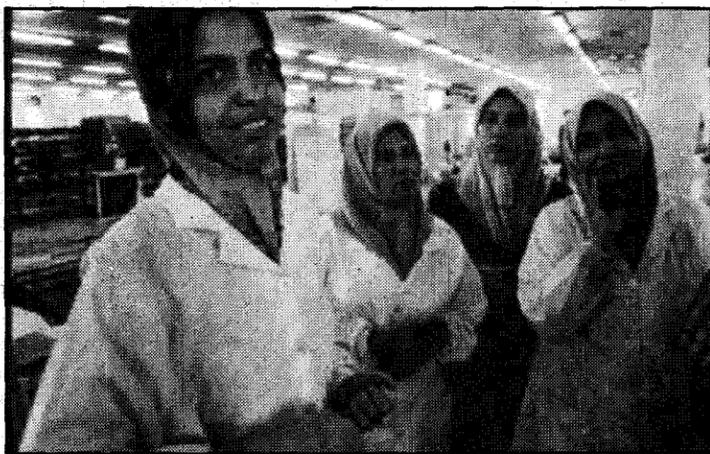
Liberation movements are never "pristine." But that hardly defines al-Sadr, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (the Jordanian-born terrorist behind many attacks on U.S. forces) or Lashkar-e-Taybe—the Pakistani Sunni group that in the past few months has sent hundreds of "holy warriors" to Iraq. Their problem isn't (as Roy says) that they suffer from "the iconization of leaders, a lack of transparency, a lack of vision and direction." They know their "direction" only too well—they want to destroy anything that comes in the way of a totalitarian control of society by religious extremism. Which is why they target not just U.S. soldiers but also Iraqi civilians, feminists, and anyone else who happens to oppose their reactionary agenda.

Resistance or retrogression? The battle of ideas over Iraq

In this respect the fundamentalist militias fighting the U.S. in Iraq closely resemble the Christian Right in the U.S., which wants to roll the clock back on everything from women's rights to freedom of expression. One of the supreme ironies of our times is that many leftists who are worried to death about the power of the Christian Right in the U.S. are making excuses for forces in the Islamic world which share its basic agenda!

ALL ROADS LEAD BACK TO BOSNIA

Moreover, some of the same people now making apologies for Islamic fundamentalists, on the grounds that "liberation" movements are never "pristine," refused to solidarize with the Bosnians and Kosovars in the 1990s against the genocidal policies of Serbia's



Women workers in Iraq

Milosevic on the grounds that they were "nationalists" and "not truly revolutionary." Where was the argument that liberation movements are never "pristine" when it was time to defend the Bosnians and Kosovars (or the Rwandans for that matter) from genocide?

It isn't that Klein and Roy are uninformed observers. They are surely capable of understanding the reactionary nature of the Iraqi militias. So why are they and so many others falling into such an ideological quagmire? The answer is that they have one standard for judging those who openly oppose the U.S. and another for those who do not. Overwhelmed and frustrated at the failure thus far of mass protests to halt the U.S. drive for world domination, they ally themselves with any force, no matter how reactionary, so long as it opposes the U.S.

That such a standpoint is taken by figures who are revered by many in the movement against global capital points to a serious barrier within the struggle. The collapse of the state-capitalist regimes that called themselves "Communist" between 1989 and 1991 disoriented many radicals, but history didn't come to an end. New freedom struggles emerged, even if they did not speak in the language of revolution. Of foremost importance in this regard were the national liberation struggles in Bosnia and Kosova in the 1990s. Tragically many anti-Stalinist leftists—from Noam Chomsky to Howard Zinn—failed to support them. The crisis in the Balkans was hardly noticed by the Western Left until the U.S. belatedly intervened in Kosova in 1998.

It may have seemed that the Seattle protests of 1999 put such contradictions to rest. A large, multidimensional movement emerged that challenged the idea that "there is no alternative" to capitalism. But the failure of many in the movement against global capital to recognize what happened in Bosnia and Kosova came at a great price. It left a festering contradiction that has not gone away, but resurfaces every time a new political crisis emerges—be it September 11 or the occupation of Iraq. By not taking issue with the view that movements are to be judged solely by whether they oppose the U.S., irrespective of their actual political or liberatory content, many have left themselves open for the ideological quagmire that now defines the positions of Klein and Roy.

WHAT NEXT?

In the aftermath of the U.S. presidential election, we can expect such ideological pollution to get worse. The reason is the sense of desperation that afflicts many U.S. radicals. Desperation over how many crimes Bush has been able to get away with. Desperation over the failure of the Democrats to project a principled opposition to U.S. foreign policy. Desperation over the fact that even when mass protests do emerge (be it a Million Man March or worldwide anti-war protests), capitalism still manages to maintain the ideological initiative with its claim "there is no alternative."

The politics of desperation leads to the politics of tailendism. It was bad enough in the days when that meant tailending repressive state powers that claimed to be "socialist," like Russia or China. It is far worse today when it means tailending Islamic fundamentalists and former Baathists in Iraq who have nothing to offer in the way of an alternative to capitalism.

The politics of desperation that leads many on the Left to ally with any force that opposes the U.S. cannot even put a dent in capitalism's ideological hegemony, because it skips over the work of articulating a positive

alternative. It only hands the Right the moral high ground by presenting "anti-imperialism" as lacking any positive, affirmative human dimension.

All that is left is mere empty negation, what G.W.F. Hegel called in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* "a pure negation entirely devoid of mediation, the negation, moreover, of the individual as a factor existing within the universal. The sole and only work and deed accomplished...is therefore death—a death that achieves nothing, embraces nothing within its grasp; for what is negated is the unachieved, unfulfilled punctual entity of the absolutely free self."⁽⁶⁾

Hegel's words not only anticipate the "empty negativity" of a bin Laden or al-Zarqawi who "oppose" the U.S. without the slightest alternative in view—unless by an "alternative" one means the imposition of an authoritarian religious state aimed at opposing individual freedom and collective self-development. Hegel's critique of standpoints that "produce neither a positive achievement nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action" is just as applicable to today's left-wing critics who are willing to ally with any force that tries to bring down the U.S. "Empire." The only thing that will result from this is a further discrediting of the Left and a strengthening of the power of the Right.

Those opposed to the kind of viewpoints articulated by Klein and Roy need to realize that a merely political response to such ideological retrogression is insufficient. That is because the problem facing us is not only political, but most of all philosophical—specifically, a lack of a philosophically grounded concept of an alternative to capitalism. Those who want to see Iraq—and the world—free of the forces of U.S. imperialism and religious fundamentalism need to get down to the hard work of articulating a comprehensive, detailed and positive alternative to this alienated, dehumanizing world. If we fail to do so, we will cede the ideological ground to the Kleins and Roys just as they, unwittingly, are conceding it to the Right.

NOTES

- "Bring Najaf to New York," by Naomi Klein, *The Nation*, August 13, 2004.
- This is discussed in "World Crisis and the search for alternatives to capitalism," *News & Letters*, July 2004, p. 5. The Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI) should not be confused with the Federation of Iraqi Trade Unions (IFTU), which has compromised itself by critically supporting the Allawi government.
- See "Who are the Progressives in Iraq? The Left, the Right, and the Islamists," by Frank Smyth [<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=15&ItemID=6330>].
- "Public Power in the Age of Empire," by Arundhati Roy, *The Hindu*, August 2004.
- For more on the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq, see "Eyewitness view of women in Iraq," by Yanar Mohammed, *News & Letters*, August-September 2004.
- Phenomenology of Spirit*, by G.W. F. Hegel, translated by J.B. Baillie (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931), p. 605.

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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2004: IS THERE ANY WAY OUT?

"Popular opinion" in Europe saw the U.S. election as a bizarre contest between a "party of God," allied with "vanguardist" intellectuals hell-bent on a worldwide crusade for "democratic revolution" and a shamefaced and ineffectual "liberal" party led by a "tin man" capitalist. The campaign and the result, however, exposed the shocking divisions within the country as much as the division between "God's America" and "secular Europe."

I have my doubts whether the Bush regime will last another four years. A global war is spiraling out of control and an exploding debt crisis are a dangerous brew for the ruling class when, as the election has shown, the people—whether Left or Right—are becoming more politicized and active.

Dave Black
London, England

What is the importance of this election? Is it the same old thing? I don't think so. Both Bush and Cheney represent something new in American political life, which is very scary. Many who voted for Kerry are opposed to broadening the war and the imposition of a police state in the U.S. while claiming to bring "democracy" to the Arab world. U.S. capitalism is in dire straits, it is faltering, and therefore a section of the ruling class is moving to a quasi-fascist solution to address it.

Ben
Oakland, California

I don't think it's any secret why Kerry lost. He didn't present a real opposition. He went out of his way to sound like Bush on foreign policy. It will be terrible for this country if people conclude that the Republicans can only be "defeated" if we become more like them.

Iranian exile
Chicago

I am appalled that so many people could vote for Bush. I can't understand it. I have family and friends around the country and every single one told me they could never vote for Bush. My sister's husband was killed in Iraq two weeks ago. I got calls from friends of his in his unit who said they were all going to vote against Bush. What is happening to this country?

African-American nurse
Evanston, Illinois

The high school students I speak with are very worried about Bush's victory. They have quite a few misconceptions about the electoral process and what actually happened in the 2000 elections, yet they want to learn more about the political process and its problems. They believe that Bush will reinstate the draft and keep the war in Iraq going.

Teacher
Detroit

I recently got out of the service. I was in the army for four years. I've been thinking a lot about moral values in light of what I went through. I signed up to defend my country, but what would I have done if I were sent to Abu Ghraib? Does a soldier have a moral obligation to disobey orders they find dehumanizing? Where do you draw the line between acting out of your own instinct for self-preservation and helping others? I wish someone had discussed this during the election campaign.

Former GI
Illinois

In this period social tensions are rising but they have not yet taken on a specific political form. Kerry didn't really articulate the problems this country is facing. There is dissolution of the social fabric. In the 1930s three political groups emerged to relate to the unemployed, but now there is not one. This is a period of ferment in which it looks as if we're pulling in our own personal directions.

Paul
New York

It is unfortunate but it appears we

have only one party that competes in our so-called democratic elections—the corporate party which is comprised of two divisions called Democrat and Republican. I wish that all other parties (socialist, libertarian, Green, etc.) were given as much air time as the corporate party. Then we would have a choice. With Bush winning the election we can say "It was a nice country while it lasted" or "I remember when we used to be a great nation."

Prisoner
Nebraska

I am an activist who works on developing communities that are architecturally and socially friendly to the environment. I feel as though people around the world should be able to vote in U.S. elections because they are so strongly affected by the results.

Community activist
Detroit

I was struck by the fact that Barack Obama got almost 80% of the vote in Illinois in his race for the Senate, while Kerry, who carried the state, got 55%. I asked a few students who aren't politically active what they thought of that. They said Kerry came off sounding like a regular politician who didn't really speak from his heart whereas Obama seemed more visionary in his approach.

Feminist philosopher
Illinois

Defining ourselves by electoral politics happens in part because of the ruling classes thorough campaign to "grind down the passions and forces that can overthrow this society and to limit the horizon of our thought and idea that we can build a new, human society," as Joshua Skolnick put it in the October 2004 issue of *N&L*. Even while speaking of a highpoint in the protests at the Republican National Convention, he stated that it was defined by something less than a highpoint: the narrow and self-defeating logic of electoral politics. We can see this narrowing of options and "grinding down" everywhere.

Brown Douglas
Memphis

Some believe that California Governor Schwarzenegger is fundamentally different from the rest of the Republican Party because he is a little progressive on some social issues. He did promote stem cell research in the form of huge corporate welfare for the biotech industry. At the same time, he helped defeat the initially popular proposition that would mandate health care coverage for most workers in California. He is now rescinding requirements won by the California Nurses Association to lower from six to five the number of patients per nurse. California is open for the business of health care but not for the care of its citizens.

Ron Brokmeyer
Oakland, California

THE POLITICS OF AIDS

Dr. Wangari Maathai, who just won the Nobel Peace Prize, has ignited controversy with her position on HIV/AIDS. She was quoted by the *East African Standard* on Aug. 30 as saying: "We know the developed nations are using biological warfare...AIDS is not a curse from God to the Africans. It is a tool to control them designed by some evil-minded scientists."

Certainly the imperialist nations have a history of using biological warfare—a prime example is the smallpox-infected blankets used against Native Americans in the 19th century. But the current spread of AIDS among women, especially in Africa, has much more to do with "how women's liberation is under direct attack from the Right," as Terry Moon wrote in her column on "Violence against women is a cause of AIDS" in the October 2004 issue of *N&L*. The Bush administration has politicized AIDS prevention, awarding funds promised to Africa through abstinence-only programs, which does not speak to the reality of African women's lives. To focus on "evil-minded scientists" could deflect people

READERS' VIEWS

from organizing to change that reality which, as it is pointed out by Moon, must be confronted, challenged, and transformed.

Longtime feminist
Detroit

Last week my doctor told me not to worry about my contraction of AIDS, because, he said, 20 drugs are now on the market that can allow me to live a normal life. I walked out of his office and said to myself, so why is it that millions of people in Africa and elsewhere can't get those drugs? Black people don't seem to matter much these days.

Black youth
Chicago



BLACK THOUGHT TODAY

I appreciated Peter Figueroa's review of John Alan's book *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* (October 2004 *N&L*). I liked especially his conclusion, that "there are no shortcuts, no substitute for constant critical questioning." One of our difficulties is struggling against apathy and misinformation.

Subscriber
England

There is increasing discussion these days of C.L.R. James' *Notes on Dialectics*. His book is interesting in bringing together a discussion of Marxism and Hegel, but I am not sure what was his actual position in the book on questions of organization. One moment he sounds like a Leninist and the next moment he sounds like an anti-Leninist.

Graduate student
Indiana

Editor's note: John Alan's Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles contains an extensive discussion of James' Notes on Dialectics, in which he takes issue with James' discussion of "dialectics of the party." To order the book, see the literature ad, page 7.

JUSTICE FOR JANITORS

One hundred and fifty janitors of Local 1877 marched through downtown Los Angeles during the week of Oct. 25-29 during the noon heat, protesting against Maguire Properties who asked their contractor, ABM Janitorial, to reduce the number of janitors assigned to clean all its prestigious downtown buildings. If accepted, this would amount to both a speedup and a cut in wages. The janitors marched to and protested at a number of buildings, including the Library Tower. They promised to go back. They have stated "janitors in Los Angeles only get tricks and no treats from their employer, ABM Janitorial."

Asian American
Los Angeles

MARX AND ECONOMICS

I was surprised to see a Reader's View in the October issue state "Dunayevskaya said Engels was superior to Marx in economics." I would like to know where Dunayevskaya said this. I doubt any such statement exists. What she did say, in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* is: "The reference is clearly to the years 1843-44...when, as an economist, Engels was considerably more advanced than Marx" (p. 120). However, by the late 1840s Marx had a far greater understanding of economics than Engels. As Dunayevskaya stated, "Indeed, all one has to do is read the kind of letters Engels addressed to Marx when he, for

the first time, was reading Vol. I of *Capital* in galley proofs, to see how much Engels did not know" (*The Power of Negativity*, p. 226). No serious student of Marxism can claim that Engels' knowledge of economics was superior to Marx by the time he wrote *Capital*.

Philosopher
Illinois

VOICES OF PRISONERS



In your "Who We Are and What We Stand For" statement you say, "We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism." However, what you stand against is much more clearly stated than what you are for. In many articles in *N&L* the authors state that it isn't enough to say what you are opposed to—but you must say what you are for to present the alternative. I agree with your new humanism but this is an obscure or vague term—especially for someone new to the concept. I suggest that you state exactly what you mean by that, in detail.

Michael Caddy
Lincoln, Nebraska

I've been able to keep up with foreign news thanks to your publication, which is important to me since I'm from Egypt. Most of what you discuss in your articles affects not just myself but my family also. I am highly appreciative for and thank you for the good work.

Carlos
San Luis Obispo, California

I am totally against drug use but I have come to realize that the war against drugs is a complete scam to get the politicians elected. It is exactly the same as slavery—just without the white sheets. If they get their way this slavery will be eternal.

N.H.
Auburn, New York

In the 1960s we were struggling for freedoms, but we did not know what those freedoms were. By allowing the system to define our struggle, 40 years later we are still in a state of slavery. The system that has long oppressed us still controls our lives. The only freedom we as Blacks can obtain is through a revolution to define our position in society and redefine our existence.

C.B.
Pendleton, Indiana

There has to be something you can do, even in prison, to keep your joy. Perhaps walking or going to church or reading. Our freedom has been taken, but why let the bars hold us hostage? You have to become free within yourself, working on your issues. No matter what your crime is, there are lots of people with similar experiences. When we unite we can experience freedom. We cannot let the correctional officers keep us apart.

The lifers have taught me that you have to keep fighting for yourself every day. If you don't, you let them win.

Woman prisoner
Chowchilla, California

I have grown a lot since I came here. God was here when I was lonely and needing someone. I get power and peace and hope from that. I am not going to give up. I try to not focus on my problems but on the promise. I didn't have a purpose before, but I do now: to tell how shameful it is that they are stacking us in here like sardines. It's crazy.

I am not into church much. Church is different than my faith. Church goes by laws and rules. But faith needs to be about our relations with each other.

Prisoner
Chowchilla, California

MARXISM AND SCIENCE: AN ONGOING DISCUSSION

Two points might be added to comments on Marx's critique of "positivist circles of Comtist orientation" in Raha's "Sham neutrality of science born of capitalism" in the October *N&L*. Engels' attempt to accommodate Marx's theory to 19th century understanding of scientific method proved to be disastrous for the Second International and post-Marx Marxism. Positivism is the dialectical opposite of dialectical method, because it is bereft of the speculative moment not only in dialectics, but in science and thinking itself. Is Raha's critique a criticism of science per se or of "scientism," the cultural expression of a positivist epistemology? "Actually existing socialism" exhibited a crude type of worship of scientific, technological, and industrial progress. But if Chernobyl is not the epitaph of "Marxism" then neither is the Luddite movement.

Marx did aspire to work out a critical science in *Capital*. However, he did not understand "science" within the framework of a positivist epistemology. It is not "science" itself that is a "lie" but the "sham neutrality" Raha exposes.

Tom More
Washington

Raha introduces the myth of the neutrality of science, but he really discusses the myth of the objectivity of science. Science is objective in the sense that it is taken independent of subjects. Is this objective? What makes science objective and infallible is born of an objectivity that cannot be perceived, which comes from the separation Marx pointed out between science and life. A human consciousness is in the machine, but it isn't yours and you don't recognize it as such. It becomes anti-human.

David Mizuno'Oto
Oakland, California

While there is a need for critique of the role of science in capitalist society, Raha's contention that "science as such...has gone to the devil" is too extreme a rejection. At the age of 10 I caught pneumonia, a disease that was often fatal a generation earlier. My life was saved because I was treated with antibiotics, a 20th century discovery.

Raha mentions AIDS and malaria as two diseases that have not yet been conquered, but smallpox has been eradicated and polio is close to being wiped out.

Science is not simply a servant of capital. As well as extending our knowledge of the natural universe from quarks to galaxies, surely an important aspect of human development, it can alert us to some of the problems facing humanity. For example, we are aware of global warming, its causes and possible consequences, because of the work of meteorologists and climatologists.

Richard Bunting
England

I don't get the statement "science as

such has gone to the devil." It isn't science's fault that millions around the world are dying of AIDS; science has developed protease inhibitors and other drugs that can indefinitely prolong the life of almost all AIDS patients, but few are getting them because it isn't profitable to provide them. Likewise, despite major advances in science the pharmaceutical industry hasn't issued a new antibiotic since the 1970s. Why? They make bigger profits by prescribing antidepressants that you have to use for a lifetime than antibiotics that you only need to take for a few weeks. It isn't "science as such" that's the problem but capitalism as such.

I also don't think that Raya Dunayevskaya dismissed "science as such." She didn't agree with Lukács' idea that Marxism deals with history and not science. She greatly appreciated Einstein's work and had arranged to meet with him shortly before his death in 1955. As she wrote, we need to grasp the "absolute contradiction" in science as in everything, and it is only the dialectic

method that can grapple with it."

Student of Marxism
Chicago

As joint author with R.T. Cross of *Teaching Science for Social Responsibility* I was disappointed in Raha's essay. Modern science developed alongside capitalism and has changed with it and we need to study the two together. To begin with, it is useful to clarify the distinction between science and technology. Cross and I argued that science should be understood as "the process of explanation," whereas technology is a process of recipes for making and doing things. Then there is the anti-dialectical nature of most scientific theory, "the tendency

to take Newtonian physics as the model for all sciences."

In addition to the whole question of science as theory there is that of "scientists and their institutions." Here the impact of the growth of monopoly and financial capital on science/technology has considerably changed since Marx's times. Even where not directly employed by capitalist enterprises, the ethos of private profit has profoundly influenced scientists at all levels. The cost of doing science makes scientists dependent on capital directly or indirectly, through the "Foundations." Among the relations of capital to science/technology which need to be examined are: the military-industrial complex; the medical-pharmaceutical complex; and the changing numbers employed in sectors as work moves from the old industrial nations (the U.S.) to the new (China). All of these questions reveal a dialectic which is much more complex than any "sham neutrality" and much more interesting.

R.F. Price
Australia

Raha's essay was creative. Smith's "invisible hand" is now openly the market. The machine "thinking" is not just a particular machine, but the market.

Huan Lin
Oakland, California

In discussing Marx's "concept of science," we should remember that it is the maturity of our age that makes us see so much more in Marx-to-late 19th century generation got so caught up in scientism that it allowed science to devour the subject. As Raya Dunayevskaya argued, they ended up denuding it of "its class content" and "transforming the object 'Science' into 'Subject'."

Science can't be decoupled from capitalism. Under the rule of capital "all science, all intellect and skill goes to the machine." That's why at issue is the freedom of humanity and not just an abstract debate about the miracles of scientific progress. What Dunayevskaya saw in "the chimera of the scientist who writes of 'Man viewed as a Machine,'" in contrast to workers battling automation and the labor bureaucrats, was different attitudes to objectivity for without a Subject one would relapse into the state or science as the liberator. Perhaps the precursor to all current tendencies within who deify science was Lassalle. He, wrote Dunayevskaya in *Marxism and Freedom*, "suffered from the illusion of the age: that science is 'class-less'." It is this attitude that made him think that he represents both "the science and the worker." Marx certainly rejected this notion, for concretely, science was incorporated into the machine; it can't be divorced from its technological manifestation.

Science can only be viewed as a totality. Methodologically, it cannot be dissected into "the good side" and "the bad side." It is not just "scientism" but the structure of scientific thought, its methodology or lack thereof dialectically speaking, that needs to be exposed to the light as "a private enclave" and subjected to negation of the negation.

Raha
California



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Tour of family opponents of Iraq war

DETROIT—Historic New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit hosted "Tour of Duty: Americans Speak Out" in October. Short notice for the event produced a disappointingly small audience for Lila Lipscomb, the Flint mother whose son was killed in Iraq and who achieved national recognition for her moving account in the film "Fahrenheit 9/11."

The program also included a powerful documentary "The Ground Truth," produced by Patricia Foulkrod (www.thegroundtruth.org). At first you heard soldiers' voices and saw only their faces. As the film came round to them again, the camera revealed that all had been injured. The reservists serving in Iraq, and detained longer than expected, leave their families with no means of support and will have no health benefits themselves when they return, even though their injuries are permanent.

Damu Smith, founder of Washington D.C.-based Black Voices for Peace, and Detroit City Councilwoman Joann Watson spoke movingly of the war casualties on both sides, and of their vision to "retire the institutionalized values that lead to this." They compared the war in Iraq to the Vietnam War, saying that every Arab is seen as the enemy; that the whole nation of Iraq has been criminalized; that young people are turned into animals to kill people who never hurt us. "Youth are kidnapped by this administration and held hostage by Halliburton's Big Lie. But the truth crushed to earth will rise again—we have to help it," he stated. They extended their vision to ending the bloodshed on both the Arab and Jewish sides of that conflict as well.

Ms. Lipscomb's strength of spirit came across, as in the film, but more strongly in person. She spoke of her



A Documentary by Patricia Foulkrod

The Human Cost of War

cretize a vision of humanity without such thinking so that we can mobilize for change.

multiracial family (who had come to support her) who had helped her to work through her grief at the loss of her son and given her support for her speaking tour.

This powerful program reminded me how important it is to overcome stereotyped thinking about who is against the war, and to con-

—Anti-war mother

Fight nuclear dump

WILLISTON, S.C.—In 1999 I got a certified letter saying that a local manufacturing company, Dixie-Narco, wanted to move a sewage system that was on our property. Most of the people living right around Dixie-Narco are Black. The sewage system had been built for a trailer park in the late 1940s. The contamination caused by the sewage system has been traced back to when chemical wastewater associated with the manufacture of refrigerators and air conditioning equipment by Admiral Home Appliances was sent to the sewage system from around the 1950s to the late 1980s. They had put millions of gallons of contaminated wastewater through that sewage system which discharged into the nearby wetland area. It sank into the groundwater, and may have affected nearby streams and ponds.

COMPANY ATTEMPTS COVER-UP

The shocking thing is the company wanted to sue me and my family because of the contamination. They wanted control and ownership of our property which was a little over 40 acres. I would not sell the property or accept a payoff because the main thing I wanted was to make sure they cleaned the property up and tested folk's water to see if it was contaminated. If I were out of the picture, they would not do any testing in the neighborhood and rush to remove the septic system, and maybe do a quick cleanup.

I started fighting and going to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Most everybody in that area drinks groundwater from private wells. After EPA and the State tested the drinking water in the area, we found out six homes had drinking water that was contaminated with chemicals like TCE, mercury, and lead. Aside from the homes nearby, there are also two schools in the vicinity; there is concern of how these contaminants in the drinking water may be affecting children.

I wrote to Lindsey Graham, Strom Thurmond, Joe Wilson, and John Ashcroft; they never got back to me. My State Representative wasn't any help, and I've known him for years. Some of his family still lives near the contaminated area. I was sure he was going to get involved and help. He called one evening and told me if I didn't stop talking about this he was going to "kick my ass." The local NAACP wouldn't do anything either.

I contacted the Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program (Memphis) and got Rita Harris to help organize the community. We created fliers to help people understand what was going on. I went around the town, delivering fliers to get people to stand up and speak out. The Sierra Club helped us form a group called Citizens Against Toxic Contaminants (CATC).

PROTESTERS DEMAND ANSWERS

The EPA went for 18 months without holding a public meeting. They caused a lot of suspicion, because while they didn't want to give us information, they had people out in moon suits taking samples. Last December, they wanted to have an "availability session," where you talk in a small group or alone to the people.

They didn't want to talk to us as a group, tell everybody the same story, or let everybody hear somebody else's questions and the answers they would give. We felt like this was a way to control the meeting and keep people from telling their stories about how they felt the contamination might have caused their cancers. We went to the EPA meeting with over 50 protesters carrying signs and demanding answers in a "real" meeting.

These companies divide people. They give money to the church organizations, to the NAACP, to politicians. The nuclear industry can fund all kinds of people. Corporate powers run South Carolina. It's the nuclear dumping ground of the world.

At the school, many children are taking Ritalin and have some learning disabilities or health problems. If you look at what TCE causes, you can find people with those same symptoms from house to house. Williston is like a Third World country.

These people need water, education, health care. People need to be more aware of what's going on around them. They've got to put some restrictions on these polluting companies so they can't just pay people off. Corporations are controlling everything. It's capitalism.

—Environmental justice activist

'No New Jails' forum

LOS ANGELES—Four days after the Oct. 22 demonstration against police brutality, the No New Jails Coalition (NNJC) held a forum at the Watts Community Labor Action Center to defeat Los Angeles County Measure A in the November election. Measure A would increase the sales tax, raising \$500 million annually for more police, sheriffs and jails in L.A. County.

NNJC is dedicated to reducing the number of people locked up in L.A. County, and promoting alternatives to the tired, antiquated and dehumanizing solution of prisons for the vast majority of offenders, as well as a more humane alternative to the usual solution of more police.

About 150 people, mostly young Latinos and Blacks, but also many whites and Asians, attended and heard testimony and comments which were 100% against Measure A. In contrast, some union leaders and progressive newspapers have recommended a "YES" vote.

A Latino youth from LA CAUSA spoke on how they help motivate youth to get their high school equivalency as a way to stay out of prison. A woman professor at California State University-Los Angeles said \$500 million was cut from their budget last year, as tuition was raised three times in the last few years.

A speaker from Families Against Three Strikes spoke in favor of related Proposition 66 which would reform the three strikes law. Tens of thousands of non-violent offenders (including parole violators, shoplifters and drug addicts) are serving 25 years to life as their third strike. Proposition 66 would allow these inmates to be resentenced.

A Black woman said new prisons are being built, supposedly to relieve overcrowding, but history has shown that each new prison soon gets filled up with no improvements in the inhumane prison conditions.

Sales taxes or other public funding would be better used to provide Single Room Occupancy housing for the ever increasing numbers of homeless, to keep clinics and hospitals open, to train and hire many needed teachers, nurses and social workers, as well as funding substance abuse treatment and restoring cuts in education. Funding to prevent recidivism is non-existent.

As a *Los Angeles Times* Oct. 28 opinion article stated: "Major crimes in L.A. County have gone from 652,939 in 1993 to 349,590 in 2002. Homicides have dropped by half. If crime is going down, why should the numbers of police and sheriff's deputies go up? There are other problems with Measure A. It would guarantee funds for 'intelligence gathering' by law enforcement. Intelligence on whom? Terrorists? Gang peacemakers? Critics of the police? The authorization is open-ended."

—Basho

On Nov. 2, Proposition 66 was unfortunately defeated 53% to 47%. Measure A thankfully failed.—Editor

New Acheh awareness

The East Timor Action Network in San Francisco Bay Area hosted a meeting in early October to initiate a support committee for the struggle in Acheh. Cut Zahara Hamzah, sister of slain civil rights champion Jafar Siddiq Hamzah, visited the Bay Area to tell of her province's struggle for independence from Indonesia.

My brother was a lawyer and a human rights activist. While he lived in New York he founded International Forum for Acheh (IFA) whose agenda is to campaign for human rights, justice and democracy in Acheh and to investigate human rights cases.

This includes ExxonMobil giving facilities to TNI (the military) troops to conduct operations in the surrounding villages without caring about the atrocities these troops are committing on innocent villagers. My brother was trying to organize a conference on Acheh to shine a light on the impunity afforded the security forces by the state, and the lack of international pressure on Indonesia to respect human rights and how that gears the TNI towards genocidal actions in Acheh.

When he returned to Acheh he was kidnapped in broad daylight on Aug. 5, 2000. A month later, on Sept. 2, we found his body wrapped in barbed wire. Jafar is not the only victim in my family. My uncle and cousin are also victims. Nor is my family unusual. Over the last 15 years there have been thousands of victims of kidnappings, torture and murder. In addition to people killed or disappeared, there are many more refugees, displaced persons, single parents, widows and orphans.

The horrible September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the U. S. has made the people of this great country, especially New Yorkers, live in panic and in fear for their safety. The families of the victims live in sorrow for the loss of their loved ones. We cry with them in our hearts because only those who have experienced such wanton brutality can fully understand their pain. The TNI has taken on the role of terrorists in Acheh.

The situation in Acheh is getting worse every day. The civil society in Acheh is subjected to harassment, rapes, kidnappings, torture and murder. Violence against women is on the increase. Hundreds of women have been raped. Freedom of expression has been crushed. The military operation bars foreign journalists from visiting. Acheh has become increasingly isolated nationally and internationally.

—Cut Zahara Hamzah

BLACK/REDVIEW

Continued from page 1

ciation for the Advancement of Colored People."

ONGOING DISENFRANCHISEMENT

To suppress or to manipulate the African-American vote is an ongoing form of political activity. According to a 2004 Racism Watch report there is a deep seated racial bias in the electoral system. Old electoral equipment with a tendency to break down is sent most often to minority districts. A 2000 study by Cal Tech and MIT universities revealed that four to six million votes were thrown out as no good and nearly all of them were from communities of color.

On the verge of this 2004 election, Florida once again geared up for another purge of released felons from the voters' rolls. The 2000 purge of felons resulted in more than 50,000 legal voters being disenfranchised, very many of them African Americans. We don't know the number of legal African-American voters that were swept up in a new Florida purge. But it is obvious that President Bush and his Republican Party knew that African Americans had made up their minds and were not going to vote for him.

African Americans were also aware of the fact that they could be a decisive political force in some swing states where Bush and Kerry engaged in a tight political struggle for votes. If one looks back at history since 1948, one would discover that African-American voters did play a determinative role in elections. When the Democratic Party took the risk of offending the South with Hubert Humphrey's strong 1948 civil rights plank four southern states went Dixiecrat.

Harry S. Truman, the man who desegregated the armed forces, narrowly defeated the Republican Dewey because, as historians August Meier and Elliot Rudwick state, 1948 was the "first election since Reconstruction in which the Negro's status was a major issue and in which his political power was critical factor in the outcome" (*From Plantation to Ghetto*).

'NO' TO SYSTEM

Up until a few days before the 2004 presidential election, many polls were taken to show how various social and ethnic groups might vote. It was very difficult to find any published polls on how African Americans would vote in "swing states" like Michigan and Ohio. One politician did say, "Bush would have to destroy Detroit in order to win Michigan." This statement is offensive to African Americans.

The totally "decided" character of the African-American vote indicates a subjectivity that is much deeper than the political process, including anything the Democrats have to offer. Ever since emancipation African Americans have been fighting in the political arena, but they also know that past political victories haven't been able to achieve any meaningful solution to the problems of racism. They are still striving for a full realization of freedom that would transform American society.

Iranian Philosophy & Revolution offers 'critical grasp'

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE TO THE NEW FARSI PHILOSOPHY & REVOLUTION (EXCERPTS)

Philosophy and Revolution? In the age of great doubts? In the age of human despair in which there is not even a dim light illuminating the way ahead? This is the epoch in which strangers no longer embrace. Human beings are so disappointed with a life which even in caricature does not resemble what previous times had handed down, that they can not go forward in darkness. How strange it sounds to say philosophy and revolution.

The first sentence of Lukacs' *Theory of the Novel* is the following: "So fortunate are the times in which a sky full of stars is the map for all the possible pathways." The epoch of epics, according to Lukacs, did not need to be questioned because it had all the answers. But epic humans in the 20th century faced the many questions that arose out of each event and stubbornly looked for answers. Sometimes events were shaped as a result of questions that demanded answers in practice. The bitter and unfortunate experiences of this century were inseparable from a simple and doubtful question: What happens after the revolution? The experiences of the many revolutions and liberation movements that had failed and aborted no longer allow us to answer this question with a subjectivist and predetermined answer. Dreams stop in front of this red line, and are forced to reflect on themselves. Each new beginning (unlike the 19th century) is forced to deal with this question. We are hungry for an answer to this question.

It is said that happy times don't have philosophies, i.e., all humans are philosophers in these times. In our tragic times in which human identity has been lost in uniformity and the global village, we desperately need philosophy. According to Hegel, philosophy is the "Thought of its Time" and deliberation on the dominant Spirit. But in times that aren't too distant, we were going down paths that led to dead ends. We were reading Georges Politzer's *Fundamentals of Philosophy* which taught us that every question has been answered and all we need is to stretch a hand to take the fruit of human knowledge from the tree of knowledge. This was possible in a land in which there was no room for exploration, research and "the labor, patience and suffering of the negative." We accepted the dominant traditions in a slogan-like manner and concluded that there was no need for further exploration. The great masters had answered all the questions. And what is interesting is that we didn't know what the great masters had said. Yes, we studied philosophy and supposedly thought dialectically, but in practice that meant fitting all social and natural phenomena into pre-made molds on the basis of the principles of so-called "dialectics."

What we didn't know was that "the dialectic is not an objective scheme, definitively articulated, and then 'applied' and adapted to a variety of situations. In the course of praxis the human subject constantly reinvents its revolutionary dialectic." Dialectics is not a "method of thought," but needs "to be situated in and for itself" (Louis Dupré, Preface to the 1989 *Philosophy and Revolution*).

The collapse of Communist regimes which had shackled human beings in the name of Marxism brought great joy to many in the world. But the establishment of "free market capitalism" has not liberated human beings, and has led to an intensification of inequalities. In this situation, there is an enormous void in thought regarding an alternative. All kinds of chauvinistic nationalisms and retrogressive thoughts have come on the scene. At the same time, a mass movement against globalization of capital and war and terrorism is growing in various parts of the world.

But just at this time, when a critical grasp of the capitalist system is urgent, large segments of left intellectuals have abandoned the task of developing, enriching and clarifying the conceptual foundations that are needed. Post Marxism has given its place to Postmodernism with its principles of probability, discontinuity and breaks and its hostility to any concept of totality, system, structure, process and "grand narratives." By promoting Nietzsche's theory of the innateness of the struggle for power, and a one-sided and dangerous cultural relativism, Postmodernism has rejected any alternative which involves the self-development of the human being and new human relations as its goal...

The greatest difficulty in reading this book will be encountered in the first chapter in which Dunayevskaya examines Hegel's philosophy. There is no doubt that many readers will find this chapter difficult to understand. Three major works of Hegel, the *Phenomenology of Mind*, *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Mind*, are explored through an examination of one central Hegelian category, absolute negativity. Unfortunately Persian readers only have access to some translations of works about Hegel (1) and not the translations of his original works. None of Hegel's major works have been translated into Persian.(2) Therefore most intellectuals don't know much about what Hegel said, unless they know European languages. Let's remember that reading Hegel is

even difficult for Germans. Hegel would have abhorred the idea of seeming easy to understand.

Hegel wrote his first major work, the *Phenomenology of Mind* (3), under the impact of the French Revolution, a revolution that started with the promise of "liberty, equality, fraternity" and ended with the reign of terror. In parts of the *Phenomenology of Mind* such as "Absolute Freedom and Terror," the question of the insufficiency of the philosophy of the Enlightenment in confronting the horrible internal contradictions of the French Revolution are clearly expressed. As against the prevalent view that reduces Hegel's philosophy and dialectics to the concepts of "thesis, antithesis, synthesis," these categories are not Hegel's. Hegel's dialectic

presents the category of negativity as the continuous development of the idea of freedom. This negativity is derived from the concept of transcendence in which one logical category negates the previous one but comprehends its content and elevates it to a higher stage. In his "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," Marx called Hegel's dialectic of negativity the "moving and creative principle," despite his intense critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Hegel's reconciliation with the Prussian state. Marx wrote:

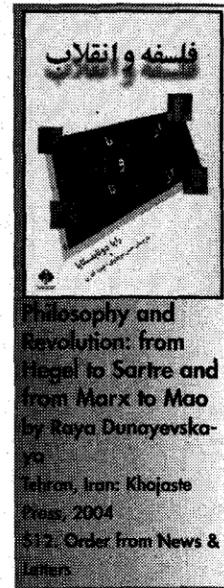
"Hegel comprehends the self-production of the human being as a process, regards objectification as contraposition, as externalization and as the transcendence of this externalization ... the true active relation of the human being to himself/herself as species essence, that is as human essence is possible only because the human being actually produces all the capacities of his/her species—and this again is only possible thanks to the collective activity of human beings, is possible only as a result of history."

Basing herself on this view of Marx, Dunayevskaya emphasized the category of "absolute negativity" or "second negativity" in her own return to Hegel. In Hegel's philosophy, the first negative merely expresses what one is against. But "second negativity" or "absolute negativity" contains a positive or affirmative content and further develops the idea of freedom. As against most Marxist and non-Marxist philosophers who see in Hegel's "absolute," an "end of history," "end of contradictions," or "escape from reality," Dunayevskaya claims that the category of absolute negativity is a new beginning and contains "a logic by which humans make themselves free." In her view, these concepts are most clearly expressed in the final chapters of Hegel's major works: *Absolute Knowledge in the Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), *Absolute Idea in the Science of Logic* (1812), and *Absolute Mind in the Philosophy of Mind* (1830).

February 2004

END NOTES

1. These translations include the following: *The Philosophy of Hegel* by Stace, translated by Dr. Hamid Enayat; *Hegel* by Jacques D'Hondt, translated by Mohammad Jaafar Puyan-deh; *Hegel* by Peter Singer, translated by Ezzatollah Fuladvand; *The Philosophy of Hegel* by Leo Rauch, translated by Abdul Ali Dastgheib, and *Hegel's Thought* by Roger Garaudy, translated by Bagher Parham.
2. Except the Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* which has been translated by Dr. Mahmud Ebadian.
3. Hegel's writings prior to 1807 are known as the Early Writings of the Jena period. They include *System der Sittlichkeit* 1802-1803.



Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao by Raya Dunayevskaya
 Editor, Iran: Khojaste Press, 2004
 \$12. Order from News & Letters

Black Colombians fight displacement

Local Colombia solidarity activists sponsored a discussion of the struggle of Afro-Colombians at a Chicago public library on Oct. 17. We print comments of two of the speakers.—Editor

Carlos Rosero, founder of Black Communities Process in Colombia

The situation in Colombia touches on human rights. It has a lot to do with economic and cultural rights also. In the Americas, there are 150 to 180 million people of African descent. Colombia is number three in the total number of people of African descent, after Brazil and the U.S.

We have 117 per 1,000 infant mortalities. We have little health care. The average life span is 55 compared to 75 in the rest of the country. Many of these problems are due to the history of slavery going back to the 19th century.

To better define the situation, we have five major cities with large Afro-Colombian populations: Cali, Bogota, Medellin, Barranquilla and Cartagena. This is an indication of the movement of people from their land, adding onto their historic problems. Three million people have been displaced by violence in Colombia. Some say that 33% of the three million are Afro-Colombians.

The government says 8.5% of the population is Afro-Colombian. Another survey says 18% of the population.

The issue of displacement is one of the biggest issues to face Afro-Colombians since slavery. I know someone who calls what is going on Desplaza Dos. The first displacement was the displacement from Africa. Now it is from their lands in Colombia.

The issue of displacement is part of the strategy of the war, to make sure that these areas are to be used for something else. To grow African palms, Afro-Colombians are situated on lands that are both strategically and economically important. I believe that the situation of the Afro-Colombians constitutes the worst situation of the African diaspora.

Land, participation and identity. These rights are an

important element of the situation in Colombia. The main issue is this issue of land and natural resources.

Zulia Mena, the first Afro-Colombian activist elected to Colombia's congress

This is a struggle of those who struggle for justice all over the world. In the period between the first displacement and now, those in power have not been able to end the Black community. We have a strong sense of consciousness. We are between 150 and 180 million in the Americas.

Being Black in Colombia is a political thing. The official statistics underrepresent us. We know we are 11 million strong. Statistics are political. We need to come up with strategies to count our numbers.

The port of Cartagena is beautiful, but it was built with the sweat and blood of African people. The abolition of slavery took place

150 years ago, in 1852. Thirty four years later the constitution was written. It was written as if Colombia was a homogenous country, but we are a mixed country. Only a small number of families consider themselves white. They have all the power at their command.

The areas of the Blacks and the indigenous are the areas of the highest biodiversity. These are the regions richest in resources, but poorest in terms of basic needs. Large interests, both national and international, want the land with no one on it.

The policies of the U.S. toward Colombia and Latin America are wrong. They come out of the Cold War. Plan Colombia originally existed to eradicate coca crops in Putumayo. Now it has been redirected towards security.

The drug trafficking is managed by a very small number of people. President Uribe is taking apart democratic elements of our constitution. Bogota, Medellin and Cali are in the hands of people of conscience.



Afro-Colombian family in refugee camp in Antioquia among the many indigenous peoples who make up a high percentage of displaced people of Colombia.

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Bush 'mandate' promises economic and social crises

Continued from page 1

precarious nature of Bush's victory and the objective obstacles that will face him in his second term. It is no accident that the go-ahead for unleashing the bloody attack on Falluja came only a few days after the election. Despite Bush's effort during the campaign to paint a rosy picture of the occupation of Iraq, he and his advisors know that a growing number of Americans oppose the war in Iraq and want to see an end to the occupation. They knew that launching the attack on Falluja prior to the election would stoke anti-war sentiment throughout the country and doom his chances for re-election.

Simply put, the occupation of Iraq is causing the U.S. to sink into a quagmire in foreign affairs on a level not

LEAD-EDITORIAL

seen since the Vietnam War. This has created so much fear even in ruling class circles as to where four more years of Bushism might lead us that a number of rightwing ideologues like Frances Fukuyama refused to endorse Bush.

No amount of rhetoric about "political mandates" can alter the fact that the occupation of Iraq presents U.S. imperialism with an objective crisis that will haunt Bush throughout his second term.

POLITICS OF 'MORAL CERTAINTY'

None of this, however, can hide the fact that the man who is so passionately and justifiably detested by millions got as many votes as he did. What is needed at this point is not just to acknowledge the painful defeat the forces of revolt suffered Nov. 2 but to figure out how the major questions the electorate faced—such as the war in Iraq, the crisis in health care, and jobs—could get trumped by something called "moral values." Masses of people are asking how can anyone associate "moral values" with someone responsible for 100,000 Iraqi deaths which his administration dares to call "collateral damage"? How can anyone believe their security against terrorism is assured by the man who has become the best recruiter for Osama Bin Laden?

What is now clear is that, ever since the Christian Coalition was ushered into the White House after Bush's 2000 victory, it has not been that they have been leading him, but it is he who has been leading them. It has required considerable skill on his part to use the Christian Coalition to promote his agenda while not appearing to be so totally in their pocket as to alienate "moderate" voters. Most of all it took great skill in playing the "faith card" to convince so many that he was the man of "certainty" who left no ambiguity about where he stood on all matters of importance. It was that image of both faith and certainty that appealed to many who thereby embraced Bush as not a "regular politician."

This "certainty" was recently explained by one of Bush's senior advisers in response to a journalist's question about whether they saw reality the same way as the rest of the world: "We're an empire now," he was informed, "and when we act, we create our own reality.... We're history's actors, and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do" (Ron Suskind, "Without a Doubt," *The New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 17, 2004). It is a chilling reflection of Bush's Bonapartist mindset and agenda of "might makes right."

Such expressions show that the rhetoric of "faith" and "moral values" is being used to cover over the barbarism of this society. The Right, however, is not the only factor to blame for this. Kerry and the Democrats also deserve part of the blame, for they did a far poorer job articulating a positive alternative to conditions of everyday life in this country than did the Republicans in mobilizing their conservative Christian fundamentalist base. If Bush and the Republicans understand anything, it's that people want to think that their lives have meaning. Many people are not satisfied with hearing "pragmatic" answers to political questions. When those opposed to Bush fail to show how a change in present policies will affect the overall meaning of their lives, the door gets left open to the Right to appropriate the language of "meaning" and "morality."

Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, addressed a similar problem in the 1980s when she said that relying on politics alone cannot reverse the retrogression that has dominated this country since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

"The two-fold problematic of our age is," she wrote in 1987, "1) What happens after the conquest of power? 2) Are there ways for new beginnings when there is so much reaction, so many aborted revolutions, such turning of the clock backward in the most technologically advanced lands?" Answering these questions, she insisted, cannot be achieved by relying on politics alone. It has instead become necessary to fuse political opposition with a philosophy of liberation that expresses not just what we are against, but what we are for.

Not only Kerry and the Democrats, but much of the Left which recognizes their shortcomings, has yet to rise to this challenge. While many opponents of Bush will no doubt respond to Kerry's defeat by arguing for more centrist and pragmatic politics, the real lesson of this election is that the Right has learned how to make use of the philosophic void that defines so much of contemporary politics.

While the cracks that have appeared within the ruling class are important to watch, the forces of revolt and what the campaign on "moral values" has meant to

their development are what demand examining.

WHERE ARE FORCES OF REVOLT?

It is first of all clear that in this election Bush managed to twist "moral values" to mean "keep gays and women in their place." Of the 11 states that passed propositions to ban gay marriage, nine (all but Michigan and Oregon) went for Bush. At the same time, it is important to remember the huge outpouring of women to Washington, D.C. in April for the March for Women's Lives, where all sorts of questions concerning truly human relations came forward and showed the coalescence and enormous diversity of the marchers. (See "Women make history in massive rally," *News & Letters*, May 2004.) That the issue of gay marriage was nevertheless so successfully used to propel Bush to a victory proves the importance of a continuing battle to project Women's Liberation as a life and death question and Gay Liberation as a matter of both human and civil rights.

So successfully was the gay marriage issue played by Bush that he no doubt imagined that it would bring many older, more conservative Black voters to his reactionary agenda. Yet the approach failed. Blacks turned out in record numbers and went overwhelmingly for Kerry. The solid 90% of the Black vote against Bush reaffirms the long history Black masses in this country have consistently played as a vanguard for all the forces of revolution. (See "African-American vote," p. 1.)

The labor vote was the most telling in breaking with its historical record not only in states like Ohio, which eventually went to Bush, but also in those like Minnesota and Wisconsin which Kerry won by the slimmest of margins. That one out of every four jobs lost in the U.S. during Bush's tenure was lost in Ohio, and he still carried the state, reflects the effect of de-industrialization, globalization, and the resulting weakening of the U.S. labor movement. Important objective changes have occurred in the structure of U.S. capitalism that the Republicans have made use of.

However this does not mean that labor is no longer a major factor in U.S. politics. Bush just barely carried Ohio. While organized labor is not the force it once was, large numbers of workers still came out against Bush. Bush's forces, however, proved better organized than Kerry's, in large part because they proved better at mobilizing their base than did Kerry, who continued to defend free trade and neoliberalism during the campaign.

That organized labor has lost much of the force it once had has made it easy for the media to participate in effectively censoring labor's active opposition to the status quo, thus making it seem even weaker than it really is. Few know that many of the largest labor organizations in the U.S. passed resolutions demanding that U.S. troops be brought home from Iraq. Well over five million men and women belong to those unions.

The maps of red and blue staring us in the face as the election returns came in showed that Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia, which used to be considered "border states," are increasingly becoming part of the electoral map of the South. Whereas Nixon and Reagan rose to power by relying on the "southern strategy" of appealing to racism and a narrow definition of "moral values," Bush is trying to spread the politics of the southern conservatism ever further northward, as a central part of the Republicans' effort to secure permanent control of U.S. politics.

YOUTH AND THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM

Of all the forces of revolt, however, it was the Youth who were targeted the most fully in an effort to get them registered and to vote. The efforts of everyone from Michael Moore to Bruce Springsteen and Eminem did increase the youth vote substantially. And they went overwhelmingly to Kerry. But while their votes increased from the last elections, so did those of almost every other segment of the population.

It might be more fruitful to look at the youth dimension as a force of revolt in terms of what it has meant historically. That is what makes it important to look at the Vietnam War which this year suddenly became the other war fought about, as seen in the campaign rhetoric against Kerry. The truth is that Kerry's struggles against the Vietnam War could have become a way to link up with the concerns of today's youth if Kerry himself had addressed the lessons learned from Vietnam. However, he did not do so. He sought instead to position himself as even a firmer supporter of "pre-

emptive war" than Bush himself.

Situating today's drive for war in the context of what happened in Vietnam would have made it easier to place today's opposition to Bush in an historic framework, by pointing to the very long haul it has been to defeat the forces of reaction in this country that never give up but take on new forms at significant moments.

It would be hard to imagine until today a president more viscerally hated than Richard Nixon, against whom the anti-war protests kept increasing the more he continued the war in Vietnam, even daring to invade Cambodia. And yet, as Bush has done today, Nixon won a second term in 1972 with more votes than he had won in 1968. The truth is that it took both the Watergate scandal and the never-ending activities of a new generation of revolutionaries to end the Vietnam war and eventually bring Nixon down. (See "Politics of Counter-Revolution: Watergate and the Year of Europe," *News & Letters*, June-July 1973.) Nixon's defeat in Watergate, however, did not prevent a renewed emergence of the Right.

What Marxist-Humanism singled out as the needed response to Nixonism was to recognize that movement activity had to be rooted in a philosophy of revolution. The inseparability of revolution with a philosophy of revolution is the banner that the founder of Marxist-Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya, unfurled in 1973 with her book *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (republished last year). That the retrogression has deepened since Nixon left office—into Reaganism and now into Bushism—has only made the working out of a unity of philosophy and revolution more urgent than ever.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

There is no doubt whatsoever that Bush is gearing up to bring his agenda down on our heads. He will be helped by the additional seats Republicans have won in Congress. With both the Senate and the House of Representatives more tightly controlled by the Republican Party, it greatly increases the dangers ensuing from all three branches of government being in these same reactionary hands.

It is a chilling prospect to know that Bush will soon be able to appoint at least one and possibly as many as four new justices to the Supreme Court, which will jeopardize not only abortion rights but all sorts of questions from the environment to the most basic civil rights.

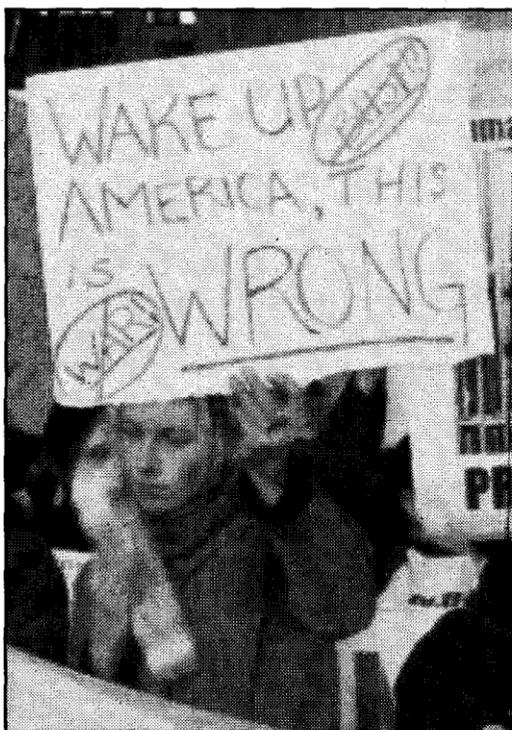
Most threatening is the possibility that those who came out to oppose Bush will draw the wrong conclusion from his election—that is, that the time has come to retreat from unfurling a banner of a total uprooting of this racist, sexist, class ridden society. Withdrawing from the struggle to make real changes in this country assumes many forms. The sudden immediate increase in applications for immigration to Canada was only one such overt expression of that withdrawal. Another more likely expression will be the argument that what is needed is a more pragmatic or a more centrist politics to win next time.

The well-known playwright Tony Kushner put it right when he said it would be "bad news for the Left" if we begin paying attention to all the noise that "the country has been completely remade into a conservative Christian nation."

The most dangerous expression is that some who recognize the futility of choosing between the "lesser evil" of different wings of the ruling class will resort to the politics of desperation. That is what the Weather Underground represented in the 1970s. Today it takes a very different form—the assumption that any enemy of Bush is our friend. This appears in the failure to recognize the twin threats represented by Bush and Osama Bin Laden. Thus, too many radicals now excuse and identify with the politics of terrorism in the Middle East. (See "Resistance or retrogression?" p. 5.)

As against this kind of withdrawal, we are seeing new determination not to retreat. Advice had been circulated even before the elections to hit the streets on Nov. 3, no matter who won. A wide number of spontaneous protests did occur. In Chicago, an anti-war protest crossed paths with the striking City College teachers and together they marched to the center of the Loop. In New York the War Resisters League marched from Ground Zero to the Stock Exchange to protest the war. Other, larger protests are already being organized through the internet.

What will be important is whether the determination not to succumb to Bush by continuing the movements against him will accompany a determination to work out a philosophically grounded alternative to this system as a whole. That is not a task that we can shift onto the shoulders of spontaneous movements. It is a task that faces those on the revolutionary Left who are serious about reversing the political direction of this country. Now is the time to get down to the hard work of articulating a comprehensive alternative to capitalism. There was never a more urgent time for that kind of activity of thinking and doing.



5,000 marched in San Francisco Nov. 3 to protest renewal of Bush's reactionary agenda.

San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center

Conference gives Marxism bad name

by Joshua Skolnik

Several hundred participants, mostly college youth, attended what was called the Northeast Socialist Conference on Oct. 23 in New York. It was in fact a regional conference of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), one of the largest socialist groups in the U.S., followers of Tony Cliff.

YOUTH

In the sessions, the ISO speakers put forth mostly bland, abstract and simplistic concepts of socialism, while other members repeating the party line dominated discussion. Yet in private conversations, a number of youth showed a lot of interest in Marx and in theory. Their interest was a welcome contrast to our experiences at some recent youth activist events here, at which attendees exhibited no interest in Marx and opposition to any role for theory in revolutionary process. At the ISO conference, people who came to the N&L literature table wanted to talk about political economy and, in particular, value theory, issues that go to the heart of creating a non-capitalist society. This interest was not reflected in the conference agenda, however, which served to separate theory from activism.

UNDERCURRENT OF EXPLORING

While ideas about alternatives to capitalism were not on the agenda of conference sessions, two sessions I attended did deal with the possibility of socialism. They were entitled "Is Revolution Possible in the U.S.?" and "Is Human Nature a Barrier to Socialism?" Although the former dealt primarily with the current political conjuncture and the difficulties of political organizing and combating ideology in quiescent times, the latter elicited from the audience some serious questions concerning problems that will no doubt arise in a revolutionary situation.

One man wondered: if, in a new society, we are to develop our potential to the fullest, who will do the necessary work that no one wants to do? One woman responded that we would need to share that unpleasant work, so that everyone could be given the opportunity to develop her talents and interests. Another woman said that capitalism, rather than being an expression of some eternal human nature, denies our nature, referring to its regime of forced labor that stunts human development.

Someone else wanted to know if a repressive regime would be necessary to ensure that capitalists don't reassert themselves. There was no mention, however, of the possibility of a counter-revolution arising from within the revolution—which happened throughout the 20th century—nor was there discussion of the specificity of value production and how to abolish it from the outset of a new society.

The hard theoretic labor needed to work out these and other questions was nowhere on the ISO's agenda, while it is central to News and Letters Committees' "Perspectives": "To leave ideas to the realm of 'theory' and organization to that of 'practice' robs us of the ability to comprehensively respond to the question of whether there is an alternative to capitalism and what

has called itself 'socialism'" (see July N&L).

THEORY AND PRACTICE DIVORCED

The conference revealed just how deeply-held is this assumption that theory and practice dwell in separate realms, an idea that permeates the Left as well as bourgeois society. That is, the realms of ideas and actions do not overlap, let alone influence each other. The political practice of the ISO appears totally divorced from the development of ideas needed for today's mass movements to progress. Thus, their discussions of politics remained at best flat and uninspiring.

The ISO's worst political position, due to the dire situation Iraqis face today, besieged both by the occupation and the violence it provokes, is its uncritical support for an undifferentiated

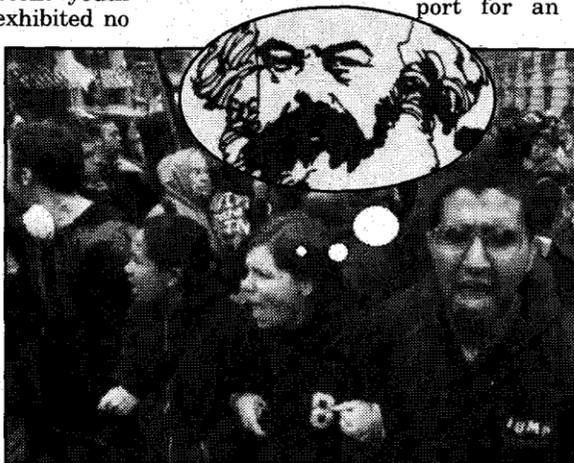
Iraqi "resistance," which was a topic in a number of sessions. It is imperative that we make concrete our determination to support the forces of revolution on the ground in Iraq, not some abstract "right of resistance"—the ISO's cover for its uncritical

support for those fighting the U.S. militarily, irrespective of the concrete struggles of workers and women **against** the religious forces who largely make up this resistance. Such positions leave the American anti-war movement in a state of disarray, isolated from people-to-people international solidarity, and without any idea of what it is **for**.

There was no sense that the dialogue created between struggles that comes from building international solidarity with liberatory movements in places like Iraq is necessary if all our respective struggles for an alternative to the existing order are to be victorious. Such abstract conceptions, which pervade most of their political positions, betray an attitude of indifference to the concrete problems of revolution, including the question of what happens after the revolution.

Toward building the American movement, the ISO displays an attitude of organizing as usual, only more of it. Typical of this conventional left wisdom was the keynote speaker, historian Howard Zinn, who, when asked what we should do, told the audience to keep on doing what they've been doing, and eventually things will go our way.

It should be clear by now that past efforts have shown themselves unable to overcome the obstacles our movements continuously confront; that we need a fundamental rethinking of our ideas and practices. A solution needs to be worked out organizationally but not without recognizing the integrality of dialectical philosophy for the resolution of these recurring problems in theory and practice.



Ecofeminist embodies Kenya's many struggles

DETROIT—Dr. Wangari Maathai, founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement which involves thousands of women reforesting their country, added a number of new "firsts" to the many achievements of her 64 years when she was awarded the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize.

Not only is Dr. Maathai the first woman in Africa to win the prize; she is the first recipient whose work directly addresses the environment and environmental justice. After decades of persecution by the dictatorial Daniel Arap Moi regime, Dr. Maathai was elected to parliament in 2002 by 98% of the vote and was subsequently appointed Assistant Minister for the Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife.

For the first time the Nobel committee, citing Dr. Maathai as "an example and a source of inspiration for everyone in Africa fighting for sustainable development, democracy and peace," acknowledged that it had "expanded the term peace to encompass environmental questions...peace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment." Professor Ole Danbolt Mjoes, for the committee, said "Maathai stands at the front of the fight to promote ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and Africa...she has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development and embraces...women's rights in particular."

ECO-SOCIAL STRUGGLES

Dr. Maathai has fiercely defended women and poor people against the abuses of government and corporate interests, as when in 1996, she spoke out against an international agricultural research organization which blamed poor farmers in the Third World for deforestation: "It is very common for people making such conclusions to blame poor people. Poor people are the victims, not the cause. In Kenya at the moment, we are fighting to protect the remaining very few indigenous forests from some of the richest people in the country."

In 1999 she was among the Green Belt members beaten and arrested by the Moi administration when they successfully protested the clearing of a forest near Nairobi for a luxury housing development.

She founded the Green Belt Movement in 1976 to enable poor women to plant trees on their farms and on school and church compounds. Almost 30 million trees later, the organization, comprised mostly of women, combats the effects of deforestation while producing sustainable wood for cooking fires. Most recently (October 9) Dr. Maathai urged U.S. voters to make a choice against the war in Iraq and in favor of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

KENYAN WOMEN IN REVOLT

Remarkable as her achievement is; Dr. Maathai comes from a rich tradition of Kenyan women fighting for freedom. Their struggles have been chronicled by News and Letters Committees since our beginning. The book *People of Kenya Speak for Themselves* (1955) by Mbiyu Koinange describes Njeri, an illiterate woman who organized hundreds of women to save pennies until they could build a dormitory for the girls at the Kenya Teachers' College. She later organized the African Women's League, numbering 10,000 members, and by 1955 was imprisoned with 9,000 other Kenyan women.

More recently, Charity Ngilu was defeated by the corrupt incumbent president of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi in her 1998 bid to become the first woman president in sub-Saharan Africa. Ngilu had been urged to run by working women in her neighborhood because of her battles for clean water and clinics for the poor. (See *News & Letters*, January-February 1998.)

Their struggle continues with Wangari Maathai's achievements today.

—Susan Van Gelder

View of 'FSM' at 40

Arrested many years ago in the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, I returned to this University of California campus for the 40th anniversary of the event. The weeklong celebration of the "FSM" featured a rally that attracted 3,000 students; 10 workshops; '60s films; two poetry readings; a night of folk song; journalist Seymour Hersh talking about Abu Ghraib prison and Iraq, and a rock concert.

The Oct. 7 panel "Berkeley and the Black Freedom Struggle: Then and Now" explored the 50-year history of civil rights activism. Taman Moncour (Traci Seams), a leader of the Bay Area sit-ins in 1963; Mike Miller, the Bay Area organizer for Students for a Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the 1960s; Hardy Frye, a SNCC organizer in Sacramento, Cal. and Mississippi from 1964-1967, and Cassie Lopez, an organizer for jobs, education and housing in Detroit—all shared histories of the '60s civil rights struggles.

Frye told how he learned to make coalitions between civil rights groups and farm workers; to change Mississippi and Alabama politics as well as to challenge the national Democratic Party, and to bring these ideas to the rest of the county.

STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The last speaker, Josie Heinman, is a senior at UC Berkeley and activist with the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration and Immigrant Rights. In a powerful speech she told how the coalition helped organize 50,000 students to go to Washington, D.C. on April 1, 2004 to demonstrate for affirmative action at the Supreme Court. Concerned that too few students of color are enrolling in UC Berkeley, the coalition is trying to restore affirmative action there.

That evening's panel, "Focus on the FSM: Its Genesis, Meanings and Consequences," had six political activists from the late 1950s and 1960s. Ken Cloke, former chairman of SLATE, a leading dissident student group of the early 1960s, said he was afraid he would never get a job if he signed a petition, but he, like all the others, overcame this fear. Jo Freeman, a leader of the Young Democrats in the 1960s at Berkeley, argued that although the FSM clearly came out of the civil rights movements, its main accomplishment was helping to end McCarthyism and redbaiting.

For author Greil Marcus, "the FSM was a great conversation," while Michael Rossman, a mainstay of the FSM for 40 years, said, "I learned the difference between a 'mob' and a 'public.' We were called a 'mob' but we really were the first democracy that we had ever experienced." Rossman added that UC Berkeley President Clark Kerr, who saw himself as a liberal fighting for civil rights, red baited the FSM in the newspapers though he knew it wasn't true. Kerr's red-baiting gave ammunition to such right-wing politicians as Ronald Reagan who, when elected governor in 1966, fired Kerr for being too soft on the student radicals.

SQUAD CAR APPROPRIATED

At the noon rally on Oct. 8, 3,000, mostly students, sat around a police car on Sproul Plaza. They were reenacting the 1964 student capture of a Berkeley police car containing civil rights activist Jack Weinberg who had been arrested for sitting at an allegedly illegal political table near Sather Gate. Three months later the UC Berkeley faculty voted eight to one that all we had asked for around the police car should be given as our constitutional rights.

In 2004 speakers spoke from a wooden stage over the police car. The current student body president, Misha Leybovich, said, "Seeing the strength of the '60s gives me hope and confidence for my generation. It's a fallacy that we're no longer passionate. It's a fallacy that we're no longer active." He apologized that the *Daily Cal* (the student newspaper), the administration, and the student government (the ASUC), were all against the FSM in 1964, but was happy that all three groups supported the FSM in 2004.

As if to underscore his point, Leybovich introduced UC Berkeley's new Chancellor Birgeneau who said that while doing civil rights work in South Carolina in 1965, he received his political education from two FSM leaders.

Rosha Jones and Hira Khan, two students from campus Berkeley ACLU, were concerned about government attacks on civil liberties. They said that the students had gotten the student government to pass a resolution condemning the USA PATRIOT Act. This next year students will focus on ending racial profiling, defeating the USA PATRIOT Act, and restoring affirmative action.

—Julia Stein

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Raya Dunayevskaya
Chairwoman, National Editorial Board (1955-1987)
Charles Denby
Editor (1955-1983)

Oiga Domanski, Peter Wermuth, Co-National Organizers, News and Letters Committees. **Jim Mills**, Managing Editor. **Felix Martin**, Labor Editor (1983-1999).

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OUR LIFE AND TIMES

by Kevin A. Barry

The battle over the future of Palestine and Israel is so central to our crisis-ridden world that, even in October, it seemed to unfold with hardly a glance at the U.S. election.

The first big event was a move by Israel's Ariel Sharon, who pushed a plan to evacuate the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip through the Knesset, dividing his Likud Bloc and developing a tacit alliance with the Labor Party. To be sure, Sharon did so not because he has transformed himself from war criminal to peace dove, but because of realities on the ground, including demography. He wants to give up internal (but not external) control of Gaza, the better to hold onto Jerusalem and large chunks of the West Bank, which he is walling off.

Sharon is laboring under the grand illusion that he can impose peace by cutting off both Gaza and the Palestinian areas of the West Bank from Israel. He really believes—and so do most Israelis—that this can contain the Intifada that since 2000 has claimed 3,000 Palestinian and 1,000 Israeli lives.

The sudden deterioration of Yasir Arafat's health and his possible impending death is a truly historic event. The Israeli leadership believes that without Arafat a more compliant Palestinian leadership might emerge that would negotiate on Israel's terms, or that a weakened and divided one would be unable to challenge Israel either on the ground or in the battle for

Massacre by military in southern Thailand

The Thai military, on Oct. 25, confronted 2,000 Islamist demonstrators in predominantly Muslim southern Thailand, a region that feels oppressed by the Buddhist majority. Soldiers shot six demonstrators to death and then arrested 1,300, who were packed onto trucks for a five-hour ride in the hot sun to a military barracks. By the time they arrived, 78 more people had died of asphyxiation. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra praised the military and excused their barbaric indifference to human life by claiming that the dead had been "made weak from [Ramadan] fasting. Nobody hurt them."

Shocked by the fact that Hambali, the alleged head of Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia, was found and arrested in Thailand last year, the government has carried out a brutal crackdown in the South. Last April, soldiers shot and killed 113 lightly armed young Islamists, who attacked police stations in an amateurish uprising about which the authorities had obviously been informed in advance. Such actions, like the U.S. "war on terror," are sure to swell the ranks of these fundamentalist fanatics by furnishing them with yet another example of the victimization of Muslims.

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Palestine and Israel at a turning point?

international public opinion.

This is an even greater illusion. The growth of Palestinian nationalism, under Arafat's leadership, and the support it has developed among the world's more than one billion Muslims is one of the central political facts of our era. It is a fact that has played no small role in the failure of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Sooner or later, the Israeli leadership will be forced to recognize this fact, no matter how much U.S. backing it receives.

To be sure, some hard infighting is likely within Palestinian society should Arafat die. Hamas and other fundamentalist groups seem content to bide

their time rather than make a bid for power anytime soon. However, several politicians that have served under Arafat are sure to vie for power. In the wings lie non-fundamentalist Intifada leaders like the immensely popular Marwan Barghouti, today in an Israeli prison.

All of these people will have to contend with a generation of young Palestinians to whom the suicide bombers are heroes worthy of emulation. Over time, if the Israelis continue to block a just settlement that would allow the creation of a viable Palestinian state, and if the Palestinian leadership refuses to give up the so-called "right of return" to Israel proper, blocking a just settlement from its own side, then the fundamentalists are sure to grow stronger. That is the legacy of both Arafat and Sharon, as well as their colleagues.

German wildcat strike

The capitalist offensive against European labor continues, centered in the powerful German economy



More than 20,000 people demonstrated in Ruesselheim against job cuts.

where unemployment stands at nearly 11%. In October, General Motors announced plans to lay off 12,000 workers across Europe, most of them in Germany. It threatened to move the work to Poland, where autoworkers receive only \$7,000 per year.

In response, 6,400 enraged workers at the GM-Opel plant in Bochum staged a rare six-day wildcat strike. On Oct. 19, up to 100,000 workers took to the streets across Europe against GM. Nonetheless, GM seems still to have the upper hand, due in part to the assistance it received from the IG Metall union bureaucrats, who pressured the Bochum strikers to return to work.

Volkswagen CEO Peter Hartz has also launched an anti-labor offensive, threatening 30,000 layoffs unless workers agreed to massive give-backs. This led to demonstrations and a large warning strike on Nov. 1. VW is winning this fight too, not least because Hartz is close to Social Democratic Prime Minister Gerhard Schroeder, who shares his view about greater "competitiveness."

Afghanistan election

Afghanistan's October elections were hardly the democratic success touted by Washington and its propagandists. Support for Hamid Karzai, elected president with 55% of the vote, was concentrated among his fellow ethnic Pashtuns of the south. Karzai received few votes among northern ethnic groups like the Tajiks, the Hazaras, or the Uzbeks. Nor was the turnout as high as expected, especially among women. Moreover, power at the local level remains in the hands of gangsterish warlords, most of them only marginally less reactionary than the Taliban.

As the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) stated before the election: "People are left with no other option but to choose between Karzai and the criminals. This is because the democratic movement is weak." Newspapers are forced by warlord threats to engage in self-censorship. To this day, feminist, secular and leftist groups cannot organize openly, due to similar threats. Nonetheless, their struggle continues, today a bit more openly than under Taliban rule.

Uruguay vote

The leftist coalition, Frente Amplio, won the presidential election in Uruguay on Oct. 31, the first time that a party other than the two traditional ruling parties has come to power. Tabare Vasquez, an oncologist and former mayor of the capital, Montevideo, will become president.

Uruguay's people have suffered greatly since the Argentine crisis began in 1999, a country which, along with Brazil, is tightly tied to economically. There has been a massive migration of the country's youth in the past several years, and unemployment has reached 20% since a crippling recession in 2002. The country, once referred to as the "Switzerland of the Americas," now has the highest rate of suicide in Latin America.

Though Uruguay is a tiny country of 3.4 million people, with about half the population in the capital, parallels have been drawn between this contest and Lula's victory in Brazil. The Frente, founded in 1971, has abandoned many of its original bedrock demands such as nonpayment of the foreign debt, and Vasquez appears to be following to the letter Lula's example of not alienating the IMF and other international lenders.

The victory is being applauded by many leftists throughout Latin America as a positive step away from unquestioned adherence to neo-liberal restructuring. However others in the region, also within the Left, point to the fact that a significant sector of the bourgeoisie in Uruguay is welcoming the Frente's attempt to "administer the crisis" that it itself cannot seem to contain.

—Mitch Weerth

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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