

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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## WORKSHOP TALKS

### HMO scams cost jobs and lives

by Htun Lin

A high-level computer software project manager at Kaiser HMO recently wrote a bombshell memo accusing Kaiser's CEO and CIO of Halliburton-style cronyism in awarding a multi-billion dollar contract to Epic Systems, whose software product has a track record of failure. This boondoggle is projected to lose \$7 billion for Kaiser over the next two years.

They kept us employees in the dark. The only official acknowledgement that there is a problem came to us indirectly through hearing about its ramifications in the media—the necessity for massive cuts and layoffs to stave off financial disaster. The ultimate impact will undoubtedly endanger patients' lives.

Patients and health workers are being asked to make a new round of sacrifices as financial shenanigans are plundering the resources of the company. Ironically this comes in the midst of another spree of hiring business office employees to "enhance revenue" through increased co-payments and deductibles.

**We are a nation that spends more than any other on earth on health care, and we are less healthy for it. It is foolhardy to measure health care primarily by dollar expenditure.**

The current price of health care reflects financial imperatives coming from the needs of capital, whether in the form of companies that pay for health care for their employees or companies that produce health care products like pharmaceuticals. Far from any actual scarcity of resources, the crisis reflects a contradiction between capital's concerns and workers' concerns over actual delivery of health care.

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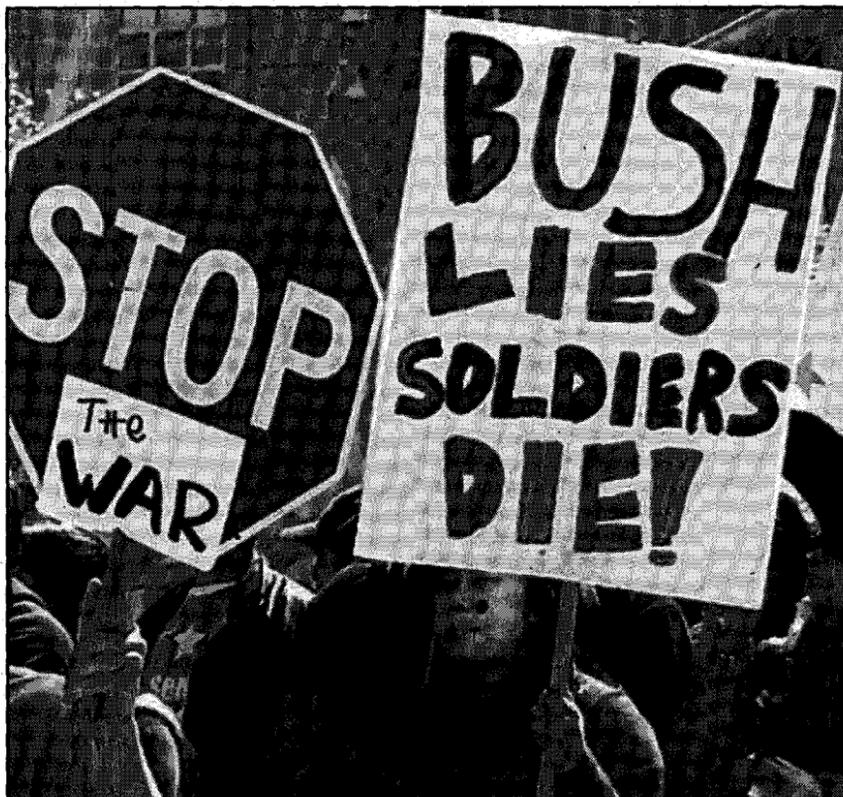
## Bush-Cheney setback while Iraq still bleeds

by Kevin Michaels

George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were dealt a substantial setback by voters in the 2006 midterm election. The widely anticipated result of the election—which placed control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the hands of the Democratic Party for the first time since the so-called Republican Revolution of 1994—reflects real dissatisfaction with much of Bush's pro-business and socially conservative agenda. The overwhelming factor behind the defeat of the Republicans, however, was a rejection of Bush's stubborn prosecution of the disastrous war in Iraq.

The outcome of several state ballot initiatives offers further evidence of an upsurge against the wish list of Bush and his religious allies. Most significantly, a sweeping anti-abortion law recently passed in South Dakota was overturned by the result of a ballot initiative there. Voters in Arizona rejected a proposal to limit marriage to heterosexual couples only and a Missouri ballot initiative ended in approval for making stem cell research legal. Initiatives in favor of raising the minimum wage also passed in six states.

Yet the details of the anti-Bush momentum contain more than a few contradictions. Chief among them is



Protests against the Iraq war, amid the 2006 mid-term election campaigns.

the ascendancy of the new socially conservative Democratic politician, such as James Webb, the Senator elect from Virginia who narrowly won a high profile race, and Bob Casey, the Senator-elect from Pennsylvania,

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## BLACK/RED VIEW

I am turning over my column this issue to a longtime Los Angeles area community activist, Georgiana Williams.—John Alan

### Oppression in prisons

by Georgiana Williams

When I asked the inmates I visit what they wanted me to address, they all said the issue is that African Americans are not getting released from prison.

Another prisoner who spoke with me has been in and out all his life for drugs. He described being handcuffed for 16 hours for something he had nothing to do with, and he wants help to file a lawsuit. Another case is a lawyer who was accused of taking a bribe when he was given money to work in a community and lost his license. He said there are two sets of laws, one for the rich and the other for the poor. He lives in Malibu where if a kid steals a car, they call it a joyride. But if a kid from L.A. steals a car, it's called grand theft auto. If it's powder cocaine, you get a slap on the hand, but if it's "crack" in L.A., you go to jail. I interviewed another brother who is now out who started a group with others called "In and Out."

We live in a grave crisis today. The prison-industrial complex has over two million incarcerated in the U.S. and still we keep building prisons. That won't stop any crime. We need to be building good schools. Prisons are the breeding ground for more crime. You can get more dope in prison than on the street, and the guards are the ones bringing it in. Bush is the real leader. He takes it as a joke and a hoax. There used to be rehabilitation—you could get a trade in prison; you could go to school; your family could visit you. Now there is nothing. The prison concept is an orchestrated design to retain a legal slave system this country was built on. Why is the U.S. the only country that refused to

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## Oaxaca repression unites Mexican movements

President Vicente Fox and Oaxaca's Governor Ulises Ruiz decided to militarize the conflict in Oaxaca by sending in the PFP (Policía Federal Preventiva) Oct. 28. Since then about 5,000 of them have occupied the central square that had been the property of the mass movement that started in May. They have also instituted virtual martial law, randomly detaining and torturing activists. They act in concert with plain clothes police and armed members of the PRI (Ruiz's party) who have killed 17.

Thousands of students at Oaxaca's National Autonomous University Benito Juárez and members of APPO (Asociación Popular del Pueblo de Oaxaca) battled the PFP forces for seven hours on Nov. 2, successfully preventing the government forces from entering the university grounds and taking over barricaded streets outside of it.

### SPEAKING SAME LANGUAGE

Since the government sent in the PFP, a militarized police force created in the late 1990s, the mass movement in Oaxaca, which started out as a teachers' strike, has become a national crisis and has also garnered support from activists around the world. Teachers in the state of Michoacan have struck in solidarity. In the state of Mexico, teachers have initiated their own Asociación Popular del Pueblo de Mexico. Numerous solidarity marches and rallies have taken place in Mexico City as well as a dozen other states.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), who lost the fraudulent presidential elections and is scheduled to assume the oppositional post of "legitimate president" on Nov. 20, has come out solidly in support of the activists in Oaxaca, something he refrained from doing while he was campaigning for the July elections.

Subcomandante Marcos, still touring the country as part of the Other Campaign, has also been rallying support for APPO. Prior to the July elections Marcos seemed as if he was bent on totally isolating the EZLN from the movement supporting López Obrador. Now it appears that APPO, and the state repression being meted out to the people of Oaxaca, is getting various

national progressive forces to speak the same language.

### NO NORMAL TRANSITION

The coming period will be crucial as the new PAN leader, Felipe Calderón, tries to take the presidential reins on Dec. 1 and prove that he can lead the country in some normal manner. AMLO's Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) for its part vowed to do everything possible to prevent Calderón from taking power that day, and the movement in support of AMLO still seems serious about its promise to make it impossible for Calderón to govern effectively.

Who, or what, is APPO? That is a question that APPO is seriously trying to define even as the PFP attempts to round up those who have acted as its "provisional leadership" in the past few months. During the weekend of Nov. 9-12, APPO is holding a "Constituent Congress" to define statutes and draft a declaration of principles. Its provisional leadership was dissolved with the opening of the Congress.

Since it was formed June 17, in response to police attacks on the teachers' strike, APPO has functioned as an umbrella organization that for the first time in southern Mexico has successfully united numerous organizations of students, teachers, campesinos, women, and guerrilla groupings. It makes decisions based on consensus, and each time Ruiz and Fox have rejected their attempts to have a dialogue on Oaxaca's problems they have radicalized their demands.

The specific demand for Ruiz to be removed and the general demand for "desaparición de poderes" (literally "disappearance of powers") has increasingly become a problem that the government can't tiptoe around. They tried to divide the movement by making it possible for teachers to return to classes, but when APPO made it clear on Oct. 24 that a return to classes would not stop the movement and instead called for a "united plan of action" and a "popular peaceful insurrection" to coincide with Calderón taking power Dec. 1, the PFP was brought in four days later to crack down.

A sense of where APPO is headed was given by Zenen Bravo, president of the "debate table" at the meeting Nov. 11, who declared, "We intend to initiate a serious and profound process of discussion with all sectors of the mass movement in order to elaborate a

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# Election opens breathing space

by Terry Moon

In the U.S. mid-term elections women won. We won by helping to sweep the Republicans from power; by defeating parental consent laws in California and Oregon; and, importantly, we defeated the fanatical anti-abortion law in South Dakota that had no exceptions, even if a woman's health was in jeopardy.

Every one of these victories means women's lives will be saved. So degenerate has capitalism become that this election was a question of life and death. Bush scoffed at the credible report that over 500,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed because of his war. He tried to hide the reality of the two, eight, ten or more U.S. soldiers killed day after day as Iraq slides into misery and chaos. The war was the Republicans' downfall. While weeks after the election, we can still be joyful, what has to be faced is that the election did not create a new world, but only a breathing space for the women's movement to take advantage of. To begin that process, we have to look hard at how that vital victory in South Dakota was won.

## THE BATTLE IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Rightfully mistrustful of a Supreme Court stacked by Bush to rule for his right-wing agenda, South Dakota feminists took the fight to the voters. Knowing that defeating this fanatics' law was crucial, the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families took the pragmatic approach. Rather than putting forward the principle that women have the right to control our own bodies, they spoke to voters about how the law is too narrow and extreme, as it outlaws abortion in cases of rape, incest, and if the woman's health is in danger.

On the one hand, the feminist victory in South Dakota showed that anti-abortion fanatics are beyond the pale. Their gold standard—that life begins at conception and the resulting fetus trumps the woman in all circumstances—will not hold. On the other hand, feminists backed away from the principled stand that our bodies are ours, and for women to be free we, not the church or state, must control our bodies and lives. That feminists downplayed what we stand for before the election means that what is key now is what happens after the election.

The defeat of so many Republicans is a victory, but it is emphatically not the deep, lasting, and total change needed for us to be free. We have Bush for two more years doing as much damage as possible; there is a reactionary Supreme Court, ensconced for decades and now deciding whether to make late term abortions illegal; and there is the war in Iraq, killing hundreds each week. But most importantly, the election did not come close to challenging capitalism, and it is capitalism that Bush and his ilk personify. That reality reveals that we cannot create a human society by softly stating

that the right wing is too extreme. We must not make a virtue of necessity; the philosophy of pragmatism cannot set our course.

## WHAT PHILOSOPHY NOW?

What makes the question "Where do we go from here?" difficult, is that 30 years of retrogression has clamped on us more tightly than ever the mind-forged manacles that make it hard to see that it is possible to transcend capitalism—that capitalism is an historical stage, like feudalism, and cannot last forever. In the 1960s and early 1970s, women's liberationists felt in the marrow of our bones that we could destroy this sexist, racist, homophobic, capitalist society. It is not that we must recapture that feeling, but that we recognize the necessity of a philosophy of liberation to help us change forever our oppressive reality. That is why we must be critical of how we achieved that victory in South Dakota, because pragmatism does not lead to the new, only to surviving what is.

Today the revolutionary project has been so discredited that Marx, while known, is studied in an academic way. But Marx was a revolutionary and his philosophy, re-created in our age as Marxist-Humanism by Raya Dunayevskaya, is a philosophy of liberation. It not only tells us what capitalism is, it shows us that it can be transcended. This election revealed a hunger for a world based on ideas, values, and human relations that are at odds with capitalism's reason for being—its self-expansion at all costs, environmental and human.

This means the breathing space created by the election has given us space to put forward what is necessary to transform our society into a truly human one: a revolutionary movement founded on a total philosophy of liberation, which for our age is Marxist-Humanism. The need for a totally new society, one based on new human relations, is screaming to be articulated and worked out. We can never again allow ourselves to be forced into a situation where we end up fighting on the ground of our enemy, of saying "this law is too extreme," when what we mean is this law is an abomination and we must have total freedom.

Let's take this space the election has made, rescue Marx from the ivory towers of academia, and work out our concept of a new society, one beyond capitalism, one of new, unalienated human relations.

## WOMAN AS REASON

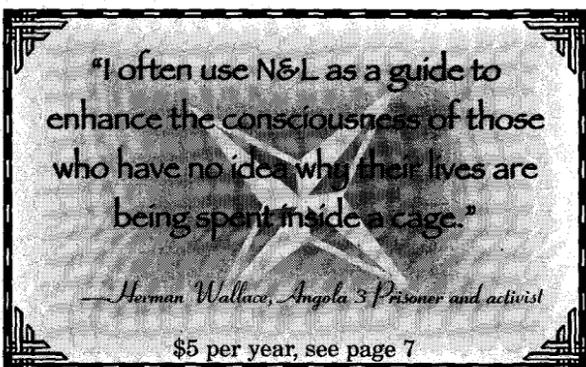
## WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

More than 100 women and men in Cairo, Egypt, protested, Nov. 9, against President Hosni Mubarak and the police force for ignoring violent sexual attacks on women walking through a busy shopping district two nights in October. The Interior Ministry and pro-government newspapers denied that such attacks happened, despite the presence of police who did nothing to stop them. Human rights activist Aida Seif el-Dawla said many of the demonstrators were new to showing their opposition to such harassment. They found out about it thanks to reports on the internet.

With hopefully more progressive voices taking office in the U.S. Congress, homeless women and children may get help. President Bush's homeless initiative has focused on getting the visible homeless off the streets. Programs for the growing number of homeless families and women who have suffered domestic violence—about two-thirds of all homeless women—are obscenely underfunded. The U.S. Conference of Mayors 2005 Survey on Hunger and Homelessness revealed that 32% of all families seeking emergency shelter were turned away. The response of Bush's "homeless czar," Philip Mangano, was to lobby against expanding federal homeless assistance to homeless women and their families.

—Information from Ms. Magazine



## Women fight for Gaza



MEMPHIS, TENN.—Peace activists here took the challenge put out by the Israeli and Palestinian peace movement "particularly the women" to bring attention to the Israeli government's crimes against humanity being visited upon the people of the Gaza Strip (see "Our Life and Times," October-November 2006 *N&L*). At anti-war demonstrations every Wednesday morning, activists from the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center and News and Letters Committees now include explicit protests against the Israeli atrocities in Gaza.

Women in Black, who demonstrate every Wednesday afternoon, also took up the cause, joining Women in Black groups in Israel to raise awareness about the deteriorating situation in Gaza. We will continue our protests through December, when we will plan a protest action as part of an international campaign to stop the destruction of the citizens of Gaza.

As Israel steps up its attack on the entire population of the Gaza Strip, a new study by Human Rights Watch reveals no effective framework in place in the Occupied Territories to respond to the escalating violence experienced by women and girls at the hands of Palestinian men, including battering from husbands, boyfriends and brothers, child abuse, rape, incest and so-called crimes of "honor." While the problem is recognized, the Palestinian Authority has taken no action. Violence is often unreported and when reported, unpunished. Abuse continues if a crime is reported, as authorities encourage marriage between a woman and the man who raped her, and they send women back to abusive families or husbands.

While the report acknowledged the problems caused by Israel's withholding of tax revenue as well as the current strife, the report stated that there are laws and institutions in place that could help women if implemented. The report reveals Palestinian women fighting on two fronts, for freedom from Israeli repression and freedom from the abuse by their own comrades.

—Women in Black member

## Ten years of welfare 'reform'

by Anne Jaclard

In the ten years since the federal welfare system was "reformed" (read: destroyed), welfare has been effectively ended as a safety-net for the working poor. The welfare rolls have been reduced by 60% due to the many restrictions on federal grants, including a lifetime limit of five years aid to any recipient. Recent new regulations make it even harder to obtain job training or education. Why did the government destroy a 60-year-old system which had enabled the poor, especially women and their small children, to survive? Some feminists blame ideology: the rulers hate women. While racism, sexism and years of blaming welfare for rising taxes provided the ideological justification for welfare "reform," its cause lies elsewhere.

Blaming ideology while ignoring capitalism leaves feminists with nothing to contribute toward change besides exposes and fruitless appeals to an inhuman system. Instead, we ought to show that "another world is possible" by explaining how this one operates, so that people can understand what it is we must change in order to actually lay the foundation for plenty and "the free development of all" (Marx).

Capitalism can no longer afford to provide cushions for the working poor because it needs them in the labor market. So slashing welfare was an attack not primarily aimed at women and children as it appears, but aimed at the whole working class, to force everyone to seek continuous employment. Bush's attempt to privatize Social Security is the latest effort to destroy all safety nets for all workers.

As Marx theorizes it in *Capital*, Vol. I, capitalism requires a growing supply of labor in order to be able to expand and maximize profits. By giving people no choice but to work or starve, the system is assured of this supply. Paying them low wages not only saves money for expanding investment, but most essentially, it obliges people to return to the workplace every day. "The Roman slave was held by chains; the wage-laborer is bound to his owner by invisible threads" (Ch. 23, p. 719, Penguin ed.).

## ARMY OF UNEMPLOYED

In this manner, the system creates a "reserve army" of the unemployed, a labor pool to draw on in periods of expansion and to lay off when they are not needed. This has always been the pattern of women's employment, and is the reason that so many undocumented immigrants are allowed into the country. The "reserve army" increases competition for jobs, lowering wages for everyone and discouraging organizing. Most importantly, it disciplines the workers so as to keep the supply of labor flowing. So welfare "reform" was necessary, not to save the relatively small cost of welfare expenditures, but to force mothers and others who chose not to work into the job market.

Capitalism is not intentionally anti-human. It is not driven by greedy rich people who want to appropriate the welfare funds or punish women. Rather, it is inhuman, that is, driven by forces without regard to the effect on people, whom it needs only for their labor power. The solution to poverty and exploitation in the U.S. and around the world is to end the capitalist production system and replace it with a system in which the workers have mastery over the economic system instead of the other way around.

## POVERTY DEEPENS

Those who leave welfare for work do not become better off. The lie that they do, sows the illusion that everyone can do OK within the capitalist system. The fact is that even before 1996, many studies of former welfare recipients showed that most did not leave poverty when they began to work for wages. The government apparently has made no studies of what happened to the people who were thrown off welfare in the past decade. What we do know is that the poverty rate was the same in 2004 as in 1998 (12.7%). At first it declined because the economy was expanding, so some of those who left welfare were able to get decent-paying jobs; when the economy worsened, the poverty rate went back up to the 1998 rate. Meanwhile, the poverty rate for single mothers rose, and the number of people in so-called "deep poverty" (receiving less than half the poverty threshold) increased by a million—probable effects of welfare "reform."

The battlefield for welfare rights organizations has shifted from the federal government to the states, which provide aid of their own and administer the federal grants. Whereas there is no longer a movement comparable to those of the 1960s, '70s and '80s, many organizations continue the struggle, including Survivors in Boston, Kensington Welfare Union in Philadelphia, Michigan Welfare Rights in Detroit, Welfare Warriors in Wisconsin, and organizations in New Orleans, both old and new since Katrina.

Moreover, the new organizations of low-wage workers, often immigrants, such as janitors, domestic workers and day laborers, can be seen as the "children" of welfare rights organizations. Not only may their members have had experience in welfare groups, but they are also similar in the sense of being composed of isolated individuals with very low wages who nonetheless are organizing to improve their lives in new and creative ways. These organizations in fact hold out the prospect of inspiring and revitalizing the entire U.S. labor movement. They could be the sparks for the working class to overthrow the system.

## Nurses battle NLRB to remain union

LOS ANGELES—On Oct. 5, the California Nurses Association (CNA) held a noontime demonstration in downtown Los Angeles to protest the National Labor Relations Board's recent decision that reinterpreted what a supervisor is.

The prior interpretation of supervisor was someone who represented management, with "the power to hire and fire," the kind of managers who receive bonuses and other incentives. The new interpretation is that anyone who delegates tasks makes them "...ineligible for union membership" (See Workshop Talks, October-November 2006 *N&L*).

**This especially targets nurses working alongside other health care workers, to claim that they really represent management. As one nurse stated, if enforced, nurses would be working for the bottom line and not for patient care.**

The decision is an attempt by the NLRB to begin by breaking nurses' unions, then all public sector workers' unions, such as teachers' unions. Eventually, extending enforcement to private sector workers' unions would further erode all workers' rights. Three of the five members of the board are President Bush appointees.

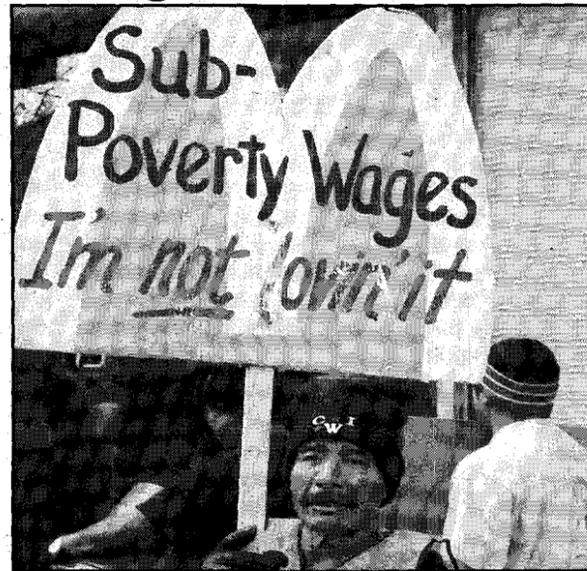
Close to 200 nurses joined the spirited demonstration at the NLRB office. There were many Asians, some Blacks and Latinas, as well as some men. Some were bused from San Diego and other outlying areas. Signs and chants included: "Union Rights Equal Human Rights," "Our Union is Our Voice," "Stand Up—Look Around. There's a Health Care Crisis in This Town," and "NLRB Beware, RN's Will Fight For Patient Care."

At one point, a rally of Aretha Franklin's "Respect," Bob Marley's "Get Up Stand Up," and other protest songs as many nurses marched and danced to the beat. Many demonstrators unrolled and held up a list, about 30 feet long, of thousands of nurses who have pledged to strike if there is an attempt to enforce the new interpretation of supervisor.

A couple of nurses went to the NLRB office to directly challenge the NLRB members through their staff. There is talk of a strike if they attempt to enforce the

new interpretation. The nurses are asking the public to call or write the NLRB office in support of the nurses. Their website is [www.cna.org](http://www.cna.org). —Basho

## Florida farm workers target McDonald's



CHICAGO—Members of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and their supporters picketed the corporate headquarters of McDonald's and several Chicago McDonald's restaurants in October as part of a campaign to pressure McDonald's to agree to pay more for the tomatoes it purchases from Florida growers who subject immigrant workers to poor wages and working conditions. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers won a groundbreaking agreement in 2005 from Taco Bell after waging a long campaign of pressure with the aid of students and activists. —Kevin Michaels

## No peace after strike for Detroit teachers

DETROIT—The unity and solidarity among Detroit Public School teachers, which carried us through a 16-day strike in September and won us modest gains, continues to be challenged by difficult working conditions and moves by the school board to erode the power of the Detroit Federation of Teachers.

Last year the school district had set up alternative schools for students who had dropped out of school and staffed them with non-union teachers. Now that the DFT is demanding that union (state-certified) teachers staff the alternative schools, the district is threatening to close them. The district claims they would cost too much to operate with DFT members.

**The DFT is demanding, if non-union teachers continue to be employed, a portion of the state funds that accrue to the district because of the enrollment at the alternative schools. I am shocked that the DFT is willing to overlook non-union teachers for the alternative school if it could receive money! This is blood money!**

Meanwhile, teachers struggle with a dysfunctional bureaucracy and mismanaged resources. One contract demand that we did not win was, "Every teacher must have access to a working copy machine." There have been times at my school when all copiers were down. Teachers still do not have all the workbooks and videos that come with our new textbooks. They only order one copy of a workbook per teacher. It makes the need for working copiers that much more acute.

But all this pales in comparison to the mismanagement the newspapers recently reported, about \$58 million in technology contracts issued by the Board of Education. Of the four vendors awarded contracts, one operated out of the owner's home and two were found to have empty offices at the addresses listed on their documents. All were said to be friends of either the Mayor of Detroit or the CEO of the school board, William Coleman.

—Susan Van Gelder, Detroit teacher

## WORKSHOP TALKS

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Workers who look to the future have stopped asking "how much?" and instead ask "what kind?"—be it labor, health care or education. Why would we workers only want more of the same? Why would we want to limit ourselves to taking over what presently exists?

We are constantly seduced by capital's imperatives to think that way instead of reflecting on the meaning of our labor. Why focus just on reclaiming the full value of our labor without questioning the very production of, say, depleted uranium, chemical-weapons, or cigarettes? We health workers ask, what about Viagra, Vioxx, or a thousand other poisonous products currently passed off as health care under an inhuman system at its core? As one RN who left the profession said, "I got tired of being paid so highly for killing people."

Counting the dollars spent does not signify a real standard for health care. From capital's perspective there is a debt to be paid, which patients pay through a chronic deficit of care.

Some advocate a single-payer system to cover all people. But the significance of single-payer is not who pays, it's that it needs to be worker-controlled. We already have a kind of "single-payer" system for health care, Medicare. Except, we're paying to help capital expand, much in the same way the U.S. military budget is a "single-payer" which makes every man, woman, and child, virtual "share owners" through the public debt in the military-industrial complex.

**This perversion existed long before the Bush/Frist Medicare Prescription Plan, designed to help the pharmaceutical giants and HMOs rob seniors by milking Medicare for more dollars.**

While individual whistle-blowers uncover corporate abuses, our union officials, under the labor-management partnership, are seduced by technology, by automation, and specifically, the fetish of hi-tech. Our own union leaders tell us that "we can't stop progress."

Through the labor-management partnership they aim to help the company outsource our own jobs! Then they try to seduce us with the promise that high-tech will deliver the "better jobs of tomorrow," in order to get us to accept the sacrifices demanded today, such as speed-up and lay-offs, and deep cuts in health care and pensions.

Could it be that we are lured into thinking that way because we subscribe to some form of "there is no alternative"? Because when we look out our window, "capitalism" is everywhere, as far as the eyes can see? Whatever happened to our mind's eye? A new movie about Jim Jones reminded me that he too told his People's Temple congregation before the Jonestown Massacre in 1978, "There is no way out." We workers helped prepare the Kool-Aid. But we don't have to drink it.

Without a doubt, there are going to be plenty of specific tasks to be accomplished concretely in order to reach the new society. But none of those tasks will signify "progress" unless they are preceded by the concrete and specific task of organizing our own minds.

## How far can workers control their jobs?

Htun Lin states, in the October-November "Workshop Talks" column in *News & Letters*, "Every worker knows firsthand what Marx was talking about in *Capital*, in the section on 'Cooperation': that workers guide and direct themselves in a cooperative fashion." He also asserts, "workers...actually manage the workplace...even as the capitalist controls the money and personifies capital's need for accumulation at our expense."

**If he's right, current production relations aren't essentially capitalist, and the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives thesis errs when it stresses the need to abolish "alienated labor and the capitalist mode of production." We merely need to put investment under social control and transform distribution relations, eliminating the middlemen who skim off profits.**

Far from arguing that workers currently "direct themselves," Marx wrote in the chapter on "Cooperation" that their activity is directed by "the powerful will of a being outside them, who subjects their activity to his purpose" by employing "officers (managers) and NCOs (foremen, overseers), who command during the labor process in the name of capital."

**Contrary to what Lin seems to suggest, Marx was referring to precisely this subjection, in the workplace itself—not money management, profit skimming, and investment—when he called the capitalist's plan "purely despotic" in form.**

At the dawn of capitalism, Marx noted, "the subjection of labour to capital was only...formal." Although workers were employed by capitalists, they did manage the work process themselves. Later, however, "the command of capital develops into...a real condition of production."

Marx goes on to trace the emergence of a "specifically capitalist mode of production," in which "the formal subsumption of labor under capital [...] is] replaced by a real subsumption." In other words, the problem is no longer merely that workers are under capitalist control. Their actual labor, activity, is wrested out of their control—fragmented, recombined, and dominated by the rhythms of the machine—in order to more adequately serve capital's drive to expand itself. I suspect that this is more in keeping with what "every worker knows firsthand."

As his alternative to the present state of affairs, Lin proposes "direct social cooperation" among workers. But if these are specifically capitalist relations, leaving them intact leaves capitalism intact, though with different faces at the top. This is why, when Marx envisioned what Lin calls "the plan of freely associated workers," what he contrasted it to was the capitalist social formation, "in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite."

He was saying that the real relations of production can be brought under human control only by breaking with the laws of capitalist production to which we all, workers and capitalists alike, are currently subjected. This is why the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, while appreciating that cooperatives and worker-run enterprises prefigure aspects of socialism, rightly cautions that they "do not constitute the abolition of capitalism" as long as the capitalist production relations haven't

been transformed.

Even within capitalist-owned firms, the cooperative labor process is a harbinger of socialism. And capitalism's creation of a socialized labor force is the creation of a new social power that can bring it down. But as long as capitalism exists, cooperative labor is neither self-directed activity nor the partial emergence of the new society within the old one.

**Labor can become freely associated only by breaking with the enslaving laws of capitalist production. There is no in-between.**

This revolutionary perspective is absent from Lin's piece. He does mention "the reality of value production being totally replaced by the reality of concrete labor." But "concrete labor" as Marx used the term is a "reality" even in capitalism—workers' labor is both abstract and concrete—so what "replaced by the reality of concrete labor" means (if anything) is not clear. But clarity about the future is of utmost importance at a moment when, in order to challenge the dogma that there is no alternative to capitalism, and the accompanying despair, concretely theorizing an alternative is a crucial task.

—Andrew Kliman

## Union fights FCC on media monopoly

LOS ANGELES—On Oct. 3, the Federal Communications Commission held two hearings in Los Angeles, the first of six national public hearings. The session held at USC focused on independent production and "Big Media's" relation to creative programming. It drew an overflow crowd of more than 500 people.

There was loud applause for the many diverse speakers against further consolidation, many of whom were members of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and independent activists. Of 50 people making public comments, only one person spoke in favor of consolidation, citing the free market.

Six conglomerates that own the media in the Los Angeles area—Clear Channel, Viacom, General Electric/NBC, Disney/ABC, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and Univision—already own most of the nation's television stations, thousands of radio stations, cable and satellite networks, movie and music companies, Internet providers, newspapers and publishing companies.

At the evening session at El Segundo High School, Mexican-American youths commented on their absence from television, as if they do not exist in U.S. society. They also spoke against Disney's "Hate Radio," KABC AM's campaign against indigenous peoples and Mexican immigrants, calling them terrorists and criminals.

The FCC had tried to push through this same deregulation in 2003 under then-Chairman Michael Powell. Three million people protested then. The FCC approved the rules change despite the protests, only to see them overturned by the courts ([www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net)).

—Activist

FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
**RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA**

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Raya Dunayevskaya's 1978 analysis of the transformations in the world economy helps illuminate the nature of today's globalized capitalism. It was written shortly after the 1974 global recession revealed structural weaknesses in the global economy—a problem that world capitalism has still not resolved. Her essay also critiques Ernest Mandel's Introduction to Marx's *Capital* for obfuscating the liberatory content of Marx's thought. Her essay was entitled "Today's Epigones Who Try to Truncate Marx's *Capital*." The original can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 5282. Footnotes are the author's, except where noted. Headlines are the editors'.

The capitalists may not be ready to "agree" with Marx that **the** supreme commodity, labor-power, is the only source of all value and surplus value, but they do see that there is such a decline in the **rate** of profit compared to what **they** consider necessary to keep investing for expanded production, that they are holding off—so much so that now their ideologists are saying low investment is by no means a temporary factor that the capitalists would "overcome" with the next boom. **There is to be no next boom.** It is this which makes them look both at the actual structural changes—overwhelming preponderance of constant capital (machinery) over variable capital (living labor employed)—as well as the **world** production and its interrelations...

It is the age of state-capitalism as a **world** phenomenon. This development has no more solved its deep economic crisis than when full state-capitalism came to a single nation, Russia, China, etc.

As for inflation, it is true that the deep recession, which was triggered by the quadrupled oil prices after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, was by no means the only reason for the double-digit inflation, any more than that "sickness in the economy" could be ascribed, as Big Capital wishes to ascribe it, to workers' wages. The overwhelming reality is this: Just as monopoly growth inhibited national economic growth, so the oil cartel has actually lowered world economic growth...

The deep recession, in the U.S. and globally, is by no means over, though some who consider themselves Marxists like Ernest Mandel think that it has come "to an end in 1975." The false consciousness that has permeated even economists who are revolutionaries emanates from the fact that capitalism has, in the post-World War II period, come up with ways of keeping the economy going, stopping short of the type of Great Depression, 1929-32 (actually until 1939), that led to World War II. Since this time it would lead to World War III, it is "unthinkable," because it would, of necessity, be a nuclear war that would end civilization as we have known it.

**MANDEL'S REVISION OF MARX'S MARXISM**

Under these circumstances, consider the irony of a famous Trotskyist economist, Ernest Mandel, who holds that the present deep recession "has come to an end."(1)

Under the guise of praising "the validity of parts of Marx's *Capital* [which] extend also into the future," Mandel hangs upon Marx's shoulders his (Mandel's) analysis of state-capitalist monstrosities as "not yet fully-fledged classless, that is socialist, societies: the USSR and the People's Republics of Eastern Europe, China, North Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba."(2)

That this can pass muster with Penguin Books "in association with *New Left Review*" which is the editor of their Pelican Marx Library speaks volumes for the sad state of today's scholarship. Whether, in this case, the choice of Mandel has come about by virtue of his name as author of *Marxist Economic Theory*, or otherwise, is their problem, not ours.

Elsewhere I had already criticized that work.(3) There I have shown that, while bourgeois ideologues were enamored with Mandel's statement that he had "strictly abstained from quoting the sacred texts," it was not true, as *The Economist* claimed, that it was because Mandel replaced "Marx's Victorian facts and statistics by contemporary empirical material." Rather, it was because Mandel tailed the Keynesian theory of "effective demand."

Here what concerns us is not so much Mandel's "Marxist analysis of contemporary material" as Mandel's utter perversion of nothing short of Marx's monumental work, *Capital*.

Capitalism's ways of containing its economic crises within recession level, rather than uncontrollable Depression, are judged by Mandel to be a "stabilizer," even though it is precisely that type of concept that led to the collapse of the established Marxist (Second) International with the outbreak of the First World War. Where that shocking event had Lenin return to Marx's origins in Hegel, and the dialectic of transformation into opposite, today's Marxists plunge not only into the latest series of economic "facts" sans any dialectical rudder, but also to a violation of the dialectical structure of Marx's *Capital* itself. That, too, is not "just theory," but that which gives, **or could give when not**

# Global capital's structural crisis and the need to return to Marx's *Capital*

violated, action its direction...

[It] is not just that the "investment drought" is a great deal more than just "hesitant." What is interesting in the *Foreign Affairs* analysis of "The Troubled World Economy" is that it recognizes that inseparable from that pivotal "investment drought," even when there is some growth, is the rise in energy costs which means that, along with the rising cost of automated equipment, too much value is invested, compared to labor productivity, when so little living labor is being used in production. Therefore it is telling "the West" not to be overly happy with their "petro-recyclers," that is to say, Big Capital's way of getting those oil billions from the fourfold increase of prices back from the Middle East potentates, and into its own hands by selling machinery and military hardware.

The point is that the recession is so deep, so internal, as well as so linked with the **world** market, that the highly industrialized countries are not programming great expenditures for new plants and equipment. This is at a time when profits are high, and so shaky are European economies and so great the fear of revolutions (or at least "Communists in government"), that the U.S. has become a magnet for foreign capital investment even as Europe was that magnet for U.S. Big Capital's investment going abroad in the 1950s.

Finally, even bourgeois economists understand that the centerpiece, the nerve, the muscle as well as the soul of all capitalist production is labor—the extraction from living labor of all the unpaid hours of labor that is the surplus value, the profits—and that, therefore, neither the market, nor political manipulation by the state, nor control of that crucial commodity **at this moment**—oil—can go on endlessly without its relationship to the life-and-death commodity: labor-power. *Foreign Affairs* concludes: "cartels don't have infinite lives... and thus will one day narrow the conditions between prices of energy and cost of production."(4)

**PERMANENT ECONOMIC CRISIS**

One would think that so erudite an economist as Mandel knows the relationship of value to price, and I do not doubt that **abstractly** he does. But watch what he does as he hits out at Marxists who have criticized him for attaching too much importance to the market. He lectures them thusly:

"... the capitalist mode is the production of commodities... this production in no way implies the automatic sale of the commodities produced... the sale of commodities at prices yielding the average rate of profit... in the final analysis."(5)

As if this vulgarization of Marx's analysis of the dialectical relationship between production and its reflection in the market crisis were not far enough a distance from Marxian "economics," Mandel reaches for Marx's most crucial analysis of the unemployed army as "the absolute general law" of capitalist production. Here is how he strips the "absolute general law" to fit, in answer to the monetarist Prof. Karl Brunner's bourgeois defense of the need to lower inflation, even though its "price is unemployment":

"There can be no better confirmation of the analysis of Karl Marx made in *Capital*, more than a century ago: in the long run capitalism cannot survive without an industrial reserve army..."

Though one acquainted with Mandel's economist specialization should be accustomed to the many ways he has of turning Marx upside down, this is enough to make one's hair stand on end. Far from saying that capitalism "cannot survive without an industrial reserve army," Marx says "the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation"—the unemployed army "and the dead weight of pauperism"—would bring capitalism down. The antagonistic character of capitalist accumulation sounds "the knell of capitalist private property. The expropriators are expropriated" (p. 929).

Now it isn't that Mandel doesn't "know" such ABC's of Marxism. It is that a pragmatist's ideology is as blinding as the "science" of today's myriad market transactions, and one extra moment's look at the market, away from irreconcilable class contradiction at the point of production, and the inescapable turns out to be the violation of the Marxism of Marx! It is high time to

turn to Marx's methodology in his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*. It was no accident, whatever, why, **precisely why**, Marx refused to deal with the market until after—some 850 pages after—he dealt dialectically and from every possible angle with the process of production. It is time we took a deeper look at Mandel, away from the market, as "pure" theoretician and revolutionary.

As we showed before, Mandel, from the very first section of his Introduction to *Capital*—"The Purpose of *Capital*"—tries to hang on Marx a 20th-century epigone's contention that Russia is "socialist." By the end of that section, Mandel has separated Marx's "scientific...cornerstone" by still another restatement about capitalism creating "the economic, material and social preconditions for a society of associated producers" (p. 17). Such "rock-like foundation of scientific truth" left out but a single word—"freely" (my emphasis). Freely is the specific word, concept, living reality that was the determinate of Marx's "objective and strictly scientific way" not only of distinguishing his analyses from all others, but characterizing his **whole** life. Marx's own words read:

"Let us finally imagine, for a change, an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common...The veil is not removed from the countenance of the social life-process, i.e., the process of material production, until it becomes production

by freely associated men, and stands under their conscious and planned control" (pp. 171, 173).

Marx's sentence is from that greatest and most concise of all sections in *Capital*, on the dialectical method. Though dialectics is not only method, but the dialectics of liberation, the last section of Chapter 1 of *Capital*—"The Fetishism of Commodities"—makes no entrance in Mandel's section entitled "The Method of *Capital*." In *Marxism and Freedom*, I have gone into great detail on the relationship of the historic experience of the Paris Commune to Marx's dialectical concept of the "fetishism" of the commodity-form. Here it is sufficient to point to the fact that neither friends nor enemies, no matter how "new" and "independent" they thought their own philosophy to be (as, for instance, Sartre's Existentialism(6), has denied the pivotal role of that section to any comprehension of Marx's *Capital*, especially its dialectics.

**THE FETISHISM OF COMMODITIES**

Fetishism contained Marx's very original dialectic, which, though rooted, as is all dialectics, in the Hegelian, has a live, concrete, revolutionary subject—the proletariat. This is not "a political conclusion" tacked onto economics. Rather, it is the "variable capital" in its live form of the wage worker who, **at the point of production**, is so infuriated at the attempt to transform him into "an appendage" to a machine, that he rises up—from strikes to outright revolutions—to uproot the old society and create totally new, truly human relations as **freely** associated men. Mandel, however, as we saw not only makes no mention of the section on Fetishism(7), but perverts the whole concept of freedom by reducing "freely associated men" to just "a society of associated producers." And so proud is he of his interpretation that that phrase becomes, literally, the final word of the whole Introduction (p. 86).

Marx, on the other hand, after devoting a lifetime to completing Vol. I of *Capital* in 1867, did not feel satisfied with his concretization of "the fetishism" of the commodity-form. It was only after the Paris Commune, as he worked out the French edition of *Capital*, 1872-75, that he reworked the section yet once again, and called attention to it and other changes by asking all to read that edition as "it possesses a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers familiar with the German" (p. 105)...

Marx never tired of repeating that his original contribution was the split in the category of labor—abstract and concrete labor; labor as activity and labor-power as commodity; labor as not only the source of all value which includes surplus value, but the subject who would uproot it. So "single purpose" a revolutionary theoretician was Marx in all his multitudinous and basic discoveries that, though he devoted some 850 pages in Vol. I to that, he no sooner started Vol. II than he repeated: "The peculiar characteristic is not that the

continued on page 9



Protest against International Monetary Fund, 2001.

# ESSAY The 1956 Hungarian Revolution with eyes of today

by Peter Hudis

Too soon

*The brace of conquest circumscribed our being  
Yet found us rooted in that unyielding  
Will to life bequeathed from birth, we  
Sought no transferred deed of earthly holdings:  
Slaves do not possess their kind. Nor do  
The truly free. —Woye Soyinka*

The lack of projection of an alternative to capitalism is taking a terrible toll on the radical movement. It is seen in the way many leftists are tailoring or supporting reactionary tendencies because they presumably "oppose U.S. imperialism." It happened in the 1990s, when many failed to support the Bosnian and Kosovar struggles for self-determination on the grounds that Serbia's Milosevic opposed aspects of U.S. foreign policy. It is happening today, when many argue that Hezbollah, Iran, or the Islamic fundamentalists in the Iraqi "resistance" shouldn't be condemned because they claim to be a bulwark against U.S. or Israeli domination. Such positions flow from a failure to develop a viable concept of a post-capitalist society that can ground radical theory and practice. In the absence of a thought-out alternative to capitalist value production, "radical" politics falls back on supporting the lesser evil or proclaiming a "plague on both your houses." Neither points beyond today's crises.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which occurred 50 years ago this fall, contains important lessons for what can be done to overcome today's crisis in developing an alternative to capitalism.

## A MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE

The revolution that broke out in Hungary in 1956 against the Russian-installed regime was more than a new stage of revolt. It initiated a new **epoch** in representing an effort by masses of people to become free from the despotism of capital even when faced with the power of a totalitarian state-capitalist regime.

The revolution began in response to an attack by Budapest police on a student rally of Oct. 23, 1956 calling for democracy. Within days a reform government led by Imre Nagy came to power in support of the students and thousands of workers who rallied to their cause. Workers' councils sprang up around the country as workers moved to take control of the factories.

Alarmed by these events, the Russian army invaded on Nov. 4. Despite killing thousands, it failed to crush the revolt. Though Nagy and many of his ministers were arrested (Nagy was later executed by the Russians), the workers' councils re-grouped and called a general strike. It lasted for five weeks, during which time production relations passed into the hands of Hungary's workers. It marked the first time in history that a general strike was successfully carried out **after** a military invasion. It was not until Dec. 19 that the Russians crushed the revolution.

The attempt by the workers' councils to run society was not led by any political party. The councils served as the political and economic vanguard in controlling production. The councils weren't restricted to one industry but were found in almost every branch of national activity. Nor was this a mere nationalist revolt; the revolution started in support of strikes in Poland, and the workers convinced several garrisons of Russian troops to mutiny and join their ranks.

Raya Dunayevskaya wrote of Hungary 1956: "The attempts of the workers to seize oil fields, rail centers, steel factories, and means of communication and to run these by revolutionary committees—that is to say, workers' control of production—is the true sign of the attempts of the revolution to affect a total change."<sup>(1)</sup>

Hungary 1956 was therefore on a much higher level than simply establishing a network of workers' cooperatives. It was also on a higher level than *Solidarnosc* in Poland in 1980. What placed Hungary 1956 on such a high level is that it was a **social revolution** in which the working class seized control of production relations on a **national** scale. It was the only social revolution to occur in Europe since 1917.

One sign of the crisis afflicting radical thought today is that many seem to have forgotten the difference between a new stage of revolt and a **social revolution** that seizes control of production relations. Such a momentous event doesn't only produce an outburst of activity. It also unleashes crucial **ideas**.

What **ideas** were unleashed by 1956? First, in moving to take control of production the Hungarian workers showed a passion to be free from statist Communism and western capitalism. Second, the depth of this quest for freedom was expressed in the central role played by groups of leftist intellectuals, such as the Petofi circle, which defended the humanism of Marx against Stalinist distortions. Prior to 1956 the humanism of Marx was either unknown or restricted to discussions among relatively isolated intellectuals. Hungary 1956 changed that. The revolutions pried from the archives Marx's humanist writings, his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

In this sense Hungary 1956 represented not just a new stage of revolt but a **new stage of cognition**.

## JAMES' RESPONSE TO HUNGARY 1956

The Hungarian Revolution had a global impact, as seen in the thousands of Communists worldwide who tore up their party cards to protest the Stalinist destruction of a genuine workers' revolution. Hungary

1956 also had an important impact on anti-Stalinist theoreticians who had viewed Russia and China as state-capitalist. Since their response to 1956 speaks directly to the task of developing a viable alternative to capitalism today, I will focus on that here.

A major figure in the anti-Stalinist Left at the time was the Caribbean-born Marxist C.L.R. James. In his 1958 book *Facing Reality*, he held that the spontaneous emergence of the workers' councils in the Hungarian Revolution was the beacon for a new type of revolution that will dispense with centralized political leadership and the separation between the revolutionary process and the ultimate goal. He wrote, "Previous revolutions have concentrated on the seizure of political power and only afterward on the problems of organizing production....The Hungarian Revolution reversed the process....The revolution from the very beginning seized power in the process of production and from there organized the political power."<sup>(2)</sup>

James argued that Hungary 1956 posed "no divorce between immediate objectives and ultimate aims." The **aim** of socialism—the elimination of the separation of the activity of the laborer from the objective conditions of production—was being made real through the process of revolution. On this basis he correctly held that the self-activity of the Hungarian workers pointed the way to a new kind of revolution that renders the Leninist concept of the "vanguard party" obsolete.

However, neither in *Facing Reality* nor later did James mention that 1956 pried Marx's humanist



*Essays from the archives.* While he singled out the **practical** accomplishments of the revolution, he did not single out the **ideas** that flowed from it—the quest to bring to life the lost philosophical heritage of Marx's humanism.

It isn't that James **ignored** philosophy. Chapter 4 of *Facing Reality*, entitled "The End of a Philosophy," stated: "As an actual liberating philosophy of life, rationalism is dead. It is rationalism which no longer commands the allegiance of men" (p. 72). He argued: "From Plato to Hegel, European philosophers were always struggling to make a total harmonious unity of societies riddled by class struggles...But the time for that is past" (p. 69). He concluded that philosophy "as such" had come to an end.

**Why** did James fail to see that Hungary 1956 signaled a **new stage of cognition** that called for a **rebirth** of philosophy, instead of its demise? It wasn't that he failed to grasp the spontaneous forms of organization that arise from mass revolt. As I see it, it was because of his peculiar understanding of the relation between "philosophy" and mass revolt that he had formulated as early as 1948 in his book *Notes on Dialectics*.

*Notes on Dialectics* sought to explore Hegel's work as part of an effort to illuminate new kinds of revolts that James held were bound to emerge against state-capitalism. Its stated aim was to explore the most "abstract" part of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the chapter on "The Absolute Idea," to philosophically elucidate the significance of self-movement and self-activity.

However, James rushed to a conclusion about the relation of philosophy and mass action before even reaching "The Absolute Idea." In commenting on the "Doctrine of Essence," he wrote: "Organization as we have known it is at an end. The task is to abolish organization. The task is to teach, to illustrate, to develop spontaneity."<sup>(3)</sup> Despite his ambitious effort to "re-read" Hegel, James reached a political conclusion about the relevance of certain dialectical categories before grappling with the **whole** of Hegel's thought.

In its rush to **apply** Hegelian categories, James' *Notes on Dialectics* made spontaneous **forms** of organization into an absolute. For Lenin the right form of organization was the vanguard party; for James the right form of organization became the decentralized, spontaneous form of organization. Despite James' criticisms of Lenin, they both shared a common assumption—that the **form** of organization exhausts the **concept** of organization.

It is therefore no accident that James never returned to a sustained discussion of Hegel after 1948. Why turn anew to philosophy, when he now had the answer to what he had been looking for—namely, that Hegel's "abstract" concept of self-movement is "translated" for our day as proletarian self-activity? James simply concluded from his study that once proletarian self-activity comes to the fore, the need for philosophy "as such" comes to an end.

**In sum, by reducing philosophy to the reflection of the steps taken by mass struggles, James negated the need for a philosophy that can help develop a liberating vision of the future. That is**

**why he later steered clear of both Hegel's dialectic and Marx's Humanism.**

This is evident from *Facing Reality*, which states: "The day-to-day struggles of the workers constitute the socialist society and the basic struggle for socialism" (p. 117). He held that "the socialist society exists...we [merely] have to record the facts of its existence" (p. 110). Philosophy, he held, is not needed to grapple with the question of "what happens after the revolution," since the answer is provided by spontaneous mass activity. And since he held that there is no independent need for philosophy, he concluded that there was no need for an independent organization of Marxist theoreticians to develop one as part of an effort to give spontaneous action its direction.

## DUNAYEVSKAYA'S RESPONSE TO 1956

In direct contrast to James' approach was the position taken by his former co-leader in the Johnson-Forrest Tendency, Raya Dunayevskaya, who founded the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism in the period in which James wrote *Facing Reality*.

Dunayevskaya emphasized the key role of the Hungarian workers in seizing control of production relations during the 1956 revolution, thereby showing that a new society could be created without the mediation of a vanguard party or a transitional society to socialism. She repeatedly returned to the importance of Hungary 1956, as in disputing Jean-Paul Sartre's contention that the workers' councils "were much too brief and too troubled for us to be able to speak of an organized democracy."<sup>(4)</sup>

Dunayevskaya held that 1956 made dialectical philosophy not less but **more** important, because **the movement from practice is itself a form of theory**. In prying Marx's humanist philosophic writings from the archives, the Hungarian revolutionaries demonstrated a passion for **ideas** to carry their movement forward. They did not presume that workers' councils shorn of new cognition was sufficient for answering the question of what constitutes a post-capitalist society. They were reaching out to revolutionary theoreticians to respond to their activity by providing as comprehensive a **conceptual** response to the question of "what happens after the revolution" as was found in their own practice.

**Surely, "rationalist" cognition shorn of any connection to spontaneous mass revolt is one-sided. But so is spontaneous revolt shorn of connection with dialectical cognition. Only in their dialogical unity is it possible to work out the tremendously difficult problem of envisioning an alternative to capitalism.**

Shortly before 1956, in a series of letters on Hegel's Absolutes written in 1953, Dunayevskaya spoke to this: "The new society will not be until it is; now we see only intimations, approximations..."<sup>(5)</sup> Spontaneous forms of organization contain important **intimations** of a socialist society. Yet she held that such intimations of a new society that emerge from revolts against the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation" are still "defective" in that they unfold within the confines of capitalist value production. To make the idea of a new society explicit, we must go further—to what Hegel called "the free release of the Idea," the **philosophic** elaboration of freedom itself.

Dunayevskaya didn't rush to a quick political conclusion in her exploration of Hegel's Absolutes—unlike James, who reduced dialectics to the reflection of the steps taken by mass practice. In carefully tracing out the dialectic in thought, she discerned within Hegel's concept of "absolute negativity" the expression of the **vision of a new society**, which Marx had worked out for his day as "revolution in permanence."

The problem we face today is that anti-vanguardist theoreticians who do grasp the importance of mass self-activity tend to burden spontaneous revolts with what is **their** responsibility—working out a liberating vision of the future. This has led to an impasse in the radical movement. We will surmount this impasse neither by turning away from "rationalist cognition" in the name of spontaneity and "everyday resistance" nor by upholding it in the name of class consciousness and "self-awareness" that fails to address what happens after a revolution. What is needed is for the humanism of Marx that was brought onto the historic stage 50 years ago to be redeveloped for today on the basis of the new stage of cognition called Marxist-Humanism.

This poses **the** challenge to organization. While spontaneous forms of organization remain key, there is a need for organizations of Marxist theoreticians that exist independently of them to work out the question masses of people around the world are asking—is there an alternative to capitalism and the failures of what called itself "socialism" over the past 100 years?

1. *Marxism and Freedom* by Raya Dunayevskaya (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 255.

2. *Facing Reality*, by C.L.R. James, Grace C. Lee, with the collaboration of Cornelius Castoriadis (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2006), p. 12. All page references are to this edition.

3. *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*, by C.L.R. James (Westport, CT: Lawrence & Hill, 1980), p. 117.

4. See *Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 198.

5. "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," in *The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx*, by Raya Dunayevskaya, ed. by Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 10.

## IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ELECTIONS

I feel as though an incubus was lifted in this election that could lead to openings. We got a call from an *N&L* subscriber who is now in a retirement home and wanted to share her joy that maybe the march toward fascism has been slowed in this country. Everyone knows that the Democrats do not oppose capitalism, but we've been under single party rule consolidating total control in this country for so long. The Right is in real disarray; it is trying to put together a face-saving package to get out of Iraq and call it a victory. The election results are an opportunity for a more open discussion on many fronts.

Ron  
Bay Area, California

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It is interesting that many Democratic leaders who had demanded that Bush be impeached for misleading us into the Iraq war are now saying they will not impeach him. I know many voters who voted for the Democrats because they wanted Bush impeached, and said that if President Clinton faced impeachment for some hanky-panky with a female White House assistant, Bush should be impeached a dozen times over for the horrible slaughter of American forces and innocent civilians in Iraq.

Veteran  
Detroit

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One thing I hope the election will put an end to is the hundreds of millions of dollars that Bush has been funneling into religious organizations which teach abstinence-only sex education. His AIDS policy, which is stingy on condoms and long on abstinence, is a disaster which has been shown to leave women at risk because they do not have the power to control how and when they have sex. The Democratic win is no revolution, but if it will change things like this, it will save lives.

Women's Liberationist  
Memphis

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I see the Rumsfeld resignation as a very clever move on Bush's part. He gets him out in advance of the Baker report, and puts Gates in, who served both Democratic and Republican administrations, thereby snaring a good number of Democrats into his coming "new year's surprise" announcement that he'll start gradually withdrawing troops from Iraq. It would have been better for us for Rumsfeld to stay, as it would make Bush's room for maneuver more restricted. Individuals don't determine policy, in any case; social relations do.

Revolutionary  
Illinois

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## HUNGARY 1956 AS 'SPONTANEITY OF ACTION AND ORGANIZATION OF THOUGHT'

The early 1950s were a time of great change. In March 1953 Stalin died and in June East German workers were the first to show that they had not been brainwashed as Western "specialists" demanding "Bread and Freedom." It was the beginning of a great wave of unrest in East Europe and beyond.

The East German workers' slogan "Bread and Freedom" put freedom as a human necessity in its own right. By 1956 Hungarian workers challenged Communist totalitarianism with their Workers' Councils. Even before that, intellectuals in Hungary's Petofi Circle and other clubs opened a widespread theoretical discussion on realizing Marx's humanist socialism. Theoretical discussions of young Marx and of Hegel raged in all of East Europe and beyond.

In Poland, where many clubs emerged with names like "Red Tomato" (signifying that they were red not just on the outside but also on the inside), "Blown Fuse" and the "Karl Marx Club," the probing of Marx was the deepest. For an example, see Witold Jedlicki's account of the discussions in the Crooked Circle Club in Poland, which started in 1955 and continued until 1963. Here is what he wrote in 1963: "The philosophy of Hegel and young Marx, and to some extent also French Existentialism, clearly functioned at the time as the spiritual foun-

It was good to read the results of the Anti-war Referendum here and see that huge numbers of voters across the state of Illinois, wherever the referendum appeared on the ballot, voted to stop the war and "immediately begin an orderly and rapid withdrawal." The vote was 80% yes in the City of Chicago and there were similar tallies throughout suburban Cook County. Too bad a referendum is non-binding. But it's not meaningless.

Voter  
Chicago

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I'd like to know more about what the election means for Iraq. Sen. Schumer, like Rep. Pelosi, says that there's not much that we can do about it. Schumer is for the horrible Biden plan to divide Iraq into three pieces. Anti-war sentiment is growing, but at the same time, the anti-war movement is shrinking.

Revolutionary student  
New York

## THE MIDDLE EAST AND WORLD POLITICS

I appreciated that your lead article by Peter Hudis in the October-November *N&L* didn't talk about the aftermath of Israel's war "against Lebanon." It wasn't against Lebanon. It was the government of Israel against the people of Lebanon who don't want Israel to invade the whole Middle East. I can see the day when Israel justifies building new settlements in the West Bank and then wanting territory to support its growing population. What philosophy can justify Israel's occupation, the invasion of Palestine and Lebanon, the extinction of people in that area?

Kenneth Bradshaw  
Memphis

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Hezbollah's shelling of civilians played into the hands of the Israeli regime as the peace movement there largely supported the war, thus failing an important test. The exception was the women's groups, who were left dangerously isolated by this capitulation. That they persisted despite such isolation made their revolt more important.

Women's Liberationist  
Memphis

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The Lead brings up the number of bomblets left over which will threaten Lebanese civilians for years. That puts in context what terrorism really is.

Subscriber  
California

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ation at first of the movement of 'thawing' and then of those tendencies which were later labeled 'revisionism.'... "It was not an accident that *Nova Kultura* (*New Culture*) honored the 125th anniversary of the "wise man from Berlin" (Hegel) by a special article by Bronislaw Basko... that *Zeszyty Teoretyczno-Polityczne Nowych Drog* (*New Ways' Theoretical-Political Notebooks*) carried a discussion of Hegel in almost every issue and that the young Marx was discussed so much on the pages of *Po Prostu* (*Simply*). That was the dominant intellectual climate, not limited to Poland..." The new stage of cognition, which Hungary 1956 embodies, had a theoretical thread from the start both in Marxist-Humanism and in the world.

Urszula Wislanka  
California

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The anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution is not just for past history's sake. It's not just that Bush is rewriting that history as if it were for free-market capitalism, rather than a struggle for workers' power in both politics and production, and truly free, humanist socialism. Dunayevskaya's letter, "Spontaneity of Action and Organization of Thought," printed in the October-November *N&L*, shows how Marxist-Humanism was in the air and intellec-

# READERS' VIEWS

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You say that after Israel's war in Lebanon the face of politics in the Middle East has changed. Significant events started a long time ago. They were planning this war since they planned the invasion of Iraq. Baker who now is trying to save the Bushes, was the architect of the first Gulf War when he told Saddam the U.S. didn't have a dog in the fight with Kuwait and Saddam took the bait.

Now there is full blown civil war and terror on the ground in Iraq. The sectarian conflict was brought on by the U.S. invasion. The premier imperialist nation declared they were going to spread democracy and now they have dropped that language. All this happened when there was a war in Africa that included genocide where probably more died in Darfur, the Congo and other regions than in Iraq. The whole discussion of human rights and democracy are not what they seem. We can't just start with categories projected by the originators of these crises.

Htm Lin  
California

\*\*\*

I appreciated the description of Hezbollah as a counter-revolutionary force aligned with the state-capitalism of Syria and the fundamentalism of Iran. That view of them as a counter-revolutionary force is important and not everyone is getting it. *Socialist Worker*, for one, paints Hezbollah as totally revolutionary.

Marxist Sociologist  
Tennessee

\*\*\*

The horror of what Bush unleashed in the Middle East was revealed in a new study by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. It estimated that over 600,000 Iraqi civilians have died in violence since the 2003 U.S. invasion. While Bush writes it off as "not credible" even the right-wing *Memphis Commercial Appeal* says it is credible. Even if the number is "only" 50,000 as Gen. George Casey says, or the 426,369 the study says could also be correct, where is the outrage at these deaths? Where is there a sliver of bone-weary sorrow that should envelop those who bear responsibility for so many deaths? That there is only denial and an attempt to discredit the study, reveals the degenerate nature of Bush's capitalist imperialism.

M. Soleil  
Tennessee

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## SADDAM'S TRIAL

In their greatest hour of need, when Kurdistan was under gas and chemical attack, no one came to hear their voice. No resolution passed in the UN. The world stood silent while 18% of the Kurdish population of Iraq perished. Now, after the verdict against Saddam and projected execution in mid-February, once again the world may not be able to hear the story of the genocide against the Kurds.

The main issue is not the fate of a brutal despot who was no "desk murderer" but very much a hands-on killer. He personally approved of the "final solution" to the Kurdish problem knowing full well that the international community would not lift a finger. His trial was turned into a political circus. He knew how to manipulate the proceedings into an open tribunal calling for the unity of nationalists and Islamists. What matters now is for the facts to come out and his deeds to become known. Only then can the Iraqis put that dark chapter of their history to rest and master the past. Otherwise, Eichmann's final words at the end of his trial may come true, as when he stood up and declared "We shall meet again!"

Iranian revolutionary  
California

## WEARING THE VEIL

The wearing of the niqab or veil by some Muslim women has become a national controversy in Britain. After Aishah Asmi was suspended from her job as a teaching assistant because she insisted on wearing her veil whenever a male colleague was present, government ministers, including Tony Blair, supported the local authorities' decision to remove her.

The stated reason, that the children's education would suffer, is implausible. Blair described the veil as "a mark of separation." But in this case a Muslim woman who wanted to teach at a Church of England school is being prevented from doing so, so who is being separatist? A humanist criticism of the niqab is that it restricts the freedom and individuality of women who wear it, even if the restriction is self-imposed. We can criticize the veil on those grounds while opposing interference by employers or government.

R. Bunting  
Oxford

## PROTESTING CAPITALISM

At the Oct. 29 anti-Iraq war demonstration in Hollywood, I was glad to see two Black women marching to publicize the plight of the victims of mass forced "relocation" and genocide in Uganda, which has been ongoing for many years. There was also a support group for CAMI (the Complimentary and Alternative Medicine Initiative), whose aim is to open grass roots clinics in Nigeria, then in other areas of Africa, to research, educate people about, prevent, and treat HIV/AIDS and other degenerative diseases. There were only a few Blacks, Browns and Asians among the mostly white protesters there, numbering 1,500.

The Black people have their own issues of high unemployment, health problems and mass incarceration of youths; they receive no mass support from other ethnic groups. Nor do Latinos receive mass support for their struggles for immigrant rights. If the time ever comes when masses of Black, Brown, Asian and White workers, youths and immigrants unite against their particular capitalist exploitation and oppression, I hope they are united under the principles Marx established in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program* as a foundation for a new human society.

Basho  
Los Angeles

tuals caught it, and how the self-organization of the workers into a new form of organization, workers' councils, manifested a creativity that gave the Revolution "its historic direction."

Today we look at it through a greater historical distance, when the revolutionary spirit of 1956 is weighted down by the consciousness of revolutions that failed or transformed into opposite. We need to look back at 1956 as the greatness that still stirs within humanity and from the point of view of the needed new society still struggling to be released.

Subscriber  
Memphis

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Dunayevskaya's letter on the Hungarian Revolution was important to reprint. It was a proletarian revolution and she shows it was in no sense a defeat.

Revolutionary lawyer  
Flint, Michigan

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The movement born in the Hungarian Revolution reached to China where Mao put down their version of Petofi circles after the 100 Flowers campaign. The idea of "Bread and Freedom" includes not just how much to produce but why and what kind of labor do we envision in a new society. There is a lot of excitement now about the ouster of the Republicans but we have to go into discussions about a totally new society.

Korean-American  
California

**CAPITAL AND LABOR TODAY**

Reports continue to come out about the horrendous loss of life in China's coal mines, with hundreds and thousands dying in escalating disasters. Official government figures put the death toll in the mines at some 6,000 a year, but other reports indicate that the toll is much higher because many mine disasters are not reported or are ignored, and the actual figure is more like 20,000 killed in the mines each year—all to feed the insatiable appetite for energy demanded by China's hot-house capitalist development. To put this death toll in perspective, there have been about 32 deaths in American coal mines this year, while in China there are 55 killed each day!

**Ex-miner  
Detroit**

+++

Congratulations to Debra Moore, the nurse and union activist in Virginia, as well as to the hospital employees and her supporters, for being restored to her job, with complete quick time and wages at Eastern State Hospital, as it was reported in the last issue of *N&L*. The labor situation being what it is against workers today, and for quite some time now, it was not a surprise to read of her oppression. It was inspirational to read this success story which shows what people can accomplish when they act together for workers' rights and simple human dignity.

**Labor supporter  
Japan**

+++

A friend of mine who works barely above minimum wage in fast food asked me what it felt like to be part of a strike. Then she said, "We should strike my job. They are too cheap to have a union."

Workers in her situation are exploited beyond their miserable wages. Their hours are cut or changed without warning, they are told they are not entitled to breaks, and they must constantly watch managers who steal from their cash drawers and then deduct the shortage from the crew members' pay.

I am thinking that other low-wage workers, like the many single parents of Detroit public school students, support-

ed our strike this fall because they wish they could stand strong in their jobs.

**Teacher  
Detroit**

+++

The fetish of high tech seduces us into complying with the prerogatives of capital's expansion. Our own union leaders tell us "we can't stop progress." They enter into labor-management partnerships to "help" the company compete. They seduce us with the promise of high tech trying to get us to accept speed-ups, deep cuts in health care, pensions, and layoffs. After consuming the marriage, capital leaves us holding the bag, often deadbeat even with our pension funds.

**Hospital worker  
California**

+++

After reading Andrew Kliman's "Demonstrating an alternative to capitalism" in the October-November *N&L*, any question about whether the law of value can be transcended or whether it can exist in socialist society should be laid to rest. He has significantly shown that objectively any further discussion on the law of value must center on how it can be uprooted.

**Faruq  
California**



**WOMEN'S  
WORLDWIDE  
STRUGGLES**

You published a piece in the June-July "Readers' Views" about the One in Nine Campaign in South

Africa working to raise awareness about violence against women. The case they had responded to was the rape of a woman by a high-ranking government official she had taken to court. In October, a year after the rape, Buyisiwe had yet to give her evidence in court. Her case was struck from the court roll because evidence was missing from the docket. Once the matter was struck the accused were released from custody and Buyisiwe was forced to take refuge in a

place of safety because of threats and the risk of further violence. The One in Nine Campaign has continued to call for a national protest. More information is available by visiting [www.oneinnine.org.za](http://www.oneinnine.org.za).

**Supporter  
Los Angeles**

+++

Dr. Shazia Khalid's tragic story reported in the October-November *N&L* reminded me of the many and varied unjust and oppressive conditions women suffer the world over. They are often told by women who suffer the events and may literally be putting their lives at risk by telling them. May their stories continue to be told so that awareness is heightened and we are moved to utterly transform human relationships so they become human.

**Lindsay  
Illinois**

**THE BRITISH SCENE**

I thought you might like to share a letter of mine that was published in *Newsweek International*, in the issue dated November 13. This was a response to an article by Gordon Brown on globalization: Brown dismisses protests against capitalist globalization as "an angry resistance to change—old-style Luddism, in other words." It may interest you to know that the original Luddites were weavers in early 19th-century England who opposed, unsuccessfully, the introduction of new technology that, in the social conditions of the time, deprived them of their livelihood and threw their families into poverty.

The propertied classes who put down the Luddites were themselves resistant to social and political changes, such as the extension of the vote to working people, the formation of unions and the reduction of working hours. Today's workers have good reason to be anxious about how capital moves around the world in search of low paid, nonunion workers without effective legal rights. Brown's globalization manifesto says nothing about the need for effective laws to protect workers from overwork and hazardous conditions, and for free, independent unions in all countries.

**Richard Abernethy  
Britain**

+++  
The Labour Party has been dominated by the theme of public service. The truth is that it is more like a gang of robber barons jousting for spoils. Myths, lies and corruption are a poor diet that the young and poor are given by a system designed to abuse them. The three main political parties are all affected. They cannot challenge this because they are all implicated. Our public servants have become our masters.

**Pat Duffy  
Britain**

**FENCES ON THE BORDER**

Just as I finished reading "Plan for 'parallel' government in Mexico" (October-November *N&L*) I heard a news story about Bush approving the building of a fence between Mexico and California. Wasn't the U.S. a strong supporter of removing barriers and fences in other countries? The U.S. just wants to be prepared to keep Mexicans out. When Mexico is no longer a U.S. puppet they will no longer welcome the immigrant workers that the capitalist U.S. society has long exploited. Could the U.S. be getting worried and making an attempt to curb the Mexican influence on the rising Latino population? After all, the Mexican people have a history of revolution. It's estimated that by 2050 a third of the U.S. population will be Latino.

**Prisoner  
Coalinga, California**

**VOICES OF REASON  
WITHIN THE BARS**

I often use *N&L* as a guide to enhance the consciousness of those who have no idea why their lives are being spent inside a cage. Prison is not a part of society. It's an exile. The exploitation of prisoners must be seen as an act of imperialism from within. Such a vision must be tied in with Marx's view of capitalism "digging its own grave."

**Herman Wallace  
Angola Prison**

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## Women workers in Bush's U.S.

by Robert Taliaferro

The following is a synopsis of a small, unscientific survey that was conducted by the writer. The references below are an encapsulated result of that informal survey and are in no way intended to represent the conditions of one specific individual.

\*\*\*

To look at her, you'd see a proud middle-aged woman with dyed red hair to cover the gray. At 49 she could almost pass for a model. She likes to dress well, though can only afford to buy clothes at thrift shops.

When she stands close you can see a tiredness in her eyes that saddens you, but it's her hands that tell the true story of her life. She wears fake nails to hide the chipped and cracked remnants of her own fingernails. Her fingers are covered with cuts and bruises that seem never to heal; they are blotted with super glue to ease the pain and provide a covering for those cuts, allowing her to keep working despite the pain.

This woman is one of millions of working poor in this country, people whom the government uses to pad its statistics of how well America works. This representative of her class works in manufacturing, the only job that she can hold with a limited education and job skills. She's also a second-generation parent to her grandson, raising him after she raised her own two children as a single parent. She's only been on welfare for six months of the 33 years that she has worked, and is proud of that fact, and she spends her leisure time wondering if she will have a job the next day.

To exacerbate the lack of funds, she—like many women in low-paying manufacturing jobs—must suffer gender abuse at the workplace, some subtle, some not so subtle. There seems to be an unspoken rule that silence maintains employment, and she cannot afford to lose her job for any reason.

The survey found that small manufacturing companies are particularly notorious in how they treat their female employees. We often are abhorred at sweatshop conditions overseas and yet small companies—in order to make ends meet—often employ the same sweatshop mentality with American workers, especially those who are poor and particularly those who are female.

Union is a five-letter word that can result in immediate termination. As one respondent noted, "I did not know that I was such a poor employee until I mentioned the word 'union' at work." The result was a termination for cause based on negative performance.

In non-union small manufacturing companies, workers are subject to near-dictatorial conditions, often required to work ten-hour days on a moment's notice; have improper (if any) safety equipment. They are often replaced when they challenge the conditions, often for real or imagined infractions that are only referenced if there is a complaint lodged, and retirement is out of the question.

### POVERTY RATES FOR WOMEN DOUBLE

Currently 3.6 million people over the age of 65 live below the federal poverty line, and the poverty rates for working poor women and minorities is double that rate or worse.

Women referenced in this article earn much less than their male counter-parts at the same low-paying jobs. Only a few have ever participated in a pension plan, and only one out of 50 has a viable health care plan that costs her nearly one-third of her salary. As she noted, she can't afford **not** to have the plan. A retirement plan is out of the question because it would require taking money from her check that she can ill afford to lose.

Today, only one in five workers in the category of "working poor" is covered by any defined pension or benefit plan. Even in the middle class, only 39% of families with incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,000 a year participate in a defined retirement plan.

Of the individuals referenced in this piece, not one has given a thought to retirement, and as one 65-year-

old Wal-Mart employee noted, "I'll be working till I'm 100 or till I can't walk no more...I can't afford not to...and I don't even think about getting sick."

In *Marxism and Freedom*, Raya Dunayevskaya stated, "Labor is first of all the function of man. But labor **under capitalism** is the very specific function of man working at machines to which he becomes a mere appendage. His labor, therefore, is not the **self-activity**, the creative function it was under primitive communism where, in mastering nature, man had also developed his own natural capacities and talents. Labor in the factory is **alienated labor**." (56)

Alienated labor abounds in Bush's America. It's an irony that the lower the unemployment rate goes, the more sweatshop conditions abound for the working poor, who must ignore these conditions if they wish to maintain what little fiscal security they have.

Yet there is hope in many that their lives will change—one day—for the better, a hope that we find in the archives of News and Letters Committees, in the words of Felix Martin. "I...see the unity of working people" he said, "...being the type of force which can change what is going on; which can provide ideas coming from the rank and file for taking control of their life and labor." (*The Revolutionary Journalism of Felix Martin*, p. 28)

### WORKING POOR NEED BETTER LIFE

Today, tomorrow, next year, it is an imperative that the working poor be given a better way to live, so that super glue does not become a common replacement for good working conditions, and so that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are not attributes that are defined by a person's wealth in any given society.

Workers should dictate the conditions in which they work, for without them there is no commerce; there is no economy. As Felix noted in 1994, "Workers are thinkers; they don't need to be led. Every worker is an organizer." (*TRJFM*, p.94)

## Legal system's lethal execution by gibberish

by C.C. Simmons

On Aug. 24, 2006, at Huntsville, the state of Texas executed Justin Chaz Fuller for the 1997 robbery and fatal shooting of 21-year-old Donald Whittington III of Tyler. Fuller's execution would be little more than an unremarkable up-tick of the body count at the busiest death chamber in the nation if it weren't for the remarkable post-conviction brief filed by his court-appointed counsel.

Texas state law provides that death row prisoners receive "competent counsel" for their post-conviction appeals and writs of habeas corpus. For indigent prisoners, the Court of Criminal Appeals, the highest criminal court in Texas, decides which lawyers are competent to handle death penalty cases, compiles a list, and then relies on trial judges to make individual appointments from the "approved" list. Counsel is thus appointed for indigent prisoners on death row and paid with state funds. Those convicts who can afford to pay for outside counsel are spared the indignity and uncertainty of relying on court-appointed counsel.

In May 2001, Texas attorney Toby C. Wilkinson of Greenville was appointed to work for Fuller. Wilkinson prepared and filed a 111-page post-conviction petition for writ of habeas corpus, which, on first impression, appeared to be appropriate. On closer examination, Wilkinson's petition was found to be unintelligible.

On page three, for example, the petition began quoting long sections of Fuller's trial testimony without clearly explaining their relevance. Half of page five repeats the exact same sections quoted a page earlier. On page six, similar repetition begins. The numbering of the paragraphs in the petition prepared by Wilkinson does not follow a logical sequence. Some paragraphs can only be described as gibberish. For example: "i & tilde hus, we diseeni no ab & tilde tse of discretion in h i & tilde coult & tilde s denial."

Part of Fuller's petition embodies wording copied from an appeal prepared and filed by Wilkinson seven years earlier for a different client, Henry Earl Dunn. Inexplicably Fuller's petition complains of improper testing of blood found on a gun used in Dunn's crime, an offense which was wholly unrelated to Fuller's case. Predictably Fuller's petition was denied and he moved one step closer to death by lethal injection. After the court rejected Fuller's petition, attorney Don Bailey was appointed to replace Wilkinson. In a later brief filed by Bailey, he wrote that Wilkinson's petition "should have been submitted on a Big Chief Tablet using an eight-count box of Crayolas." Wilkinson was paid \$18,000 from state funds to prepare and file Fuller's petition.

Edward Marty, a former assistant district attorney in Smith County (Tyler), said he was "disturbed" by the quality of Wilkinson's petition. Marty pointed out that Wilkinson was given an opportunity for a hearing "to make up any differences and clear up anything he wanted to." There is no indication Wilkinson did so.

A short time later, a Texas District Court judge in

## Voter intimidation in the South

**MEMPHIS, TENN.**—On Election Day I volunteered at the Memphis command center of Election Protection, a national, non-partisan organization that monitors polling sites. We were responsible for dispatching trained volunteer teams to polling sites in north and south Memphis, regions with high concentrations of low-income and Black voters.

Voter intimidation was a widespread problem throughout the areas we targeted. We heard reports of GOP "poll watchers" standing behind the voter registration desk and capturing people's personal information as they signed the register to vote. Voters were visibly intimidated by this, but on-site election officials refused to order the GOP poll watchers to stop.

Every precinct has brand-new Diebold machines. We heard many reports of machines malfunctioning. At one polling site, the Diebold machines rejected the electronic voter cards, so a GOP poll watcher was swiping the cards for every voter at the machine! No partisan "watcher" should be allowed to touch the machine when people are voting! In a south Memphis precinct, four of the seven voting machines began smoking at 8:30 a.m. Over 100 voters were turned away without being offered provisional (paper) ballots! When I left the command center at 12:30 p.m., the four machines had not been replaced, and the line to use the three remaining was long.

The most egregious voter intimidation was committed by the Memphis Police Department. Cop cars sat in parking lots of precincts throughout north and south Memphis and pulled people over for traffic violations as they were turning into the lot to vote! We fear that many voters were discouraged from voting because they saw police lights in the parking lot.

It is obvious that true human freedom will take a revolution, not an election, but until that moment, it is important that all people can participate in elections and that no voter is intimidated. The South has a long history of disenfranchising Black voters, yet I did not see any media coverage of the violations in Memphis. It makes me wonder if Black voter disenfranchisement is such a part of politics in the South that the mainstream media does not find it newsworthy.

—Amy Garrison

Hopkins County (Sulphur Springs) appointed Wilkinson to prepare and file a petition for a writ of habeas corpus for Daniel Clate Acker, an indigent convicted prisoner on death row. Wilkinson's brief for Acker devotes 13 pages to naming virtually every document ever filed in Acker's case. The brief goes on to recite five claims that are almost identical to claims set out in Fuller's case, a totally unrelated crime.

The next 24 pages were apparently copied from client letters which seldom cite applicable case law and sometimes lapse into first-person narrative. For example, Claim 36 of Acker's petition states: "I'm just about out of carbon paper so before I run out I want to try and list everything that was added to and took from me to convict me on the next page. Then as soon as I get some more typing supplies I have about 30 more errors I want to tell you about and have brought up in my appeal." Wilkinson was paid another \$18,000 to prepare and file Acker's brief.

When asked, Sharon Keller, the Presiding Judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals, said she couldn't comment on individual cases. She emphasized that her court carefully screens the attorneys who are selected to handle death penalty appeals. One wonders about the screening criteria and if, perhaps, demonstrably sub-competent attorneys are purposely selected to handle death penalty appeals. Perhaps Fuller wondered about that too.

## Racist law voted in

**DETROIT**—Proposal 2, mistakenly called the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, was approved statewide by 62% to 41%. The proposal bans the use of affirmative action in considering qualifications for hiring, promotion, and admission to public programs in Michigan. It was modeled after a similar proposal spearheaded by Ward Connerly in California three years ago. The state coordinator was Jennifer Gratz, who unsuccessfully sued the University of Michigan for not admitting her to law school. Her suit was denied by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003 after much public protest against it.

The president of the University of Michigan, Dr. Mary Sue Coleman, has vowed to maintain diversity. A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the proposal has been filed by the group which has led protests for affirmative action at the University, BAMN (By Any Means Necessary.) Experts seem to think that this lawsuit will not succeed.

People in Detroit are worried about the future of training and recruitment programs designed to bring minorities and women into areas in which they are scarce. There are feelings of anger and disappointment among African Americans, who see the vote as just one more attempt to deny them equal access to opportunities. Everyone talks about poor schools in Detroit and other cities, where students are years behind in learning required material. But those who oppose affirmative action simply do not care, as long as they get theirs.

—Susan Van Gelder

## BLACK/RED

Continued from page 1

abolish slavery? All across the country our children are dying before they reach the age to vote. They are car-jacking, robbing the hamburger stands, dealing with crack in the streets—this is the hand of the oppressor. I don't know any African American who owns a ship or plane to go to Colombia and bring drugs to our streets. I tell the brothers and sisters they can no longer put the rope around your neck and hang you on a tree, so they bring cocaine and tell you how to make rock so you can destroy each other.

This country was founded on cheap slave labor. I told the immigrants that I know what it is to work from sunup to sundown on your knees and get 50 cents. We all know that if you keep people from being able to live with dignity, it will result in crime. Do we want to stigmatize people when they get released from prison? The question is what are we going to do about it? We need to keep our children in school. We need to keep saying it over and over—stop destroying each other.

## EDITORIAL

## Behind North Korea's nuclear test

The North Korean nuclear test in October was a most serious event, one that should not be passed over amid Iraq and the U.S. elections. Above all, the nuclear explosion announced by the totalitarian state-capitalist regime points to the utter unviability of this capitalist/nuclear world.

As with the 1998 nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan, or the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power disaster, the North Korean test illustrates the sober fact that the end of the Cold War has not ended the nuclear nightmare first unleashed by the U.S. at Hiroshima in 1945. The world capitalist "order" in the nuclear age is an illusion, one that could go up in radioactive smoke at any moment.

The most immediate danger at this moment lies in Japan's response to North Korea. Because of their history, the Japanese people are particularly sensitive to nuclear threats of any kind. The Japanese ruling class plays upon these fears, not letting them forget the fact that North Korea has also tested missiles that could reach Japan, although putting nuclear warheads on them is years away.

This danger has helped Japan's political establishment to move politics sharply to the Right in the past decade, crushing labor and adopting a belligerent nationalist tone toward the country's Asian neighbors that is almost as strident as that of the U.S. under Bush. This turn to nationalism has allowed a nearly zero-growth capitalist system led by a corrupt Liberal Democratic Party to don the mask of "reform," as it stirs up nationalism and guts the public sector.

Japan's rulers indicate that they have no plans to respond to the North Korean tests with a nuclear program of their own. Nonetheless, it is clear that the world's second largest capitalist economy could do so in a matter of months, should it choose to embark on such a path. Were Japan even to hint at nuclear weapons development, there is no telling how China or South

Korea, countries with searing memories of Japanese militarism, might react.

## U.S. SCRAMBLES

The biggest implications of the North Korean test are not limited to the region, however. The test illustrates again how the Bush administration's reckless militarism has weakened rather than strengthened U.S. imperialism's global reach. In the weeks following the test, the U.S. tried in vain to get backing from the United Nations Security Council for a set of strong sanctions but was stymied by Russia and China. It had even less success in mobilizing its "ally," South Korea, against the other Korean state.

China and South Korea are afraid that any serious pressure on North Korea could destabilize the region. Even without nuclear weapons, the North Korean regime could shell Seoul, which sits within easy range of artillery weapons, turning the South Korean capital into a fiery inferno.

Even without a military confrontation, the collapse of the regime from internal unrest could send millions of refugees into South Korea, which could be bankrupted from the expense of caring for them and aiding the North. They are well aware of the price that a far more prosperous Germany has had to pay for its peaceful unification with the East.

## BEIJING ANXIOUS

For its part, China fears instability of any kind in the region. A military confrontation could spin out of control. An internal rebellion in a neighboring one-party state could call into question the iron grip the Chinese Communist Party retains on political life. This threat looms at a time when the Party is losing legitimacy amid corruption scandals and a rising economic gap between the new magnates of capital and a restive working class.

China hopes that the market reforms it and South Korea are encouraging will gradually soften the stance of the North Korean regime toward the outside, while also raising the standard of living. This is unrealistic, if not illusory, for the North Korean regime has such a narrow base of support—it is not the product of a national revolution, as is the Chinese regime, but of a leadership installed by Russian occupation forces—that even small reforms could destabilize the system.

Another factor in the relatively mild U.S. response is that after Iraq, the people of the U.S., as well as large sectors of the dominant classes, stand opposed to any new U.S. military intervention.

In fact, the lead-up to the Iraq war contributed in no small way to North Korea's nuclear test. Having singled out Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the "Axis of Evil" in 2002, Bush followed that up with the invasion of Iraq the following year. This undoubtedly pushed both Iran and North Korea to speed up their nuclear programs.

In this sense, the sheer recklessness of U.S. militarism and the confrontational actions by its declared enemies, Iran and North Korea, feed on each other. The U.S. is so unpopular today that global public opinion, including that in other developed capitalist lands, has tended to give the totalitarian systems in Tehran

and Pyongyang a pass, while concentrating their criticism on the U.S.

We firmly oppose any U.S. intervention into the Korean peninsula. At the same time, we continue to point to the oppressive nature of the state-capitalist regime in North Korea, one that has not hesitated to starve its own people while directing all available resources toward the military and the narrow caste of military officers and party bureaucrats who exploit the working people of that country.

## Anti-sweatshop hunger strike

**WEST LAFAYETTE, IND.**—Students representing numerous Purdue organizations, including the Purdue Organization for Labor Equality, Amnesty International, the Purdue Alliance of Libertarian Socialists, and the Marxist-Humanist Network, are currently engaged in a hunger strike and camp-in until Purdue President Martin Jischke signs the Designated Suppliers Program (DSP). The DSP ensures that Purdue-logged apparel is made in factories which follow three basic guidelines:

1. Workers in these factories have the right to form a democratic union if they desire, or already have such a representative body.
2. Workers in these factories can bargain toward a living wage.
3. The Purdue Code of Conduct (which has already been approved) is followed.

For seven years Purdue students have been struggling to make Purdue a sweat-free campus. Over the course of the past year and a half, we have attempted to reach an agreement with the university, but have not received a positive response nor any concrete answers as to the university's problems with the DSP.

Purdue's apparel monitoring organization, the Workers Rights Consortium, has already endorsed the DSP. Some 30 peer universities, including Indiana University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have already adopted the DSP.

The hunger strike, which began Nov. 17, will continue until Purdue unequivocally accepts the DSP. Students have also been occupying various campus buildings 24 hours a day despite intense police harassment. The occupation will continue throughout the Thanksgiving holiday.

To help us:

1. Contact the Purdue Board of Trustees (trustees@purdue.edu, Tel: 765 494 9710, Fax: 765 496 7465), President Martin Jischke (mcjischke@purdue.edu, 765 494 9708), and Vice President of University Relations Joe Bennett (jbennett@purdue.edu, 765 494 2085).
2. Send letters of support to the strikers c/o purdue\_ole@yahoo.com and egcollective@rise.

—Supporters

## QUEER NOTES

In late September, 30 people from the National Union of Students LGBT campaign and Outrage!, two UK gay rights groups, protested at the Ugandan High Commission in London. They denounced the outing of 58 Ugandans, alleged to be lesbians and gay men, by the Ugandan tabloid *Red Pepper*. Uganda punishes male homosexuality by up to life imprisonment.

+++

Most LGBT high school students don't feel safe at school, according to "From Teasing to Torment," a report produced on behalf of GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. The Harris Interactive poll found that as many as 90% of LGBT students are harassed at school. This, despite 85% of teachers who feel they must keep such students safe, whether or not they have administration support.

+++

A lesbian has been granted custody of her child by the Georgia Court of Appeals. After Victoria Moses and Kelvin King split up, custody of their child had originally been granted to Moses, but after her same-sex partner moved in with her, a lower court granted King custody, even though he had served jail time for not paying child support for more than a year and a half.

## Capitalism's structural economic crisis

continued from page 4

commodity labor-power is saleable, but that labor-power appears in the shape of a commodity." (9)...

We must begin at the beginning, when Marx first projected, in the crucial, famous, irreversible French edition, 1872-75, the idea that the law of concentration and centralization of capital would reach its ultimate when "the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalist company" (p. 779)...

Far from "ownership" alone determining the class relationship, Marx, from his first break with bourgeois society in 1843, through his leadership in the Workingmen's (First) International Association in 1864, to his death in 1883, never varied from "dead labor dominating living labor" as the determinant of capitalism.

The point is that, even if one didn't wish to accept our analysis of state-capitalism as the total contradiction, absolute antagonism in which is concentrated nothing short of revolution, and counter-revolution, one would have to admit that the totality of the contradictions compels a total philosophic outlook.

Today's dialectics is not just philosophy, but dialectics of liberation, of self-emancipation by all forces of revolution—proletariat, Black, women, youth. The beginning and end of all revolves around labor.

Therein is the genius of Marx, who, though he wrote during a "free enterprise, private property, competitive capitalistic era," saw that, instead of plan vs. market chaos being the absolute opposites, the chaos in the market was, in fact, the expression of the hierarchic, despotic plan of capital at the point of production. "Materialism" without dialectics is "idealism," bourgeois idealism of the state-capitalist age. As I pointed out in my critique of Mandel's *Marxist Economic Theory*:

"No wonder that the bourgeois reviewers were so pleased with Mandel's view of the market mechanisms

acting as 'stabilizers.' Mandel wanted to synthesize the overproduction, underconsumption disproportionality theories of crises with Marx's, which is related strictly to the law of value and surplus value. But as Marx said of Proudhon, 'He wishes to be a synthesis, he is a composite error.'" (10)

## NOTES

1. Ernest Mandel's Introduction to the Pelican Marx Library edition of Vol. I of Marx's *Capital*, p. 16. All other references to the Introduction and to Vol. I will include the pagination directly in my text. [The Pelican edition corresponds to the Vintage edition, published in the U.S.]—RD.

2. See "True Rebirth" or Wholesale Revision of Marxism?" *News & Letters*, May and June-July, 1970.—RD.

3. "True Rebirth" or Wholesale Revision of Marxism?" *News & Letters*, May and June-July, 1970.

4. *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1977, "A Troubled World Economy."—RD.

5. Ernest Mandel, "A Hesitant, Uneven, and Inflationary Upturn," *Intercontinental Press*, Nov. 29, 1976.—RD.

6. See Jean-Paul Sartre's *Search for a Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), and *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1960). See also my critique "Jean-Paul Sartre: Outsider Looking In," Chapter 6, *Philosophy and Revolution* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973), pp. 188-210.—RD.

7. By no accident whatever, Mandel's half-sentence reference (p. 74) to the existence of the section on "Fetishism of Commodities" is in what could be called the sales section of his Introduction, "Marx's Theory of Money."—RD.

8. *Capital*, Vol. II (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 37.90. Karl Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1906), p. 228; *Collected Works*, 6:178.—RD.

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# Bush-Cheney setback while Iraq still bleeds

Continued from page 1

who defeated Republican and religious conservative Rick Santorum. These two men now join Nevada Harry Reid, who will serve as the Senate majority leader, as nationally powerful Democratic politicians who oppose the right to abortion.

Moreover in some cases it was not enough to simply oppose Bush's Iraq war to win the election. In two closely watched races, candidates who defined themselves by their position on the war failed to win. In Connecticut, Ned Lamont was unable to defeat incumbent Senator Joe Lieberman, despite having forced Lieberman to run as an independent by defeating him in a primary election for the Democratic nomination. In Illinois, disabled Iraq war veteran and Democratic candidate Tammy Duckworth was unable to win the seat in the House of Representatives left vacant by the retirement of the entrenched conservative Republican politician Henry Hyde.

The Iraq war, however, was the predominant issue in this election and its outcome will in all likelihood represent a turning point in how the U.S. will continue to conduct the war.

The first casualty of the Republican defeat was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld—perhaps the person most closely identified with the war after President Bush—was a major advocate of the invasion of Iraq as a response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. After he and his co-thinkers in the administration were successful in committing the U.S. to overthrowing Saddam Hussein, he forced military commanders to accept his vision of a relatively light commitment of troops to Iraq as integral to his effort to transform the armed forces through an emphasis on technology instead of the traditional heavy weapons systems developed for use against Russia. He managed to hold this line even as the anti-U.S. insurgency flared up and sectarian violence against Iraq's Shi'a majority became endemic. Along with Bush and Cheney, he is also heavily responsible for the close integration of torture into the U.S. war effort in places like the prisons at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

As the Bush administration's interpretation of events in Iraq diverged sharply from the reality of the situation on the ground, Rumsfeld became a focus of attention for critics. Democrats who had initially voted for the war found him to be a convenient target, and calling for his resignation became a respectable way for politicians of both parties to distance themselves from the President. Although Bush expressed support for Rumsfeld time after time, in the end it became clear that he was too much of a liability to keep around. The press conference in which Bush accepted Rumsfeld's resignation took place less than 24 hours after the day of the elections.

## THE WAR AFTER RUMSFELD

The war in Iraq is going so badly for the U.S. that well before the election, Bush was forced by events to consider a serious change in strategy. One means to such a maneuver is the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan committee of policy experts led by Republican Party fixer James Baker and former Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton. James Baker, an influential former Treasury Secretary as well as former Secretary of State close to the Bush family, was last prevailed upon to influence the Florida election re-count of 2000 for the Bush campaign. The fact that Bush's candidate to replace Rumsfeld, former CIA Director Robert Gates, is a member of this group indicates that it is no light-weight advisory body.

This group, which is scheduled to submit its recommendations to the President in early 2007, may offer him cover to undertake a change in direction in Iraq, perhaps involving even a reduction in the numbers of U.S. troops committed there. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, is also conducting an intensive reconsideration of U.S. operations.

Meanwhile, the war in Iraq drags on. The conflict there has a dual character: simultaneously an insurgency against the U.S. military and a bloody civil war between Sunni religious extremists and remnants of the old regime on one side and the Shi'a majority of Iraq, long oppressed by Saddam and despised by both elements of the insurgency, on the other.

## THE TORTURE PRESIDENT

This complicated reality gave Bush enormous latitude in manipulating the American public into tolerating the more than three-year-old war as part of the larger effort he and Cheney call the "war on terror," even to the point of virtually ignoring revelations about atrocities such as the Haditha massacre of November 2005 and the horrific rape and murder in March of 2006 of Abeer Qassim al-Janabi and her family. The relatively small number of American troops in Iraq and the relatively low number of U.S. fatalities allowed Bush to keep opponents of the war on the defensive.

Things changed, however, as the tempo of the civil war aspect of the conflict began to intensify after the February 2006 bombing of a revered Shi'a shrine in the

city of Samarra. The pace of outright sectarian murder picked up and Bush's claim that the Iraqi government represented the unified and democratic will of the people became difficult to maintain when it began to be clear that partisan Shi'a militias were conducting revenge operations from positions within powerful ministries of the government itself. The pressure that the U.S. exerted through Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to restrain the militias in turn caused resentment on the part of the Shi'a parties that the sectarian violence of the Sunni groups was being ignored by the Americans in the interest of holding the government together.

When the U.S. troops were recently ordered to impose a blockade on the large and impoverished Shi'a neighborhood known as Sadr City—a power base of influential cleric Moktada Sadr and his militia, the Madi Army—in an attempt to find a kidnapped soldier, a crisis developed. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki had to implore the U.S. to lift the oppressive blockade in order to prevent a rebellion by Sadr's political forces and a return to the period in 2004 when Sadr's militia



Opposition to the Iraq war grows, but the anti-war movement, above in Denver earlier in 2006, flounders.

twice fought pitched battles with U.S. troops. This prospect of open conflict between the Shi'a parties and the U.S. has always represented the greatest threat to the American undertaking in Iraq.

## ENTER RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES

With the exception of Moktada Sadr, the leaders of the Shi'a parties spent much of the period of Saddam's rule in exile in Iran or Syria and are as unknown to most of Iraq's population as the Western-oriented figures the U.S. hoped to install in the wake of the invasion. Their parties, however, have benefited from the solidification of sectarian identity throughout Iraq. The savage anti-Shi'a violence of the insurgency created an environment in which people look to the militias connected to the parties for protection.

The political dominance of the Shi'a parties resulting from the elections of 2005 has allowed them to impose their conservative religious agendas on Iraqi society at the same time as elements of their militias have begun to involve themselves in kidnapping for profit and other crimes. One of the biggest militias, the Madi Army, is said to be escaping from Moktada Sadr's control and disintegrating into small bands led by local strongmen.

The same thing is occurring on the other side of the sectarian divide. The Sunnis hate and fear the new Iraqi army and police and look to their armed groups for protection.

All of this is contributing to a situation in which, whatever the wishes of the Bush administration or the new Democratic Congressional majority, the U.S. is left with few options. Leaving the troops in place will result in more U.S. fatalities. Withdrawing support from the Shi'a parties and leaning towards an authoritarian figure will outrage the majority of the population. Simply removing the U.S. troops from Iraq may contribute to the hastening of a civil war reminiscent of Lebanon's recent past, with the possibility of Iran standing in for the role Syria played in that conflict.

## HUMAN TOLL OF WAR AND OCCUPATION

The impact on the ongoing American presence in Iraq is staggering. *The Lancet*, a highly regarded British medical journal, published a recent article that estimates there have been 654,965 "excess Iraqi deaths" since March 2003, over and above the pre-invasion mortality rate. The Iraqi Health Ministry cites a figure of between 100,000 to 150,000 deaths, but whatever the true number, the society of Iraq has been dev-

astated.

The U.S. never carried through with its promises of mass reconstruction aid and much of what money was spent was dissipated through corruption and lack of oversight. Now the Bush administration has not only halted all reconstruction efforts, but even plans to close down the office responsible for investigating the many instances of projects derailed by corruption.

Second only to the outright loss of life resulting from the sectarian attacks on civilians, has been the pervasive institutionalization of the sectarian religious divide between Shi'a and Sunni citizens of Iraq. Thousands of people have been driven from their homes in mixed neighborhoods into areas of exclusively one religious persuasion or the other. This divide—which was exacerbated by every action the U.S. took—has debilitated Iraq's future and heavily influenced the contours of politics in the Middle East for decades to come.

The sectarian gulf also has ominous implications for demands for an exit strategy of the U.S. Some politicians—like Democratic Senator Joseph Biden—and some commenta-

U.S. Ambassadors—former U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith among them—openly call for the partition of Iraq into three states as a solution to the crisis. This proposal to forcibly divide Iraq among Sunnis, Shi'as and Kurds would represent the worst possible end to the U.S. invasion and occupation by setting in stone the sectarian principle that the U.S. is responsible for intensifying. A

partition imposed by outside powers should be strongly opposed by all who seek to solidarize with the people of Iraq.

The outcome of the U.S. elections represents a rejection of much of what George W. Bush has achieved during the years of his administration. Without a doubt, a turning point in the Iraq war has been reached. Although pressure on President Bush to dramatically change course is likely to force him to commit to modifying his strategy, the reality is that he has little room to maneuver. Whatever he does, the dire situation of the population of Iraq—a situation caused by the U.S.—is not likely to change for the foreseeable future.

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## Repression in Oaxaca

Continued from page 1

program of struggle and government that will reclaim the aspirations of the great masses of people, with the end of conquering power and putting it at the service of all."

Marcos Leyva, one of the "provisional leaders," characterized the movement as a "gestating unarmed revolution." He continued, "The people have demonstrated that they can carry out a struggle in the streets, at the barricades, with the government forces, but also with a set of ideas, and concrete proposals."

—Mitch Weerth

Go to page 12 for more "Our Life and Times"

## NEWS & LETTERS

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## Array of influences remain after Israel's fiasco in southern Lebanon

Israel's invasion of Lebanon last summer will have a lasting impact not only on the Middle East but also on the world. Hezbollah is not only becoming the main power in Lebanon, but the war has also made the Iranian government into a major power in the region.

Today Pan-Arabism has been transformed into Pan-Islamism. What were once Soviet-backed Arab interests versus U.S.-backed Israel has been replaced by a regional power play between the U.S. and Iran, superimposed upon the Arab-Israeli conflict

### NATIONALISM OR ISLAMISM

Alex Callinicos, a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers Party and professor of European Studies of King's College London, stated recently in an interview with Ardeshir Mehrdad of *Iran Bulletin* (9/18/06):

"What we have seen across the whole region is a process in which the leadership of resistance to U.S. imperialism and Israel has passed from secular nationalisms and the Left to the Islamists. This process began with the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79, but we have seen some very important developments in the past few months, notably with Hamas's defeat of Fatah in the elections to the Palestine Authority and the enormous acclaim that Hezbollah and its leader Nasrallah have received through the region for their resistance to the Israel Defense Forces... It is a historic shift that is a consequence of the political failure of secular nationalists and the Left."

Callinicos views Hezbollah and the Iranian regime as bourgeois nationalists. He claims, "it is of the essence of bourgeois nationalists that, when imperialism prevents them from building their own independent capitalist state, they may lead struggles against it, but they are striving to carve out a place for themselves within the existing system, not to overthrow it."

This means that sooner or later the Islamists will come to terms with imperialism, just like Nasser, Gandhi and Mandela. According to Callinicos, anti-imperialist Mandelism according to the ideology of an actual or aspirant capitalist class that finds the way to its own independent state blocked by imperialism and therefore mobilizes the masses to break down this obstacle. However, the situation today is very different from how Callinicos describes it.

### ANTI-IMPERIALIST ROLE?

The ultra-nationalism of Ayatollah Khomeini was different from the bourgeois nationalism of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, whose government was overthrown by the CIA in 1953. Constitutionally, the leadership of the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader (vali-faghih) is defined as the head of the Islamic revolution, and the Revolutionary Guards are described as the army of this revolution. But there are different views among Islamic thinkers and even among Islamic fundamentalists over these matters.

Islamic movements (religious and/or ethnic ultra-conservative) do they have an important role in the secularists and leftists in resistance struggles against the U.S. imperialist assault, which is a result of the political defeats suffered by secular nationalist, socialist and communist movements. Yet today's Islamic movements have serious internal defects. Iran's fundamentalists cannot and will not mobilize revolutionary social forces in a movement against imperialism. If there are illusions in parts of the Middle East about the role of a future Islamic government, there are no such illusions among the Iranian people.

In Iran we are seeing a new wave of protests and struggles by workers, students, women and the oppressed nations, ethnic groups and religious minorities. These protests against the ruling power are for freedom, democracy and equality. Akbar Ganji, an Iranian political prisoner who a few months ago was released from prison and recently came to the U.S., stated in a speech at Northwestern University that if there were democratic elections in all countries of the Middle East, Islamic factions would win almost all of them except in Iran. I fully agree.

After Israel's war in Lebanon, we need a broad international consensus for a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, which has been blocked by the U.S. Israel, and many Arab regimes as well as the Iranian government, for the last 30 years.

### ABSENCE OF SECULARISTS, LEFT

One thing is certain: In the battle between Islamic fundamentalists and U.S. and Israeli imperialism, progressive movements will pay the price if the Left and those who are for freedom do not recognize the dangers of these counter-revolutionary forces. The Islamic regime of Iran tries to mobilize movements on the basis of an anti-Western ideology opposed to U.S. and Israeli imperialism. The Islamic regime tries to mobilize these movements for their own benefit.

We need to establish a third alternative against war between these two forces of imperialism and fundamentalism. We need to oppose the reactionary Islamic fundamentalists, the Islamic rulers, the reactionary Israeli regime, and a U.S. intervention in the Middle East. We are for and two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. We need to welcome dialogue among Muslims and Jews who oppose fundamentalism.

At the same time, we need to know what kinds of movements are in the Middle East. Four groups stand out: 1) nationalist movements of the oppressed nations and ethnic groups (Arabs, Baluchi and Azari in Iran, Turkman in Iraq and Iran, Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran); 2) secular anti-dictatorial and democratic movements for freedom and equality (with growing roots among women, students, intellectuals, religious minorities); 3) anti-capitalist movements fighting against neo-liberal policies, with an expanding social base among urban and rural working people; 4) Islamic

fundamentalist movements.

Not all Islamic fundamentalists are the same. Hezbollah is reactionary, but it is not the same as the Iranian regime, and Shia fundamentalists are not the same as the Sunni Al Qaeda. It is vital for us to pay

attention to these differences in formulating principles.

The regime in Iran would like nothing more than to own the Palestinian issue, because with it they think they can unite all Moslems. Palestinian secular organizations like the PLO are losing influence among the Palestinian masses and have been replaced by Islamic fundamentalist movements such as Hamas or Hezbollah. These two groups are reactionary, but they are also different than Al Qaeda.

Hamas and Hezbollah have mass support rooted in



Destruction in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion in August.

## Roe v. Wade... v. 'Roe'

Norma McCorvey was the plaintiff in *Roe vs. Wade* because she had been unable to get an abortion for her third pregnancy at age 21. She told her story in her first autobiography, *I Am Roe*, written with Andy Meisler. She described herself as a "rough, simple woman" who had addictions, anger, and trouble dealing with people. She was made a spokesperson for the pro-choice movement and given a job at an abortion clinic.

Her second autobiography, *Won by Love*, which supposedly provides an insider's view of feminism and the conversion to "industry," describes her conversion to anti-choice fundamentalism. It becomes clear that the well-written commentary on the need for abortion rights in her first book was written by Meisler because her second book depicts grotesque inaccuracies about abortion clinics.

We are expected to believe in blood on walls, sleazy barefoot doctors, and fetuses "stacked like cordwood." Abortion clinic staffers are depicted as using drugs and alcohol to deal with the supposed horror of what they are doing, as well as giving cocaine to patients.

Patients are described as impulsive, over-emotional women who would benefit from a 24-hour waiting period so that they can think about anti-abortion propaganda. During a time when clinics are forced to close due to ridiculous legal restrictions, McCorvey tells us that the clinics have fewer restrictions than veterinary clinics. Abortion providers and catfighting feminists are depicted as not caring about the safety of abortion.

Most shocking of all is McCorvey's explanation of the purpose of our fight for abortion rights, not for control over our own bodies and the course of our lives and not to sometimes save our lives or our health, but for people to have "less taxes," "pursue their careers with abandon," and "live together and break up without the worry of who gets saddled with custody." She describes herself as the former "enemy of children" and thinks that we want a "quiet world" with no children.

Even though this book was written several years ago, it is still relevant. That's because Operation Save America and other anti-choice groups trot out McCorvey to give speeches at rallies and events. The mainstream media take what she says at face value, so it's important for us to know the facts.

—Adele

the everyday activity of local communities of poor Arabs. Al Qaeda does not have such a base. Hamas and Hezbollah are not defined by being strictly anti-U.S., as is Al Qaeda. Hassan Fadlallah, Hezbollah's spiritual leader, condemned the September 11 attacks as un-Islamic, refusing to call the hijackers "martyrs." He maintained that they committed suicide while murdering innocents (both are forbidden by Islam).

Yet the U.S. added Hezbollah to its terrorist list in 2004. Why? Because in that year Iran sent Hezbollah 12,000 rockets. The conflict between the U.S. and Iran is mainly for power. Under Bush, U.S. policy on terrorism is similar to Al Qaeda's jihad. Both sides believe that they are fighting a global war. This is different than Hezbollah and Hamas, whose missions are specific and localized.

### WHOSE DEMOCRACY?

Some Islamic thinkers, like Reza Aslan, author of *No God but God*, claims that the experience of colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries forced the entire Muslim community to reconsider the role of faith in modern society. Some Muslims pushed for the creation of an indigenous Islamic enlightenment and sought to develop Islamic alternatives to the Western secular notion of democracy. Others advocated a separation from Western cultural ideas and voted for complete "Islamization" of society.

Today there is a battle between Islam and democracy, between fundamentalism and Islamic reformation. There is a clash between those Muslims who try to reconcile their religious values with the realities of the modern world and those who reject the modern world. In Iraq, attacks between Moslems have caused more casualties than attacks against the occupying U.S. Army.

The radical Islamists have tried to create a language, a religious language, to describe the objective world. The human being becomes a slave of God and the religious imam. Ayatollah Khomeini conveyed the notion that to unite the objective world with the subjective human world, we need the mediation of the state, an Islamic state. These radical Islamists are part of the capitalist era and they seek money and power. They are also corrupt. There is no question that they are capitalist.

The Left in the Middle East today is starting to lose its identity. In the past progressive forces were crippled by left Stalinist ideology. Now in the absence of an alternative, the Left is shrinking. Most former Iranian socialist activists today are for the free market economy and have become social democrats while rejecting Marxism. It is no wonder that they are uncritically supporting Akbar Ganji.

Even though we cannot deny Ganji's courage in struggling against the Iranian Islamic regime, we need also to oppose Ganji's idea that a free market economy and open democracy are inseparable. Yet those who are for socialism need to do better than just only reject Mr. Ganji. In order to oppose religious fundamentalism and imperialism and struggle for new human society, we need to have a humanist alternative, starting with an alternative to capitalism.

—Ali Reza

## McKibben's ecologism sticks with system

MEMPHIS, TENN.—The growing awareness of the crisis posed by global warming was reflected here in recent events such as special screenings of Al Gore's movie *An Inconvenient Truth* and a lecture by environmentalist Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*. Over 200 came to the lecture, which began with a description of some of the latest scientific findings showing that the catastrophic effects of climate change are likely worse than thought and can deepen abruptly, and the time to act is short.

Both the lecture and the movie evoked alarm, which environmentalists are trying to turn into organizing, including a growing student movement around climate change that McKibben promoted. At the same time, we are faced with how puny undertakings like the Kyoto Protocol are how puny undertakings like the problem is. Already in 1995 McKibben had pointed out that technological and legal changes are not enough. Nothing less than a change in "civilization's basic momentum" would suffice.

But his conception of the needed fundamental change in social relations was so limited that he ended up posing the basic problem as an ideology of "hyper-individualism," and the solution as building community, for which he saw local economy as crucial, such as farmers' markets vs. supermarkets. Left untouched in McKibben's vision, as well as in Gore's untouched for fixing carbon emissions, is the capitalist nature of this society. How can civilization's momentum be sufficiently altered without touching capitalism's basic momentum of ever-increasing production for production's sake?

Activists generally agree that Gore's movie is a great way to get the word out. For this movement to be able to attack global warming on a global scale, we need to challenge the ideology implicit in both Gore's and McKibben's work—not "hyper-individualism," but "there is no alternative to capitalism."

—Franklin Dmitryev

## OUR LIFE AND TIMES

by Kevin A. Barry and Mitch Weerth

On Nov. 7, the Israeli military took advantage of the fact that the world media was focused on the U.S. elections to commit one of its dirtiest deeds. As it has done

### Nicaragua elections

FSLN leader Daniel Ortega, president of Nicaragua from 1985 to 1990, won the Nov. 5 presidential election with slightly more than 38% of the vote. He assumes power Jan. 10. The rightist Eduardo Montealegre of the Alianza Liberal Nicaraguense, favored by the U.S., came in second with 29%. Montealegre promised continuity with the Enrique Bolanos administration, also supported by the U.S., which has done nothing but worsen Nicaragua's poverty in the past five years, due in no small part to the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

The country's elite was unable to unite behind a single candidate which, along with the recent change to the electoral law designed by Ortega that allows victory with only 35% of the vote, enabled Ortega to win.

Oliver North was in Nicaragua in October to try to bolster Montealegre's case, and the U.S. ambassador Paul Trivelli warned of sanctions if Ortega won. The Bush administration was furious that Hugo Chavez was "meddling" in another country's elections when he came out in favor of Ortega and sold fuel and fertilizer earlier this year to Nicaragua at reduced rates. Montealegre's campaign made every effort to scare people into believing that Ortega would take the country back to the days of the civil war. That war, created by Reagan and North, "meddlers" who created the Contra army, cost the tiny country some 30,000 lives.

Ortega insists he is no Marxist and poses no threat to CAFTA, free trade, and private property. He means it. He speaks now only in general terms about aiding the poor, much as any politician in an impoverished nation does. His latest unconscionable about-face came in the weeks before the election when he bowed down to the Catholic Church and supported the legislature's total ban on abortions. For the past century legal abortion was possible only if three doctors certified that the mother's life was at risk. That meager protection has now been jettisoned by the Church in alliance with Ortega, who in the 1980s supported abortion rights.

### Authoritarian Russia

Russia under Vladimir Putin continues its slide toward authoritarianism. In October, the prominent journalist Anna Politkovskaya was assassinated. A reporter for *Novaya Gazeta*, Politkovskaya was the only journalist who regularly reported from Chechnya on the Russian occupation. At the time of her death, Politkovskaya was about to publish an article about the forced confessions and murders that form part of what Putin calls his "war on terror."

Although hundreds attended Politkovskaya's funeral, the mood was somber. Like other independent intellectuals and activists, Politkovskaya had been receiving death threats on reactionary nationalist internet sites. The government also harasses critics, as in the arrests last July of many of those traveling to a conference on "The Other Russia" held on the eve of the G-8 Summit in Moscow.

Violent attacks on ethnic minorities have escalated as well. In September a pogrom took place in the town of Kondopoga, in the Karelia district. After a fight in a bar between ethnic Russians and immigrants from the Caucasus in which two Russians died, Russian mobs gathered, ordering all "blacks" to leave town within 24 hours. Violent rioting then commenced, in which young neo-Nazis from out of the area also participated. Police waited three days to intervene.

## Israel lobby and the massacres in Gaza

so many times since June, it sent shells into a populated area of Beit Hanun on the Gaza Strip. This time, it killed 18 Palestinian civilians, six of them children and eight of them women. The stated reason was to respond to a rocket from somewhere in the area that had landed harmlessly in Israel.

Since June 25, when militants from the fundamentalist Hamas movement captured an Israeli soldier, Israel has engaged in the collective punishment of Gaza, itself a war crime. Some 350 Palestinians have been killed, 70 of them in a single week during November. During the same period, rockets fired by Palestinian militants have killed five Israelis. For this reason, the UN Security Council considered a resolution condemning Israel's "disproportionate" use of force, but the U.S. predictably vetoed it.

The totally uncritical support that the U.S. gives to Israel has led to some new debates since the publication last March of an essay, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," by conservatives John Mearsheimer

administrations since 1959. The all-too-conventional wisdom holds that this is due to the voting power of the exile establishment in Miami and that establishment is itself encouraged to nourish the illusion of determinant influence. But the notorious Cuban American National Foundation has only won its degree of access to Washington power in the context of official concerns about the spread of the revolutionary contagion throughout Latin America, undermining U.S. hegemony over the western hemisphere. The Miami establishment has proven its usefulness in providing a political support base for counter-revolutionary intrigues and a pool of terrorists which the CIA has tapped not only against Fidel Castro's regime but also against revolutionary Nicaragua in the 1980s. The notion that decisions of global strategic import are made to appease sectors of the domestic electorate is an illusion which those sectors are allowed to cultivate to ensure their loyalty and usefulness as proxies."



Israel's shelling of Gaza, Nov. 7, left 18 Palestinians dead, as well as many injured and maimed.

and Stephen Walt. Some leftist intellectuals have supported their critique.

But as a detailed analysis by William X in the autonomist *World War 4 Report* shows, although it may be true that its leaders misperceive U.S. imperial interests, the Mearsheimer-Walt thesis amounts to "the unlikely position of a client state seizing control of imperial policy" <<http://ww4report.com/node/2709>>. (Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* propagates similar distortions but casts its blame on the Saudi Arabian rather than the Israel lobby.)

William X continued: "The unlikely proposition of a client state seizing control of imperial policy is taken as a fait accompli. The possibility does not even seem to have occurred to them that U.S. elites—even if in a counter-productive strategic blunder—have perceived a convergence of U.S. imperial and Israeli national interests at this juncture or perceived a unique usefulness of Israel as a regional proxy. Maintaining a regional proxy (which implies a more nuanced relationship than that between the imperial center and outright puppets, such as the Cold War military dictatorships of Central America) means granting a certain degree of access to imperial power and decision-making. It does not mean a surrender of power and decision-making.

"Even in cases where the privileged clients have nowhere near the degree of access to power that Israel's ideological agents have been granted in the current administration, this error has often been evidenced. U.S. policy on Cuba has remained essentially unchanged through both Democratic and Republican

### International Trade Union Confederation

On Nov. 1, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) was founded in Vienna, an event utterly ignored by U.S. media. With 168 million members, the ITUC results from the merger of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICTFU) with several other international and national union groupings. Among the latter are the Christian-oriented World Confederation of Labor (WCL) and France's left-leaning General Confederation of Labor (CGT). One major union confederation, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), originally based in the former Soviet bloc and now quite reduced in size, has opted not to merge with the ITUC.

To be sure, the ITUC was formed in a top-down manner by labor bureaucrats without any serious discussion among rank-and-file workers. It also takes at best a social democratic stance. As a Brazilian labor leader stated, the ITUC "does not really stand up for workers, especially in developing countries, against capital."

Nonetheless, the ITUC is a step forward in that it proposes to unite labor on a global level against an increasingly globalized capitalism. In a nod to the anti-globalization movement, the ITUC's Emilio Gabaglio said it would strive to "make trade unionism the most important NGO on the planet." ITUC President Sharon Burrow has called for a "global day of action" on the part of international labor.

### 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*.