

WORKSHOP TALKS

Katrina's real culprits scapegoated victims

By Htun Lin

A year ago, Louisiana's attorney general charged a highly respected doctor and two nurses with murder in the deaths of four patients at Memorial Medical Center in New Orleans during evacuations after Hurricane Katrina. This moral grandstanding by a bourgeois official is reminiscent of the Terri Schiavo case.

A few weeks ago all three were cleared by a grand jury. The case continues to resonate with those of us who face crises everyday in the health care work place because of capitalism's neglect.

Dr. Anna Pou had been practicing medicine for more than 15 years. As Katrina approached, Dr. Pou headed to Memorial, where she was on call. After the storm passed on Monday, she was offered the chance to leave but chose to stay with her patients.

By late Tuesday, the hospital was flooded with ten feet of water and completely without power. Ventilators stopped, there was no telephone service and limited food, all in 110 degree heat. Patients lay soaking amidst squalor. Nurses broke the windows for air.

The seventh floor was most critical. A separate company called Lifecare ran a facility there for the severely ill. Their doctors didn't show—health care subcontractors in business to milk Medicare dollars are often willing to hire untrained, unqualified and unmotivated staff. But Dr. Pou and a handful of other doctors and nurses did what they could.

By nightfall Wednesday, Memorial was a hellhole. The hospital had become a death trap. By Thursday morning, another ten patients were dead. Then word spread that no organized rescue would be coming. Dr. Pou called these "battlefield conditions"—except that on an actual battlefield, the military brags about all the wounded being evacuated and treated promptly.

Dr. Pou and her nurses provided comfort care and medicine to alleviate suffering for all their patients, including the four cited in the legal case. Dr. Pou says, "I did the best I could under these dreadful conditions"

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Labor unrest and economic distress impact U.S. politics

By Peter Hudis

The decision by leaders of the United Auto Workers to call off its strike in late September against General Motors after only 41 hours has deepened the divide between UAW leaders and rank-and-file workers. Although the strike was initially impelled by growing discontent with shrinking benefits and worsening working conditions, the UAW accepted GM's demand for a two-tier wage structure and to make the union, instead of the company, responsible for the retirees' health care.

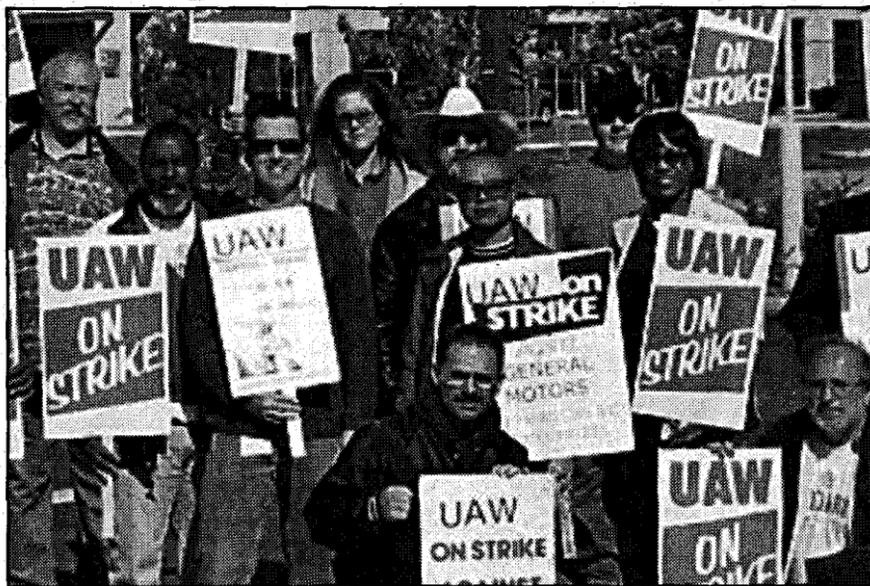
In opposing these concessions, many UAW members are pointing out that the settlement failed to include any explicit commitment by GM to continue to build cars and trucks in U.S. factories. The "two worlds" that separate rank-and-file workers and their "leadership" has become wider than ever.

LABOR AND THE FIGHT FOR HEALTH CARE

Global competition is forcing a fundamental transformation in the entire U.S. automobile industry. Ford plans to close 16 of its 41 North American plants by 2012. GM's market share is shrinking so fast that it will soon be surpassed by Toyota. Chrysler has been sold to a private investment group for a fifth what Daimler paid for it a decade ago.

The problem isn't one of productivity; U.S. autoworkers remain among the world's most productive. Ford's Wixom plant was voted the most productive U.S. auto factory in June; a week later Ford announced it was closing the plant.

Nor is the problem a lack of car sales. The problem is



Members of UAW on strike—one cut short by concessions from union leaders.

global competition. Remarkably, the UAW has failed to unionize a single one of the many Japanese-owned auto factories that have operated for decades in the U.S. This has given firms like Toyota and Honda, which provide lower wages and benefits, a competitive advantage over U.S.-owned firms.

The auto companies are using global competition as an excuse to gut hard-fought for health benefits. The UAW has responded by agreeing to the demand for a health care trust run by the union. Under this "voluntary employee benefit association," or VEBA, the UAW will take responsibility for managing \$51 billion in GM's health care liabilities. Once Ford and Chrysler sign onto the same deal, the total will be \$100 billion.

About 70% of VEBA will be financed by contributions from the auto companies in the form of cash, stocks, and real estate—at a moment when many economists predict that real estate prices may contract by at least 20% nationwide in the coming period.

By shifting the responsibility for health benefits onto the UAW, the auto companies will be able to write tens of billions of dollars in liabilities off their books—while workers' health benefits will be subjected as never before to the vagaries of the "free" market.

This has elicited howls of protests from workers. Many argue that a quarter of a million UAW members will be asked to surrender future pay raises to finance the trust. Moreover, close to half a million retirees would have to pay a greater percentage of their medical costs by themselves.

A similar union-controlled trust for handling medical liabilities was set up at Caterpillar in 1998 and went bankrupt in 2005, leading to lower health benefits and pensions for most employees.

CRISIS IN PROFITABILITY

The crisis in employee health care has been long in coming. UAW leaders like Walter Reuther didn't only capitulate to capital after World War II by giving the companies control over production in exchange for higher wages. At the time many U.S. workers demanded a single-payer health care system funded by the government. When Congress and President Truman objected, Reuther and other union leaders capitulated and accepted the system of employee-based health care. The availability of health care was made contingent on corporate profitability instead of being treated as a public good.

Now that U.S. capital is feeling the brunt of a long-term crisis of profitability, it is trying to gut the health benefits that many union leaders took for granted.

It is striking that none of the major aspirants for president, including the Democrats, support a single-payer system that shifts the funding of health care away from private insurers and employers by providing universal health care through the expansion of existing programs like Medicare. A single-payer system does not necessarily mean that the government owns hospitals and medical facilities; it simply means that the government funds facilities that may continue to be privately owned. Yet even that is considered too radical for Bush's Democratic Party critics!

This reflects an objective crisis. As we wrote in the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives for 2007-2008, "Since the mid-1970s, it has become clear that welfare state policies conflict with the expansionary requirements of capitalist value production. This has eliminated the

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BLACK/RED VIEW

By John Alan

I am turning my column this issue over to two reports from participants in the protest in Jena, Louisiana, against the railroading of six Black youth who have fought racial injustice in that city—John Alan.

MEMPHIS, TENN.—Five busloads of us boarded here Sept. 19. We all had on black and white t-shirts that said, "Memphis supports the Jena 6." When we got to Jena on Sept. 20, it was so congested we couldn't park. The streets were completely filled with marchers—so thick, there was barely a place to put one foot in front of the other. The media said there were 15,000 to 20,000 people there. But I would say anywhere from 50,000 to 150,000 descended on the city.

We feel the six boys have been mistreated by the criminal justice system simply because they're Black. Where are the charges against the boys with the nooses? That was a hate crime. It ought to be punishable under federal law. The Attorney General of Louisiana appeared on TV and said that because they're underage they don't want to charge them. But the Jena 6 were underage; why did you charge them as adults?

The march had a spirit of unity, peace and nonviolence. Everybody was saying, as Black people we have had enough of our young men being put in jail and

Protest in Jena shines light on racism in the U.S.

serving harsher sentences. Our presence in Jena was a signal to America that enough is just enough. Many of the marchers had on black t-shirts saying, "We support the Jena 6," or "Enough is enough." We were saying we will be back if this situation is not worked out. We feel that our march and rally in Jena shines a light on racism in America that it is happening in cities all over America, not just in Jena, La.

When we got to City Hall, the crowd was so huge you couldn't hear everything that was said on stage. A few people were passing out from the heat. In front of City Hall they had maybe 15 to 20 port-a-potties, with 20 to 30 people standing in front of each. There was no toilet paper in the one I went in. The temperature inside had to be 115 degrees.

The whole town was closed down, even McDonald's, and they had plastic matting all the way around the front. To us it was a signal saying, "We don't want to serve you today." In a white residential area there was a man riding his lawn mower with his gun just like in "Gunsmoke." The police didn't line our parade route, but there were a whole lot of police behind the platform where the speakers were. They also had a SWAT team. Some of the marchers said there was a team up on the roof with rifles. But there were no incidents.

There were about 35 high school students from all across Memphis who went with us. Many of them said this trip changed their lives forever, that they had seen films of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. but had never had opportunities to participate in the civil rights movement. They said that they did not know that racism was this bad in America and that this incident with the Jena 6 woke them up and let them know that racism is prevalent in our society. Some of the students said that they felt that the Jena 6 were their brothers.

I never thought that I could do all that walking, because I am overweight, and it was very tiring, but I'm glad that I was able physically and mentally to do it. Back in the 1960s, I was 14 or 15 years old when

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Abortion debate intensifies

By Terry Moon

The fanatical assault against Planned Parenthood (PP) in Aurora, Ill. (see article this page), is the latest in a seemingly endless attack on women's right to control our own bodies. In fact the reason PP applied for their building permit under a different name was because of experiences like the one in Texas in January of this year, where zealot Chris Danza, using intimidation, forced local contractors working on a PP clinic—one that was not going to be providing abortion services—to pull out of the project. The main contractor could no longer hire local plumbers, carpenters, drywall installers, etc., who had been threatened by Danza: "Any contractor that shows up will get a call from us and about a thousand other people."

ENDLESS RETROGRESSION

One reaction to this endless retrogression has been the attempt by segments of the abortion rights movement to frame the debate differently as if the problem is how the debate on abortion is constructed. The international women's rights group MADRE suggested linking abortion rights "to social and economic rights" and "expand our understanding of 'women's issues,'" to include "international peace and security, indigenous cultural survival." A more recent example is from the Center for American Progress (CFAP), a nonpartisan research and educational institute that presents what they call "a vision for reproductive health and rights that seeks to broaden the current discourse beyond the stagnant abortion debate and that can be integrated into a larger progressive agenda."

There is nothing new in what the CFAP or MADRE are proposing. It is the usual: "the ability to determine whether or when to have children; the ability to have a healthy pregnancy; the ability to have healthy and safe families and relationships," etc. CFAP sees "a unique opportunity to redefine the very terms of the debate over reproductive and sexual rights by re-establishing the context in which decisions about pregnancy are made, connecting support for reproductive rights with broader progressive values...."

But is the problem that those fighting for reproductive justice have to "broaden" or "expand" their dis-

War affects women and families

There are political, personal and economic effects of this war in Iraq that specifically and powerfully affect women and families. War does not just affect the primarily male fighting forces. The violence and chaos of this war ruins the lives of women, both internationally and domestically, while such consequences are often overlooked by those waging war, and the media who cover it. This is a particularly tragic position for women who are often excluded from decision-making and peace-making processes.

- Displaced persons and refugees are often the forgotten casualties of war. The fact that worldwide the majority of refugees are women with their dependent children contributes to this neglect. Refugee women must try to support themselves and their children in the face of discrimination in the communities where they have taken refuge: as women, because of nationality or ethnicity, and as refugees.

- While waging war is still thought of as a man's job, rebuilding families and lives once the war has ended is often left to poor and traumatized women.

- When men return from the atrocities of war, wives, mothers and children must witness and endure the long term emotional and mental consequences of their experiences.

Most sources state the rate of domestic violence in military couples is between three and five times the rate of non-military couples. These statistics often do not include military spouses who live off-post, as a reported 60% do, as these instances are often reported to local authorities or DV shelters and do not show up in military statistics.

Male vets who have been in combat (a relatively small subset of all veterans) are more than four times as likely as other men to have engaged in domestic violence.

- Women enlisted in the U.S. military are more likely to experience physical, emotional, and specifically sexual abuse during their service.

- Our government claims to be helping women internationally with our military efforts. The U.S. has shown no real commitment to helping these women once their political goals have been achieved. Afghanistan is the perfect example. The ability of Afghan women to gain even a minimal amount of freedom is being severely hampered by the U.S.'s support of the warlords, by a repressive male-dominated culture, and by the hold that fundamentalist ideas have on the countryside. Every marker that showed progress is now moving in a backward direction. Horrors are appearing that are new on the Afghan landscape and the U.S. and NATO appear powerless to turn back the reaction.

—Anna, Women's Action Coalition of Memphis

course? Strangely enough, the fanatical Right does recognize just how broad the question of abortion is, which is why their attack against it is so relentless.

In Aurora, there have been revealing slurs from anti-abortion fanatics: Rev. Dan Hoehn said of the documented demand in the area for reproductive health services: "There is a demand for pornography in Aurora. There is a demand for heroin. Just because a demand exists does not oblige the council." Aurora resident Jeff Budill said of PP: "They are no different than drug dealers that push drugs in our schools. They push sexual pleasure." These complaints are less about abortion than they are about the desire to control women's sexuality; and both conflate sex with drug abuse, as if it is an addiction.

The protest against the clinic in Aurora is spearheaded by Eric Scheidler, son of extremist Joseph Scheidler, head of the Pro-Life Action League, which last year sponsored a conference called "Contraception is Not the Answer." J. Scheidler's twisted thoughts were revealed in his statement that "contraception is more the root cause of abortion than anything." The recent Supreme Court decision that upheld the outlawing of a late-term abortion procedure reveals the notion that women are incapable of making decisions about our own bodies, stating that women who have abortions "regret their choices," and suffer from "severe depression and loss of esteem." In fact almost every barrier that the anti-abortion fanatics have created—parental consent laws, unnecessary waiting periods, mandatory scripts required of doctors that lie about the consequences of abortion, and the escalating attack on contraceptives—reveal the attitude that women are less than human, that their sexuality, especially young women's sexuality, must be controlled by others.

RIGHT'S DESIRE TO CONTROL

Implicit in the Right's struggle to outlaw abortion in all cases, is their desire to control and define what a woman is, or, at the very least, what she should be—including what she should think. If they can command what we do with our own bodies, if they can force a woman to have a child she does not want or carry a fetus to term regardless of the hazard to her health, they are well on their way to carrying out their full agenda of imposing their fundamentalist, anti-human, pro-capitalist agenda. While the struggle for abortion rights may appear as an argument over when life begins, or women's "choice," in actuality it is a struggle about freedom and self-determination. That is the underlying meaning of the intensity of the struggles bringing religious and non-religious together against the Right in Aurora.

It isn't that those fighting for the right to abortion need to "broaden the current discourse," but to articulate just exactly what the right to control our own bodies—which is what abortion rights is about—means. If we can do that, then the implicit revolutionary nature of the struggle will become explicit.

WOMEN WORLDWIDE

By Mary Jo Grey

Sixty-two years after the end of WWII, the Japanese Supreme Court acknowledged that women had been kidnapped and coerced into sex slavery by the Japanese military during the war, yet the government still rejects claims by victims for compensation. But they were not alone in perpetuating this barbarism. After the war, with approval from the U.S. occupation authorities, Japan set up a similar "comfort women" system in which tens of thousands of women were forced to provide sex to U.S. troops.

Nuns in Santa Barbara, Cal. are being evicted to help pay a \$660 million settlement to the victims of sex abuse by priests the Catholic Church has been protecting for decades. The Los Angeles Archdiocese is selling their convent, which has housed the order of nuns for more than 40 years. "The pain is being spread around," said an archdiocese spokesman. The nuns will be forced to move by the end of the year, although an earlier departure "would be acceptable," said the archdiocese vicar general. "What hurts the most," said Sr. Angela Escalera, the order's local superior, "is what the money would be used for—to help pay for the pedophile priests. We have to sacrifice our home for that?" She said that the sisters have been overwhelmed by offers of help from the community.

Aurora clinic opens!

(As we go to press, the Aurora City Council granted an occupancy permit to the Aurora Planned Parenthood Clinic after Kane County state's attorneys said there was no fraud involved in getting the building permit. Anti-choice fanatics vowed to continue their attacks.)

CHICAGO—Women in the rapidly-growing western suburbs of Chicago have been denied access to affordable health care after U.S. District Judge Charles Norgle, on Sept. 20, turned down Planned Parenthood's request for an emergency court order allowing it to open its new health care center in Aurora after the city council questioned the legality of its building permit.

The council had previously approved construction of the clinic, one of the largest in the country—knowing it was Planned Parenthood—and granted it a temporary occupancy permit in August.

Anti-abortion protesters descended on the town with their misogynist rhetoric. Council then backed down from their original approval after political pressure from the protesters.

But the clinic is not without a growing number of supporters. Pro-choice advocates crowded Planned Parenthood's website (www.aurora-plannedparenthood.org) to put their names on rib-

bons being displayed outside the new center. Religious leaders from throughout the Chicago area organized a day of prayer in support of the clinic. They said they wanted to reclaim the moral mantle from the anti-abortion opposition. They felt that ensuring women's access to health care, including abortions, is consistent with the lessons of their faith.

According to the Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, "The religious Right believes they have heard the voice of God, and they try to impose their hearing of it on the rest of us by law. But there are many women of faith who have heard a different voice of God when they prayed."

Even the not-always-progressive *Chicago Sun-Times* published a three-quarter page editorial titled: "Let the Aurora Clinic Open: Many Women Need Its Reproductive Services." They point out that at least 60,000 young adult women in the Chicago area seek Planned Parenthood services each year. Quality health care and access to abortion must not be limited to people who can afford it in the privacy of their family doctor's office. Girls and women in Aurora deserve access to a range of reproductive health services.

Chicago Area Planned Parenthood President Steve Trombley reiterated that their "main concern is that every day the health center is not open, more women go without pap tests, birth control supplies, breast exams and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. These are critical services that this community has been lacking and that we will provide. We anticipate being back in court shortly," Trombley said.

—MJG

Full Frontal Feminism

Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters, by Jessica Valenti (Seal Press, Emeryville, Cal., 2007)

Jessica Valenti, who writes the blog "Feministing.com," wrote this book to get young women as excited as she is about feminism. She wants to make them realize that they are already feminists by pointing out that they hate sexism, by dispelling the usual myths about feminists (and including a brief history of the movement), and by educating them about the many problems women still face.

She wisely starts by discussing women's sexuality, first in regard to how the religious Right tries to stifle it and explaining how "abstinence only" education is really intended for the control of young women, not for keeping them safe. Then, she talks about how popular culture also tries to control women's sexuality by objectifying us. She then moves on to the more emotionally difficult subjects of rape and violence. A chapter on reproductive rights discusses "crisis pregnancy centers," the persistence of forced sterilization, and right-wing lies about abortion and birth control. There is also a chapter on discrimination against pregnant women and mothers and others on the right-wing war on women's involvement in the workforce and in politics. There is a chapter on how holding men to sexist, and often violent, standards of "masculinity" is damaging to both men and women. Valenti then discusses how feminism can include the struggles against racism, classism, and homophobia.

It is really important that this book doesn't make the reader feel helpless by just describing the severity of the problems but that Valenti constantly gives suggestions on how the reader can both empower herself and change society. She also aims to inspire readers (and banish the myth of young women's apathy) by telling them about the activism that young women are already doing. She includes a resource list of organization websites, books, magazines and hotlines to help the reader get active.

—Adele

Utah miners' deaths a business cost

DETROIT—The roof fall disaster at the Crandall Canyon coal mine in Utah on Aug. 6 that killed or trapped six miners, and 10 days later killed three rescuers trying to reach them, opened up a flood of information that disclosed much about the owner, the mine, the industry and its regulators. The mine had been cited for 33 health and safety violations this year.

The mine owner, Robert Murray, was portrayed in daily interviews as a kindly, white-haired and deeply concerned man who emotionally vowed to do everything possible to reach the six miners. However, a clue to the real Murray came early, when he insisted from the beginning that the roof fall resulted from an earthquake, despite seismic reports from the University of Utah that indicated the conditions in the mine caused the fall. His claim was clearly designed for him to avoid any future legal suits—an earthquake would legally be ruled an "act of God," leaving him and his company free of responsibility.

Moreover, it turns out that Murray owns 19 mines in five states and is vehemently anti-union. All of his mines have long lists of health and safety violations. One mine in Galatia, Ill., had 850 health and safety violations this year for which Murray was fined \$1.4 million, but the appeal process that is friendly to coal operators under Bush will drastically reduce this.

In another of Murray's mines, a fine of over a million dollars for violations was reduced to \$300,000. Such reductions are routine under the Bush administration—in fact, some appeals are never processed, which means the violators pay nothing.

The type of mining being done in the Crandall Canyon mine has also come into question. It is often referred to as "retreat mining": after the forward mining process reaches the end of an area, coal stumps, or pillars, which are left in place to help hold up the top are mined out.

The theory behind this kind of mining, which I did for a while working in the mines in West Virginia and which we called pillaring, is that by pulling the pillars out the roof will be weakened and fall ahead of you, thus relieving the roof pressure where you are working. It doesn't always behave that way in practice.

I was a shot fireman—I dynamited the coal. Holes were drilled at the base of the pillars, where I placed the dynamite and exploded it with an electric charge. On one pillar that was flaking off coal rapidly, the holes had been drilled and my boss told me to go and shoot it. I refused, and he angrily shouted, "I am giving you a direct order to shoot it!"

He phrased it that way to threaten me with being fired because I refused a boss's direct order. I knew the roof was coming down any minute, so I told my boss, "OK, I'll shoot it if you come with me." He turned on his heel and walked away—and at that moment the roof caved in and came down directly where I would have been working.

I refer to this to emphasize the point that there is a

Katrina's real culprits

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that I did not create, but were created by the fact that we were abandoned."

"Did you figure at any point that you were really done for?" Morley Safer asked Dr. Pou on "60 Minutes." She replied, "I don't think anyone gave up hope. I can tell you that I didn't give up hope, because as a cancer specialist, what I do is I give hope to my patients. You know, I am hope."

This is the kind of human response that workers and only frontline workers can give. Health care workers like Dr. Pou confront human tragedy every day, whether that is from disease or abandonment by a diseased society. Abandonment rips apart a sense of community. Abandonment is the norm under capitalism's constant crises. Genuine health care is not possible in such a society.

Current HMO restructuring shifts the burden of health care onto individual worker's families, forcing many to join the ranks of the uninsured. We are operating under an ideology of abandonment. Governments and corporations supposedly underwrite the cost of health care. In reality they spend their waking hours trying to figure out how to write off whole segments of society.

The culprits here are not the abandoned health care workers. It is American civilization that is on trial. It is the Bush government, which is guilty of gross negligence in the man-made disaster that followed Katrina. Bush only personifies the imperatives of capitalism, which is an ongoing chronic disaster for humanity.

To capitalists, health care is either an expense or a profit center. Dr. Pou and her staff waiting for rescue helicopters that would not come is only an extreme version of the daily abandonment we feel on the shop floor. Like them we cooperate to make the best of a bad situation when critical resources are not available because capitalists' objectivity sees health care only as numbers in a ledger.

In a human society people would not find themselves in such circumstances. Dr. Pou and others who stayed with the patients made a difference. They saved many who would not have survived were it not for their direct intervention. The problem remains, how can we workers, through our cooperation, get rid of this society that is putting us into these extreme inhuman situations?

life and death struggle that miners face every day in the mines because they face a management that has only one goal: coal at any price.

In the more than seven years I was on the safety committee in my mine, we made a safety run of the entire mine twice a month. Never once did we find less than a dozen safety violations. Most were minor, but there were hundreds that were dangerous and life-threatening.



When is it that you learn of health and safety violations in a coal mine? It is

always after a tragedy when there is loss of life that an investigation reveals health and safety violations. There has never been a mine tragedy report that did not list a long line of violations.

The violations are there every day, but they are ignored by mine management. This is made many times worse because of the Bush administration's support of corporations and opposition to health and welfare measures that could save the lives of miners and other workers. If you don't believe me, wait until the next mine tragedy—which is coming soon to your newspaper headlines and TV news reports.

—Andy Phillips

Berkeley IWW strike

Berkeley, Cal.—The owners of Metro Lighting portray themselves as a liberal Berkeley business, a green business, environmentally responsible. But when dealing with workers, they say this business is for making money, not for you, and if you don't like it, get out.

We organized as an IWW local six months ago in an attempt to save a fellow worker's job. They were firing her for no reason. We managed to save her job. We chose IWW because we wanted all to be in the same union, production workers and the retail staff.

In the process of organizing, the boss made the environment very hostile. He would not negotiate on any terms, and started retaliating from that point on. He hired union-busting attorneys, started surveillance of us. New rules were made up, our hours were changed, our health care was cut.

On Aug. 9, I made a health complaint to OSHA. Everyone here feels we have been retaliated against for both union activity and the health complaint. The health concern was about a caustic soda, a mixture of water glass and lye. It can cause burning of the skin and, if inhaled, causes respiratory problems.

When I called OSHA about it was when we were locked out, told to go home with no pay. After three weeks we were told to come back for three days, but then the store owner closed it again supposedly for family emergency for three weeks. But the next day the store was open with scab workers. We were supposed to return again on Sept. 21, except I received an email terminating my employment.

During the three days between lockouts, within five minutes I got written up four times. I have never been written up before in the three years I worked here. There was clear retaliation. People followed me out onto the street here, since I've been fired. We have been getting support from the community, we turn potential customers away. We have great support from the union, that helps keep us going.

The boss is willing to spend 10 times the amount of money that it would have taken to meet all of our demands to fight our organizing. He is content to lose all this money, and probably his business in the end, not to back down, not to give in to his employees.

—Union organizer

Students counted but don't count in Detroit

DETROIT—"I've never seen anything like this!" sighed one administrator at my school, a veteran of Detroit Public Schools. Last June, 34 schools were closed and about 50 were "reorganized." The massive chaos damages teachers' and staff ability to perform effectively and downgrades the educational life of the children.

A new superintendent, Dr. Connie Calloway, has ridden into town. Because of the corrupt contracting practices of the previous superintendent, all purchasing is on hold. Schools cannot receive curriculum materials, supplies, copier repair or repairs to the physical plant.

Staff and teacher placement is strictly by enrollment numbers. Thus, my school has "enough" teachers and counselors (last year we had three, now there is one)—but we all have to teach additional subjects, often outside our area of certification. Teaching split classes, two grades at once, is even more demanding. Students will lose because no one can teach a new subject as well—without preparation—the first time around.

UAW settles with GM

DETROIT—Negotiators for General Motors and the United Auto Workers reached a settlement on Sept. 26 after a two-day strike. The reason that UAW president Ron Gettelfinger gave for the brief strike was a demand for guarantees on preservation of jobs in the face of GM's open plans to move more production outside the country. But the settlement was all about ridding GM of health care burdens.

Negotiations between the UAW union and GM had centered on VEBA (voluntary employee benefit association), a plan to transfer employee health care benefits from the company to the union. Dumping GM's obligations on the UAW will transform contract benefit bargaining for every union and will ultimately affect every single individual in this country.

The plan is so complex that the company and union negotiated for the longest time in 25 years, and involved accountants, lawyers, economists, benefit specialists, and health care experts.

What is of great concern to the rank-and-file auto workers is what the trade-offs will be. They know the two-tier wage plan will permit paying new employees less in wages and benefits. At the same time two-tier wages create tensions between new and older workers because it violates the long-held union principle of equal pay for equal work.

Other troublesome concerns are work rules and flexibility, which mean working conditions in the plant that workers will face every day. They know that every change that has been made resulted in more speed-up, more inhuman working conditions and the creation of fear among the workers, fear for the loss of a job or a whole plant.

While the out-sourcing of jobs and plants has been going on for years, and while concessions keep piling up because UAW President Gettelfinger and his labor bureaucrats cooperate to satisfy the company instead of the rank and file, the separation of the union leaders from the workers has never been greater.

What auto workers have learned the hard way is that if the company is for something, they had better be against it. That is why they are very worried about the negotiations, and know only too well what Charles Denby, Black Chrysler production worker and founding editor of News and Letters, said: "You never know about a contract until you start working under it. That's when you learn all the fish hooks in it."

—Labor veteran

GM to dump retirees

SHREVEPORT, LA.—We have not been told details of what GM and the UAW have agreed to, but we will look to see what givebacks the new contract contains. Even new benefits hide givebacks.

For example, in the 1988 contract the big benefit was a new two-week vacation. Then we found out the vacation was exactly when we would normally have model changeover and be paid unemployment and supplemental unemployment pay, and it was in place of an annual \$600 Christmas bonus. It was more new company benefit than benefit for us.

They already sharply reduced retiree medical benefits in the last contract—we do not know what this change will mean. I know more than most about how job conditions lead to health problems in retirement. My brother just died this summer. He is the fourth family member to die of lung cancer or emphysema after working in the Colorado uranium mines—my father, an uncle and a cousin had preceded him.

For workers still in the plant, GM has gone beyond replacing many production jobs with robots to eliminate most supervisors. They have been able to get production with fewer and fewer supervisors.

When I retired a couple years back the Shreveport plant already had just one supervisor for every 60 workers. Now any problem that comes up, like a team member being absent, the team leader is expected to solve, even though he is a union member. We have joked in the past that GM's ideal would be two or three people in the office to handle payroll, and nobody else in management, yet still control production.

—GM Shreveport retiree

Enrollment is low because so many children are enrolled in charter schools and suburban districts. These schools will keep the children until Count Day (Sept. 26); then expel the most difficult students. But state funds remain with the school that registered them on Count Day.

It is an open secret that DPS plans to lease their vacant buildings to charter schools. Meanwhile, the No Child Left Behind Act has terrorized the district so much that teachers in testing grades received scripted curricula to prepare for the MEAP statewide test upon which a school's existence hangs.

Like workers everywhere, teachers and those unsung heroes, the support staff, are required to do more with less. We have not heard one word from the union about our deteriorating working conditions. At the same time the administration can't wait to break the union altogether.

—Teacher

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

EDITOR'S NOTE

We reprint here a 1955 column by Dunayevskaya that represented one of her many responses to the work of Cornelius Castoriadis of the "Socialism or Barbarism" independent Marxist group that existed in France from the late 1940s to the 1960s. We reprint the column here, which originally appeared in *News & Letters* in 1955, because of the way it speaks to the distinctive Marxist-Humanist understanding of the relation between theory and practice. It was originally entitled "Socialism or Barbarism: On the Problem of a Workers' Paper." The text appears as in the original, with the addition of a footnote supplied by the editors.

I have received the July-September [1955] issue of the French magazine *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (Socialism or Barbarism), and see that it is largely devoted to the problem of establishing a workers' paper. The article by D. Mothe on the question deals with the experience of some French workers who published a shop paper, in Renault, which is like Ford here, and the experience we have had in America in publishing a workers' paper.

All this is new. Heretofore socialists and other radicals have been content with publishing a paper "for" workers rather than by them. The fact that some now pose the latter question, and pose it with the seriousness characteristic of the theoretical journal, is a beginning in the direction in which we have worked for some years before the actual publication of *News & Letters*.

The conditions in France, however, are radically different from those here. We do not have a mass Communist Party to plague us. The Communist Party of France (and even more so of Italy, it must not be forgotten) is a strong force. It controls the largest trade union—the CGT—which is like the CIO here.

No socialist grouping like *Socialisme ou Barbarie* can disregard such a mass force as the Communist Party represents there. It cannot speak to workers on any subject as if the problem were only of workers against capitalists. It is a struggle within the working class; the counter-revolutionary force is right within the revolutionary movement. The problem of establishing a workers' paper in France is a question only the French can decide.

OUR EXPERIENCE

But, insofar as the struggle the world over today is a struggle against bureaucratic domination, and the fundamental problem of workers the world over, in this age of bureaucratization, is to tackle this problem not the day after but today, our experience can illuminate the problem.

The working class stamp in the overall editing and the decentralization in the editing of the individual sections—Labor, Negro, Women, Youth—did not come about accidentally. They were the results of the decisions of a unique combination of worker and intellectual, in its own small way to be sure, the practice of the breakdown of the most monstrous division of all—the division between mental and manual labor which has reached its apex in this epoch.

This brand of any class society also stamps many people who align themselves with the working class, but have no conception of how total the opposition to the old order must be not alone in theory but in practice. This characteristic is not limited to intellectuals, but permeates a stratum of the working class. For the classic example of that we must consider not the comparatively small problem of a workers' paper, but the historic problem of workers' power itself, for it was in the period of the workers' state in Russia (1917-1923) when all the problems of today were seen as if in a blinding flash, and grasped at once by Lenin.

WHAT HISTORY TEACHES US

Before 1917 all radicals saw the problem of a new society as the problem of achieving political power. What the Russian experiences showed was that the problem first then began.

Shlyapnikov was a worker who had joined the Bolshevik (Communist) Party long before the Russian Revolution of which he was a leader. Nevertheless, once power was achieved, he refused to see the problem of worker and intellectual—which is another way of saying the role of the party.

Lenin, on the other hand, saw precisely this division as the barrier—the last barrier—that the old decrepit society was setting up in the path of the new workers' state that had won power but was nevertheless heading back to capitalism. He insisted on two seemingly contradictory policies: 1) He said they must define the term, worker, "in such a way as to include only those who could have acquired a proletarian mentality from their very position in life." By which he meant that they were workers all their life; that they had worked in heavy industry at least 10 years; that they were factory workers not through choice but because they had no other way of earning a living.

2) Nevertheless he showed that the proletarian policy of the party was the result of "the enormous undi-

vided prestige enjoyed by the thin stratum which may be called the old guard of the Party. Only a very slight internal struggle within this stratum would be sufficient, if not to destroy this prestige, then at all events to weaken it to such an extent that it would lose the power to determine policy." And so it was and the workers' state crumbled altogether.*

ON PUBLISHING A WORKERS' PAPER

To return from the historic height to the problem raised by our French friends, I cannot see how theoreticians can continue to theorize in the old way while the workers in their various activities break through old patterns to new theory. Just as it is true that the workers, in a workers' paper, do not speak only of their relations at the point of production, but all of their ideas on life, labor and the new society, so it is true that the intellectual's role cannot be just to generalize the experience, but must be to discipline himself to hear all the workers say instead of hearing only what fits into his previous theoretic patterns.

Workers' actions speak for them without equivoca-

tion. The intellectual must be attuned to hear that movement from practice to theory. That is the nub.

I would say that the tendency to say: "A workers' paper, yes, but in that case it must come from the workers themselves, and not from us the theoreticians" is an evasion of the task at hand. Theoreticians cannot be bystanders to a paper that mirrors the workers' thoughts and activities as they happen. We would like to hear more from our West European friends.

NOTE

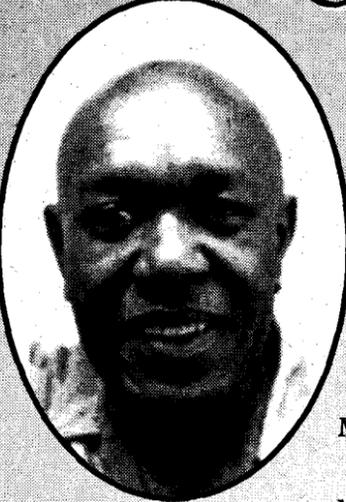
* For Dunayevskaya's subsequent discussions and criticisms of Lenin, see her *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (University of Illinois Press, 1991 [original edition, 1981]) and *Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* [original edition, 1973]—especially the expanded edition of 1991, which includes as a new Introduction "New Thoughts on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy" (Lexington Books, 2003).

A response to Castoriadis's 'Socialism or Barbarism'

Remembering

Charles Denby

On the 100th anniversary of his birth



Charles Denby (1907-1983) was a Detroit autoworker and editor of *News & Letters* from its founding in 1955 until his death in 1983. His autobiography, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, remains a classic work in American radicalism. It traces his journey of development from the deep South and involvement in Civil Rights struggles to his activity in the rank-and-file caucuses in the Detroit auto shops and his development as a Marxist-Humanist thinker-activist.

Denby's life and work remains a beacon for those striving to break down the division between worker and intellectual and between mental and manual labor in our world today.

"The 75 years of Charles Denby's life are so full of class struggles, Black revolts, freedom movements that they illuminate not only the present but cast a light on the future... 'Philosophy of liberation' was not mere rhetoric, much less an empty intellectual talk. To Denby, philosophy became a clearing of the head for action. From the minute he became editor of News & Letters, which manifested so unique a combination of workers and intellectuals, Denby's interest in philosophy was never separated from action.... Thus, from Marxism and Freedom he was always quoting: 'There is nothing in thought-not even in the thought of a genius-that has not previously been in the activity of the common man.'"

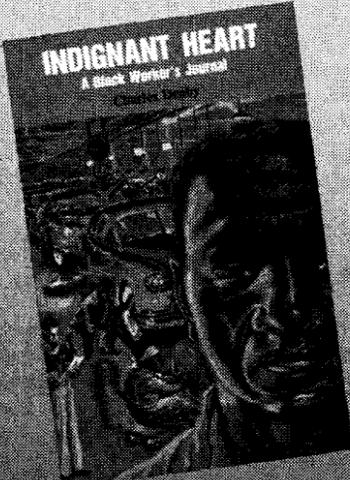
—Raya Dunayevskaya, "Afterword" to *Indignant Heart*

"Nothing has been done to eliminate these dangers to the workers. If anything, they've gotten worse—which shows just how much management is interested in the health of workers.

On the other hand, we have the new robot of unimation. It is the last step of the capitalist's dream of replacing what Marx said was in the capitalist's view, the 'refractory hand of labor.' What they don't understand is that they cannot eliminate that 'refractory hand,' which is still the gravedigger of capitalism.

These developments are putting American labor at an historic crossroad, and the answers to these problems will decide which way this country will go in the future."

—Charles Denby, *Indignant Heart*, p. 288.



To order your copy of
Indignant Heart
see literature ad on page 7.

ESSAY Marx's late writings on Russia re-examined

By Kevin Anderson

author of *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*

This year, we celebrate the 125th anniversary of Marx's 1882 Preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, co-authored by Engels, in which he espouses an alternate road toward communism for Russia, one based upon agricultural Russia's village communes, and different from that outlined in *Capital*, Vol. I for Western Europe. The 1882 Preface is the culminating point of Marx's late writings on Russia, which to this day have been unassimilated into the framework of "Marxism" as developed by post-Marx Marxists.

This is a grave loss for those struggling against capital today. In many places, but especially Latin America, the anti-capitalist movement is seeking "autonomous" pathways toward a new society. Often, these movements look toward indigenous communal forms predating capitalism as *loci* of resistance. Too often, however, this search has fallen back toward the illusion of "socialism in one country," the notion that one can create socialism without breaking with the law of value in a large portion of the developed capitalist world, including one or more of the major industrialized regions, like North America or Western Europe. In his 1880s discussions of alternate pathways for Russia, Marx avoids this kind of illusory politics, while also taking account of the particularities of a non-industrialized land like Russia, with different historical and social conditions than the West.

Marx's late writings on Russia, which stretch from 1877 to 1882, have received some discussion, especially after being published with commentary by various scholars in Teodor Shanin's collection, *Marx and the Russian Road* (1983). A year earlier, they were highlighted in Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982, hereafter RLWLKM), and in other of her essays from that period.

Unfortunately, encouraged by the one-sidedness of some of the essays in Shanin's book, much of the discussion of Marx's late writings on Russia has obscured three crucial points: 1) Marx is stressing the revolutionary potential of the indigenous communal forms of the Russian village, but not unconditionally: The Russians would not be able to revolutionize their society without linking up to "a proletarian revolution in the West." 2) Marx is talking of an actual communist revolution in Russia, not merely a democratic one, one that would, given such a linkage, be able to skip over the capitalist stage and move directly to the new society. 3) Such a revolutionary outbreak in Russia could serve as a spark for a wider global revolution against capital.

I. MULTILINEARITY: THE 1877 REPLY TO MIKHAILOVSKY ON RUSSIA AND ROME

In 1877, Marx drafted a response to an article on *Capital* that the prominent Populist Nikolai Mikhailovsky had published earlier that year in the Russian journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*). What distressed Marx was that Mikhailovsky, in seeking to defend him, ascribed to him a unilinear theory of human history. Marx may also have been troubled about the way in which Mikhailovsky distanced himself from the book's overall dialectical framework.

Marx begins his three-page draft of a letter to *Otechestvennye Zapiski* by denying that he had ever dismissed the possibility of a positive development on the basis of Russia's rural commune. He adds: "The chapter [of *Capital*] on primitive accumulation claims no more than to trace the path by which, in Western Europe, the capitalist economic order emerged from the womb of the feudal economic order." Here, Marx cites the 1872-75 French edition, where he had altered the text of *Capital* in the direction of a more multilinear perspective, writing regarding the "expropriation of the agricultural producer": "It has been accomplished in a radical manner only in England... But all the countries of Western Europe are going through the same development."

Marx also made an implicit answer to Mikhailovsky's strictures concerning Hegelian dialectics, writing that at the end of the discussion of primitive accumulation in *Capital*, the historical tendency of capitalist production "is said to consist in the fact that it 'begets its own negation with the inexorability of a natural process'; that it has itself created the elements of a new economic order." This referred to the conclusion of the work, where capital was "negated" by revolt of labor, a process Marx characterized as "the negation of the negation." Ever since, anti-Hegelians like the structuralist Marxist Louis Althusser have complained about Marx's use of the core Hegelian concept of negativity at this crucial juncture, with some non-Marxists claiming he had tried to "prove" his economic laws via Hegelian syllogisms.

Here in 1877, Marx answers the latter charge as follows: "I furnish no proof at this point, for the good reason that this statement merely summarizes in brief the long expositions given previously in the chapters on capitalist production." Thus, his recourse to Hegelian language at the end of *Capital* was only a methodological indication. Dialectics fit into *Capital*, he seems to

suggest, not because he imposed dialectics on reality, but because reality is itself dialectical.

Returning to Russia, he writes that "if Russia is tending to become a capitalist nation like the nations of Western Europe," then and only then, 1) it would have to expropriate its peasantry and make them into workers, and 2) it would come under the "pitiless laws" of capitalism. If Russia did not take step 1, then step 2 would not follow.

Marx gives another example of an alternate pathway of development that did not end in capitalism, that of ancient Rome: "At various points in *Capital*, I have alluded to the fate that befell the plebeians of ancient Rome. They were originally free peasants, each tilling his own plot



on his own behalf. In the course of Roman history they were expropriated... What happened? The Roman proletarians became, not wage-laborers, but an idle 'mob' more abject than those who used to be called poor whites of the southern United States; and what unfolded alongside them was not a capitalist but a slave mode of production."

Although he drew these parallels between Rome and the American South, his emphasis ran in another direction, toward the radical differences between Roman and modern social forms.

Marx's main point in the letter to Mikhailovsky was that he had not, as Mikhailovsky had argued, developed "a whole philosophical-historical theory" society that was generalizable for all times and places: "Thus events of striking similarity, taking place in different historical contexts, led to totally disparate results. By studying each of these developments separately, one may easily discover the key to this phenomenon, but this will never be attained with the master-key of a general historico-philosophical theory, whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical."

Moreover, it is not inevitable that Russia would become capitalist, for Marx rejects what he terms "a historico-philosophical theory of the general course fatally imposed on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves placed."

Thus, Marx is denying that he had developed 1) a unilinear theory of history, 2) that he had a deterministic model of social development, or 3) that in particular, Russia was bound to development in the manner of Western capitalism.

Commentators since the 1960s have differed strongly concerning just how new Marx's 1877 rejection of a unilinear framework was, with some viewing it as a break with his past in too one-sided a fashion. In *Marx on the Russian Road*, Teodor Shanin characterizes it as a move away from the "unilinear determinism" of *Capital*, while Haruki Wada argues that Marx "underwent significant change after he wrote the first German edition of *Capital*." In *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism* (1996), James White claims that it "imposed retrospectively on *Capital* an interpretation completely at variance with the spirit in which it was conceived."

In an equally one-sided fashion, other scholars have held that no fundamental change occurred: Also in *Marx and the Russian Road*, Derek Sayer and Philip Corrigan argue persuasively that "Shanin overstates... the extent of the break between the 'late Marx'... and what went before." But then they minimize the extent of the changes when they describe the late writings on Russia as "not so much a radical break as a clarification of how his 'mature' texts should have been read in the first place." In *RLWLKM*, Dunayevskaya avoids these forms of one-sidedness in writing that in his last decade, "it was clear that Marx was working out new paths to revolution, not, as some current sociological

studies would have us believe, by scuttling his own life's work of analyzing capitalism's development in West Europe."

II. 1881 LETTER TO ZASULICH: CONCRETE REALITY OF RUSSIAN COMMUNAL FORMS

The 1877 letter stresses Marx's multilinear standpoint but does not analyze the situation in Russia any more than had *Capital*, Vol. I. In his March 1881 drafts of a letter to the Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich, however, Marx begins to do so.

In a letter of Feb. 16, 1881, Zasulich, a self-described member of Russia's "socialist party," asks Marx whether "the rural commune, freed of exorbitant tax demands, payment to the nobility and arbitrary administration, is capable of developing in a socialist direction," or whether "the commune is destined to perish" and Russian socialists need to await capitalist development, the rise of a proletariat, and far in the future, a socialist revolution. Marx's Russian followers held the latter view, she adds.

In his reply, dated March 8, Marx again refers to the above-cited passage from the French edition of *Capital* bracketing the discussion of primitive accumulation to Western Europe, before concluding: "The 'historical inevitability' of this course is therefore explicitly restricted to the countries of Western Europe." Marx ends the letter with a few tentative remarks about Russia: "...but the special study I have made of it...has convinced me that the commune is the fulcrum for social regeneration in Russia. But in order that it might function as such, the deleterious influences assailing it from all sides must first be eliminated and then it must be assured the normal conditions for a spontaneous development."

He indicates that he was basing this judgment in large part upon the marked differences between the social structure of the Russian village, with its communal property, and the medieval village in Western Europe. He adds that his recent studies of Russian society had "convinced me that the commune is the fulcrum for a social regeneration in Russia."

A. RUSSIA AND MULTILINEARITY

In the much more substantial preparatory drafts, Marx covers these points in more depth, as well as other ones left out of his reply to Zasulich. As in the 1877 letter, multilinearity is one major theme of the drafts.

It should be underlined, however, that Marx is not proposing anything like autarky for Russia, but a new unity of the archaic and the modern, one that took advantage of the highest achievements of capitalist modernity:

"Precisely because it is contemporaneous with capitalist production, the rural commune may appropriate for itself all the positive achievements and this without undergoing its frightful vicissitudes... Should the Russian admirers of the capitalist system deny that such a development is theoretically possible, then I would ask them the following question: Did Russia have to go a long Western-style incubation of mechanical industry before it could make use of machinery, steamships, railways, etc.? Let them also explain how the Russians managed to introduce, in the twinkling of an eye, that whole machinery of exchange (banks, credit companies, etc.), which was the work of centuries in the West."

B. RUSSIA, INDIA, AND BEYOND

A second theme in the drafts, not present in the letter Marx actually sent to Zasulich, concerns the interweaving of issues from his 1879-82 notebooks on anthropology and on India with these reflections on Russia. Marx alluded, for example, to the anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's notion that in the future, Western civilization would revive archaic communism in a higher form. He also mentions, but not without criticism, Henry Sumner Maine's work on communal forms in India and Ireland, which showed:

"1) that the primitive communities had incomparably greater vitality than the Semitic, Greek, Roman, etc. societies, and, a fortiori [even more decisively], that of the modern capitalist societies; 2) that the causes of their decline lie in economic conditions that prevented them from passing beyond a certain level of development, this in historical contexts not at all analogous with the present-day Russian commune."

This second theme in Marx's drafts centered on the common features of Russia's communes and those in other times and places. To be sure, he had not yet worked out a theory of social development or revolution for that country, let alone the colonized lands of Asia and Africa, or for Latin America. In fact, he mentions India only briefly, only in order to contrast it with politically independent Russia. At the same time, here and in *Capital*, he steered clear of applying the logic of primitive accumulation to India, any more than to Russia. For as in Russia, the development of modern capitalist private property in India involved a transition not from feudal private property, as in Western Europe, but from communal property.

The broad sweep of Marx's notebooks on communal forms during the years 1879 to 1882—covering contemporary ones in Russia, Algeria, India, Indonesia,

continued on page 9

CHALLENGING THE DOMINANCE OF CAPITAL: MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES, 2007-2008

"Challenging the dominance of capital in theory and practice" (*N&L*, August-September 2007) provided an excellent overview of where we stand in relation to the globalized capitalist order that is taking form. As you have said so often, theory must be hammered out from practice, rather than practice standing apart from theory. Theory must be shaped from revolutionary action adjusting to history as it unfolds. Otherwise, history will out-run theory every time, leaving it in the dust, so to speak, as it rushes forth towards its own destination. The ultimate objectives of revolutionary action must be focused on overthrowing the present order and replacing it with a new one that itself is shaped out of the ashes of the former. Keep up the good work. It is so necessary in a time of massive delusion politically.

D.T.
Louisiana

Sections I and II of your Perspectives Thesis are very clear. They give a good description of what confronts us as revolutionaries: economic developments in capitalism and phenomenal state forms since the 1930s within capitalist society.

Hugo Chavez and the movement around him is interesting and at the same time alarming, considering his flirting with the rulers in Iran because of his course against the U.S. This got remarkably little attention of those who are propagating and defending his line of thinking. Many on the Left are following Chavez uncritically because they are still trapped in traditional "left" thinking which sees socialism only as collective ownership of the means of production and as nationalization by the state. They do not take seriously the lessons of history. They do not grasp Marx's "Human power is its own end."

Section III has to do with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* as a philosophy of revolution, and tries to develop a perspective for socialism, an alternative to capitalism. The crux is the transcending of capitalist production relations, the ending of labor power as a commodity, and the production of commodities. In other words: the ending of capitalist value production and the capitalist logic of value. What does that mean? Above all, we have to look, to study, **how** value production **determines** the capitalist society in which we live.

Marx says there is a specific way of knowing the totality and that way is not artistic, not religious, not practical-mental, but philosophical. Marx's specific way of analyzing society is in the context of capitalist society which is determined by value and surplus production. Raya Dunayevskaya emphasized, "it was Marx's concept of Alienated Labor which broke through all criticism. That discovery changed all else. That self-clarification disclosed the inner connection between philosophy and economics, philosophy and politics, subjective and objective; it created a new beginning, a new totality of theory and practice." I quote this from *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (p. 125). Later on she

REMEMBERING PRISON YEARS IN IRAN

Hearing Soudabeh Ardavan was an inspiring event when she spoke in Chicago on Sept. 15 and exhibited some of the drawings she had produced during her eight years of imprisonment in Iran from 1981 to 1989. She said she had been studying architecture and design at Tehran's Polytechnic Institute during the Cultural Revolution when she was charged with participating in demonstrations against the Islamic Republic and thrown into prison. For eight years she was transferred from one prison to another, spending time in between in solitary.

She tried to write her story through the pictures she drew of her cellmates, the guards, the conditions of the prison,



The faces she drew are unforgettable. She said she hoped people would see her paintings and remember the many innocent lives that had been lost during what she called the darkest history of her country. One picture was of a blue sky with white birds hoping to see freedom one day.

You could not help but think of other prisoners who told their stories of defiance and human resilience in many ways, as Rosa Luxemburg did in her prison letters. Readers can get more information about her through YADNEGAREHA@YAHOO.SE. *N&L* is to be thanked for helping to sponsor the event in Chicago.

Marxist-Humanist
Chicago

adds: "Philosophy pervades the whole: not only is the critique of philosophy 'philosophical,' but so is the analysis of the political economy."

K. L.
Amsterdam

Palestine in crisis revealed what happens when there is no attention to a viable secular nationalism; thus the ascension of Hamas. There is a similar crisis here in America, with ever-growing numbers of people embracing some kind of religious belief. In the New Afrikan community there is the growth of megachurches that are attended by thousands on Sundays. In the wholesale adherence to religious beliefs there is suspension of the needed discussion and search for an alternative vision of a future. Instead of attempting to address the root causes of self-alienation and poverty, the tendency is to place faith in the metaphysical realm as a source of salvation. The failure to comprehend the exact nature of capitalistic social relations entails the tendency to absolve capitalism of its crimes against humanity.

Faruq
Crescent City, California

While the Perspectives focused well on world events and struggles, it lightly touched upon the issues of women, both at home and abroad, as well as prison issues that have affected every state and every community in the country. Neither of those factors can be ignored.

Prisoner
Wisconsin

I've received *N&L* for nearly four years and found Dunayevskaya's writings direct, clear, and, if not easy, at least jargon-free. That's not been true of your other theoretical articles. Thus I was happy to find the Draft Perspectives in the August-September issue set out its ideas in clear, forceful, jargon-free language. A very strong and helpful document. I appreciate the work that must have gone into creating it.

Poet and Teacher
San Francisco

I found lots of meaning and agreement in the Perspectives Thesis, which I read online. Focusing on working out theories and "specifications" for the new society is objective, since so many movements know what they oppose but lack concrete ideas about how to get free from capitalism. However, News and Letters Committees faces an urgent task: to find new energy and membership to carry the philosophic labor in theory and practice. We need to focus on advocating our philosophy concretely.

Iranian exile
Los Angeles

I first made contact with News and Letters Committees 20 years ago. It has been a difficult time as the world seems to be moving backwards. You have been correct on the need for a total uprooting and to pose the question of what hap-

READERS' VIEWS

pens after the revolution. Over the years I have argued for more arts and poetry in *N&L*. Marx was clear about capitalism not having much truck with arts and poetry. It's for that reason that we must make time to laugh and sing. Hippocrates was right that Art is long, and Life is short.

Longtime supporter
London

Editor's Note: The Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives 2007-2008, published in our August-September issue, was approved as the Perspectives of News and Letters Committees at our recently concluded national plenum. For a copy of the bulletin that contains the Perspectives Thesis as well as the reports and sub-reports given at our national gathering, send \$5 to *N&L*.



PROTESTS IN BURMA

Several hundred Burmese Americans and supporters came to the Chinese embassy on Sept. 28 to protest against the violent crackdown on a resurgent democracy movement in Burma, this time led by Burmese monks who have inspired the general population that came out to support them. The demonstration was held at the Chinese embassy to register opposition to Chinese imperialism that underwrites the brutal regime. "China: Stop Arming Burmese Terror" read one of the typical mostly handmade signs. Most had a personal connection to the events in Burma. One woman, an exile from Burma, said she spent three years of hard labor at the infamous Insein prison after the huge demonstrations in 1988. She was imprisoned for delivering a letter from Aung San Suu Kyi to the students imploring them to not carry weapons in their struggle for freedom.

Another demonstrator said the current crackdowns reminded him of the brutality against students during the 1988 protests when more than 3000 were massacred. He had been a student back in 1962 when the first movement of students challenged the then Ne Win government, which proclaimed itself to be "Socialism the Burmese Way." Forty five years later miseries caused by repression and deprivation have so intensified that even the normally ascetic monks have become involved-

Protest participants
Oakland, Cal.

I found a copy of *N&L* at a coffee shop near my home. I had a vague idea of what *N&L* was but I was excited upon reading the August-September issue and researching Marxism-Humanism. I ordered a one-year subscription after reading that first issue and am eager for more. I feel *N&L* has a great approach to Marxism that not many people share. Many of the ways I have viewed Marx's writings are shown in your issues. I enjoy both your articles about things happening as well as actual real analysis absent from many publications. Thanks and keep up the good work.

New Subscriber
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Readers: Can you help place *N&L* in a coffee shop in your location? Ask for a small bundle to try it out.

U.S. ETHNIC CLEANSING?

The Chicago area contains one of the largest concentrations of immigrants from the Balkans in the U.S. They represent numerous ethnic groups, including Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian people.

In a city that has a long history of ethnic challenges and civil rights demands I am dismayed that the victims of the 1992-94 holocaust in Bosnia-Herzegovina rarely have their history and culture presented in the media. It is as if the mass killing and torture, the death camps never happened. Unfortunately for the Bosnia community, the Serbian and Croatian crimes did occur in massive numbers. The Bosnian people suffer from a similar fate that the African Americans, American Indians, and other ethnic minorities suffered from in our nation. If you can't get proper treatment in the land of the free, and since you can't go back to your own destroyed nations where discrimination is even worse, where can you go?

Social Science Researcher
Maryland

What is occurring in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is a subtle type of ethnic cleansing. The ruling class white people have denied poor Blacks from New Orleans the means of returning to the city. They are attempting to make the diaspora permanent. All of us who believe in the equality of those of all ethnic and racial backgrounds should let it be known that the right of Black Katrina survivors to return to New Orleans, along with the white survivors who are doing much better, shall be absolute. The systematic denial of the means of re-establishing doctors, nurses, hospitals and clinics, mental health facilities, schools and teachers, roads and water and sewage and all other necessary elements of social and physical infrastructure is a crime against humanity.

D.T.
Louisiana

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-WAR ASSEMBLY

Thank you for your message to the 45th International Antiwar Assembly in Japan. In the midst of their antiwar activities, Japanese workers, students and citizens held the Assembly on August 5, when 1200 people gathered at the central meeting in Tokyo and hundreds at each of the regional meetings in Hokkaido, Hokuriku, Tokai, Kansai, Kyushu and Okinawa. We received 16 messages from 9 countries this year. Each was read to the assembly one after another. Imagining colleagues struggling in other countries against war and oppression confirmed our international solidarity.

Antiwar Assembly
Tokyo, Japan

THE BRITISH SCENE

The Labour Party will be meeting in the in Seaside town of Bournemouth. Taking the air and strolling along the sandy beach, participants will be making up a fairly tale of life under Brown. Things could never be better—save the first run on a bank in over a hundred years, which we have just seen here. The reality will be ignored—the removal of all barriers to the advancement and free flow of capital. The concentration of substantial wealth into fewer hands. The deterioration in the conditions of workers. The slashing of social benefits and public services. The use of union busting companies and anti-labour laws. The incorporation of the unions and their pockets have enabled the Labour Party to maintain its dominance. The main political groups of Conservative and Liberal seem to be fragmenting further. It might be said to be the best and the worst of times. The good thing about the shambles might be to show very clearly that there is no parliamentary road to socialism. As Rosa Luxemburg put it, the choice was socialism or barbarism. We have had plenty of the barbarism. A little socialism is long overdue.

Pat Duff
London

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION ON TRIAL: ON JENA 6

Reed Walters, the LaSalle Parish District Attorney, who has consistently used his authority and short-fused racism to guide unjust outcomes, stated at his conference on Sept. 20, "This is not about race." But when a Black youngster was beaten up at an all-white party, was it about race that no charges were brought against the assailants? When two Black youth took a gun away from a white person who threatened them with it, was it about race when they were charged with stealing the gun? And to whom was Walters referring when he took the podium at an earlier protest about "the tree," became irate at unruly students and waved his pen declaring, "I can ruin your lives with one stroke of my pen!" The entire Jena 6 case bears close examination by all who are interested in justice. Walters' history can be repeated among prosecutors throughout the U.S.

January Chicago

A demonstration of several thousand mostly high school students was held at the UC Berkeley campus in solidarity with the marchers in Jena. Most pointed out that what happened in Jena is an everyday occurrence in Berkeley. One Black woman recounted standing on the same Sproul Hall steps in 1995 when she was a student and spoke out against infamous Proposition 209 that sought to end affirmative action in admitting students to the UC system. Many participants wore green and black clothes, green for growth, black for mourning.

Dave Berkeley

While 300 people traveled from here to Jena, the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center held a demonstration of 50 on a busy Memphis street corner on Sept. 20. Mostly African American, there were a few whites. Many drivers honked their horns in support, cheered and held up their fists. A grade school student said they discussed the Jena 6 in class; a high school student said her class had a moment of silence for them.

Adele Memphis

Our cowardly politicians, especially Democrats voted to condemn MoveOn.org for their ad criticizing General Petraeus. Yet every objective analysis showed that his claim that the surge has lessened sectarian violence in Iraq is a total fabrication. That MoveOn.org is on target is shown by the fact that an African-American spinoff from it, Color of Change in San Francisco, investigated what happened in Jena a year ago. Color of Change spread the story, including the mostly unpunished white attacks on Blacks, over the internet, which Black radio stations picked up. The ensuing outrage, reflected in the thousands who went down to Jena, showed that it is the U.S. justice system that needs to be put on trial. What the bourgeois politicians lack is the courage of African Americans who continue to expose the hollowness of U.S. capital-

ism's claims of equality and democracy. Student of History California

WOMAN AND WARLORDS

The PBS documentary on Malalai



Joya's struggles as an outspoken Afghan women's rights activist brought home forcefully the Appeal from her that you published in the June-July issue, after she was expelled from the seat she had won in Parliament. In following in detail the courageous campaign she had fought to gain that seat, the documentary "A Woman among Warlords" exposed not only the state of politics in Afghanistan but the global issues of women's human rights. The scenes with

the 100 year old woman who had walked miles to support Malalai, and the joy on both their faces when she succeeded in casting her vote, could not help but bring joy to anyone watching. I urge all your readers to watch for it.

Strong Supporter Chicago

"A Woman Among Warlords" was important because, along with telling the story of Malalai Joya's struggles, it told other stories as well. One was about how she had been asked to mediate against the forced marriage of a young girl to a man her grandfather's age. In refusing to stop pursuing this child bride, the man revealed not only his brutishness but the devaluation of women's lives and hopes. Another was the story of a woman married to an opium addict who beat her and neglected the children. Together with the story of Joya's campaign, they reveal real contradictions for all the world to see.

Feminist Memphis

OPEN LETTER TO COLUMBIA UNIV. ANTI-WAR COALITION

As an Iranian feminist opposed to imperialist war and committed to the democratic opposition movement in Iran, I am disappointed that the Columbia University Anti-War Coalition refused to take a stand against Iranian President Ahmadinejad for fear of being equated with the Bush administration and its call for war.

The logic of this position is that instead of supporting democratic freedom movements within Iran, we should be supporting their "anti-imperialist" and repressive rulers. How does the anti-war movement expect to stop wars with this logic? It stands against the very principle of self-determination of nations and human beings.

If the anti-war movement wants to be effective in stopping a U.S. war on Iran, it needs to establish genuine solidarity with the democratic opposition movement in Iran which consists of the following forces: A women's rights movement which opposes women's second class status; a student movement demanding freedom of expression and assembly; a labor movement which represents starving and unpaid workers, and demands the right to form independent trade unions; provincial movements in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and Khuzistan which demand greater regional autonomy and recognition for Iran's minorities; Islamic reformists as well as secular intellectuals who are interested in rationalist branches of Western and Islamic philosophy, and call for the separation of religion and state.

Here are some ways in which U.S. anti-war activists can express their solidarity with the Iranian people:

- Read new books on Iran such as Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis, Shirin Ebadi's Iran Awakening, Azar Nafisi's Reading Lolita in Tehran, and Afary and Anderson's Foucault and the Iranian Revolution.
• Support the Tehran Bus Drivers' Union and their jailed leader Mansour Ossanoloo. Send statements of support to the Bus Drivers' Union at www.syndicavahed.com (http://www.syndicavahed.com/).
• Start a campaign to support jailed student activists Ahmad Ghasaban, Ehsan Mansouri, Majid Tavakkoli from Amir Kabir University.
• Contact the women's equality campaign at www.wechange.info/english and online feminist magazines at info@iftribune.com or info@herlandmag.com.

Iranian Feminist

REPUBLICRATS AND DEMOCRANS

It's so easy to blame the Republicans for everything. I would probably agree with the emotional statement by Kanye West that Bush hates Black people after the horror that was New Orleans was revealed. But is that solely restricted to Bush and the Republicans? Or do we have to spread the blame around to several hundred years of racist repression and social disdain on all levels?

Black prisoner Wisconsin

N&L has been too lax on the Democrats who are responsible for where we are now. I expect that many readers are ahead of N&L in expressing anger at them for not ending the war or taking up an impeachment of Bush. I also don't think there is a real commitment to a two-party system. In contrast to 30 or 40 years ago, when they talked of "pluralism," right-wing commentators now want to eliminate the opposition.

Radical lawyer Detroit

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By Robert Tallaferra

One of the debates raging in Congress regards the privatization of Medicare and its components. Called "Consumer Choice," it is a poorly thought-out concept to defund Medicare programs, thus robbing millions of citizens of the right to comprehensive, affordable health coverage.

As with many social issues, if one wishes to see the long-term effects of a mismanaged bureaucracy, one needs to travel no further than one's friendly neighborhood jail or prison.

The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world, approximately 740 people per 100,000 of the population, or roughly 2.2 to 2.5 million people currently behind bars with another 5 to 6 million on parole or probation. As shocking as those statistics are, that's only one aspect of incarceration.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, while Congress was being lobbied by HMOs and health insurance companies to "revamp" Medicare, state and federal prisons were already revamping their systems, privatizing their health care, and thus lessening health care services and accessibility provided to prisoners.

Ironically, the theory in the state and federal prisons was that privatized care would be more professional and would help to cut costs in the growing Department of Corrections (DOC) budgets. Around that same timeframe, the U.S. was also embarking upon the largest prison-building boom in the country's

Acheh leader speaks

NEW YORK—The governor of Aceh province, Indonesia, spoke at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights on Sept. 11. Irwandi Yusuf, who was a leader of the pro-independence Free Aceh Movement (GAM), is the first governor to be elected by the people of Aceh. A peace agreement (Memorandum of Understanding—MOU), signed between GAM and the Jakarta government in 2005 in Helsinki, provided for elections and other forms of semi-autonomy, following years of repression and killing. Gov. Yusuf, who took office in February, permitted *N&L* to record his talk, in recognition of our years of support for Aceh. Excerpts of his comments and responses to questions appear below:

After peace talks failed in 2003, Indonesia declared martial law in Aceh. I was arrested and sentenced to nine years. I had served 19 months when the tsunami of December 2004 swept away the jail I was in, and I just walked away. In 2005, I became a GAM representative to the peace talks. The MOU provided for Indonesia to withdraw its military occupation, and for GAM to disarm. The first popular election for governor—in Aceh and anywhere in Indonesia—was held last December. The MOU permits local political parties to be formed in Aceh for the first time. There are now five or six parties, of which two are registered.

In Helsinki we agreed to establish a human rights court, but we failed to agree on what human rights violations would be heard. The agreement doesn't say whether that court is to have jurisdiction over past abuses or just future ones; of course, Jakarta says only future ones. The MOU also mandates that a peace and reconciliation commission (PRC) be set up. Neither has been implemented.

The rights won in the MOU are restricted by Law #11, requiring all local laws to accord with existing national law. We need to amend that law, set up our own institutions without authorization, or get the Indonesian president to establish the PRC.

I want to make peace in Aceh sustainable, but it's impossible to know now what will happen. Whether the Indonesian military might be let loose in Aceh again depends on what happens in Jakarta. I am worried about the national elections in 2009. If the ultranationalist party wins, it might refuse to implement the MOU. We don't know yet how real our rights to autonomy will be, but I intend to push the law to the limit.

Reconstruction from the tsunami is progressing, but we still have 20,000 people housed in barracks. We expect to finish the 15,000 new houses we need by April 2008. New roads are under construction. Unemployment is a problem, and after the foreign governments and NGOs who are administering aid leave, it will be an even more serious problem.

Some of the unemployed are former combatants. The MOU provides for monetary assistance to 3,000 GAM members, to assist their re-integration into society. But there were 15,000 fighters and many more in the political wing. I am in charge of the reintegration process, but Jakarta hasn't sent me all the money the MOU requires. Actually, I hate the term "reintegration" because GAM was never disintegrated from society. We always had the support of the people.

Eighty percent of the remaining forests in Sumatra are in Aceh. Much of the land is degraded from illegal logging by the military and others. In June, I declared a moratorium on logging. No trees may be cut except farmed trees. Some illegal logging continues, but much less than before. We will re-forest some land. We may make some farms for biofuel, timber and fruit trees for rural livelihoods. We will save the preserves and the animals in them.

Health care failure

history, thus exacerbating DOC operating budgets exponentially.

What many states did was cut wages for inmates, and privatize their health care access, replacing DOC hired and trained personnel with contract employees of a variety of health care providers. To help offset the costs of these new services, and to cut down on alleged "sick call slackers" in prisons, various corrections departments opted to charge their prisoners co-pays.

Co-pay is not a new concept to civilians, but at the time it was to prisoners. Civilians have insurance plans that require co-pays, which tend to be high, but at least manageable. Then, of course, a consumer does have a choice if they wish to pay the co-pay. Civilian co-pays, however, are not designed (in theory at least) to take 100% (or more) of your earnings.

In a number of states, the idea of co-pay was initially to take a minuscule amount of money from prisoners to offset their health care and to give them a taste of self-responsibility, as well as to cut down on a number of extraneous expenses incurred by prisons.

In several Midwest states the concept was taken to extremes, until high co-pays (upwards of 100% of a prisoner's salary) caused prisoners to refuse to seek treatment because it would require them to choose between soap and stamps versus checking to see if long-term indigestion was cancer.

Another bureaucratic irony is that inmate co-pays, alleged to help cut down prison health care costs, actually sparked even larger long-term costs because prisoners were seeking health care long after the onset of an illness, thus negating short-term approaches that could have caught an illness sooner, which would have alleviated the need for long-term, radical, and more expensive treatment.

Since most prisoners opt to not pay the high co-pays, there are now more prisoners being released with major medical problems that will ultimately subject the civilian health care system to exacerbated problems. If any governmental agency ultimately has to find the money to subsidize a problem such as prison health care (or civilian Medicare programs) when it breaks down, then one must wonder why they could not use that money, in the first place, to get it right.

In prison, though, things that should make sense are often the last things to be looked at. More often than not, things that work well are broken beyond repair, then deemed as "politically fixed," like the current political fixes being recommended for Medicare, making the poor and the elderly the disenfranchised, medical prisoners of the health care industry.

Tennessee nuke dump

MEMPHIS, TENN.—Outrage has been spreading here since we learned that radioactive waste is being buried in two local landfills. These are ordinary landfills with no special monitoring or regulation for radioactive material. This came out in a report from Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) titled, "Out of Control—On Purpose: DOE's Dispersal of Radioactive Waste into Landfills and Consumer Products."

It turns out that a company called RACE is licensed to send radioactive materials to the North Shelby BFI Landfill in neighboring Millington, Tenn. This is the same company that wanted to put a radioactive waste incinerator on Presidents Island near Black communities in Memphis, but an outpouring of Black and white people stopped them. (See "Community opposes nuclear waste incinerator," May-June 2005 *N&L*.) They assured us at the time that all their waste was handled carefully and disposed of properly, but we had reports of trucks from RACE dumping at North Shelby at night, when it was closed.

The NIRS report tells of how materials contaminated with radioactivity are being released to ordinary landfills or even recycled, without serious monitoring, and how the nuclear establishment has been pushing to do this on a large scale for decades to cut their costs of dealing with nuclear waste. These efforts were fought off by anti-nuclear groups, workers, state and local governments, and even industries that didn't want these materials dumped on them. Tennessee is a center of unloading nuclear waste, making it someone else's problem—ours. We suspect our state is on its way to becoming the country's nuclear dump—some is already coming from as far as California. This reflects how impossible the problem of dealing with nuclear waste is—what's needed is to stop producing it.

Already in Middle Tennessee, Citizens to End Nuclear Dumping in Tennessee (ENDIT) has been organized to demand "a permanent end to dumping all nuclear and toxic waste in our landfills in Tennessee or other sites in Tennessee" and "frequent and thorough monitoring of: 1. Air quality near dumping sites. 2. Drinking water for levels of radioactivity and toxicity and 3. Independent assessment of the levels of pollution at Middle Point and other Tennessee landfills. ENDIT also urges that all possible efforts be made to clean up dumping sites in Tennessee and that any plans to expand the Middle Point landfill be terminated permanently." In September they forced the Middle Point Landfill to be taken off the list of landfills that can receive this "special" waste.

Here in Memphis we are just starting to fight this.

—Environmental activists

BLACK/RED VIEW

Freedom march in Jena

Continued from page 1

people were marching in Somerville, Tenn., my mother was afraid for our lives and wouldn't let me march.

There were people with signs written in Spanish on one side, and in English on the other, "We support the Jena 6." I saw Spanish-speaking people, American Indian, white people. I know that when whites come out and support a rally like that, they set themselves up to be shunned by their own race.

I am so grateful for my Black brothers and sisters who are getting up off the couch and marching in the



Thousands demonstrate for Jena 6 at UC Berkeley.

street against racial injustice. I hope that the nation will listen to this great sound against injustice that was made in Jena. A lot of us took off from work and kept our children out of school. I'm so grateful for the unity of the races and the nonviolent commitment that took place. I feel that this must continue until all of those boys are released and all of the charges are dropped. We want justice.

—Black woman marcher

JENA, LA.—The sandy soil stung my eyes and sinuses as I walked into Jena, La. I had ridden, cramped in the back seat of a passenger van for seven hours, to get to this small rural Louisiana town.

Though most of the town residents had either left or decided to remain hidden, the police tape around businesses and the quickly written and typed signs declaring shops and buildings closed for Sept. 20 brought home the point: you are not welcome. But beyond the obvious reason—this is an 85% majority white town and parish—I get the feeling that there isn't enough space for even the 3,500 regular residents. This is a hard place, only home to those born there. There are no welcome signs. But on Sept. 20, this town became a destination for people from all over the country. I saw 50,000 people make their way to Jena, probably more.

The sea of Black moved through the town as a rising Black tide. The faces are of people weary from their journey and weary for the need of this journey. Where some may find this imagery disturbing, the power of Blackness, the color, the "race" is still evocative. Reports of local white residents' fear that the town would be destroyed by the influx of Black people reveals the limits of their imagination.

I understand after seeing this town why a Black student had to ask permission to sit under a tree in 2006, because there was no room for change in this town. Three nooses were hung from a tree at the high school in 2006 because there was no room for change in this town. Black students gathered to protest the nooses and all hell broke loose. White kids at a party then attacked a Black boy. Black boys had a gun drawn on them at the convenience store. Verbal altercations and then a white kid was beaten badly after he made "racially charged comments," which led to attempted murder charges levied at the six young men.

The disparity in the charges is glaring. That is why people made this pilgrimage. This place has become an obvious sign of the double standard that continues to exist in our society. While "white" crime is prosecuted, crimes of "color" seem to garner an added harshness as if there is a greater threat from people of color.

Everyone wanted to see "the Tree." We were still expecting to see the nooses dangling there as proof to the world what we have lived all of our lives. Racism still exists, but many in our society would have us believe that racism is the specter of a long gone era.

The tree is now gone, bulldozed months ago. Part of the school is gone, burned by an unknown arsonist's act. Tens of thousands of Black people (and some white and brown and yellow) filled the streets of that town without breaking a window or tearing down a wall. We showed the country that there is enough room for change in our "small" town.

—Chad Johnson

Haitians speak out against unfair trade agreements

Editor's note: The following article from Haiti is printed, with minor editing, with the permission of Batay Ouvriye, a federation of unions, workers' committees, and grassroots community groups that are fighting against conditions in Haiti today. The full article can be found on its website, BatayOuvriye.org.

On all radio stations, in all the newspapers, on all TV channels, and in the context of the "development" that the imperialists, the bourgeoisie and their reactionary state have in store for the Haitian workers, the latest word is the HOPE (the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement) Act of 2006.

On Dec. 16, 2006, the U.S. Congress voted into law the HOPE Act, designed to regulate some of the commercial exchange between Haiti and the U.S. This law opens the doors for the two countries to be able to realize "free" commercial exchange without any import tariffs or duties, or any obstacle to the free circulation of goods. The goods that the Act refers to are mainly textile products from the maquiladoras. Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis completed a trip to Washington last April to work out the details of the implementation of the new law.

What most people don't know about are the various compromises and concessions made by the Haitian government. First, the government gave up all rights of control over North American products imported into the country, that is, what they are and which ones will be allowed in. Nor can the government place any demand on multinational capital, such as control over the prices of goods being sold in the country. Therefore, the Minister of Commerce and Industry has no control over any prices. Finally, the government agreed to actively pursue the privatization of public services.

STRUGGLE AGAINST "FREE" TRADE

In the context of the struggle against the unbridled implementation of the Free Trade Agreement of Central America and Dominican Republic (TLCAC-RD) by the bourgeoisie of the different countries of Central America, the union confederations of these countries have been coordinating their actions and have succeeded in forcing the inclusion of some considerations, albeit of a general character, regarding the workers' rights in the factories.

In the Ouanaminthe Free Trade Zone (FTZ), the workers have succeeded, with their struggle, in forcing the bosses of the Grupo M to accept the principle of collective bargaining, so that even the World Bank had to attach a series of regulations and conditions to its loans to the capitalists of the FTZs regarding respect for the rights of the workers, including the right to organize and the right to collective bargaining.

Of course, HOPE mentions the rights of workers and the clearly established international laws. But we must be clear on this: there has been absolutely no mechanism put in place to insure that these rights and these labor protection laws are respected or applied. The Labor Code is the only enforcement mechanism that exists at the national level. However, in practice, the Code is being used to handcuff the workers.

Let us remember that the Haitian bourgeoisie, currently acting as the intermediate agent in the implementation of HOPE, has the sadly infamous reputation of being the worst bourgeoisie in the world, in the very words of the American capitalists who call these corrupt lackeys "the most repugnant elite in the world."

To such bourgeoisie, workers' rights are something they couldn't care less about! Their very existence, as a class, is based on trampling under foot the workers' rights. That's why it's no surprise that they would make a vague and general mention of these rights: it's a convenient façade that will help them fool the people, knowing very well that they have no intentions whatsoever of making good on it.

The Haitian government doesn't make the least effort to protect the Haitian workers and to define the mechanisms necessary to implement the generally-mentioned workers' rights. HOPE doesn't have any legal appendages regarding the issue of workers' rights (this would scare away potential investors). What's worse, not even a mention is made of the current repressive Labor Code, which has been in existence since the time of the Duvalier dictatorship.

The Haitian state has never lifted a finger to protect, or demand respect for, the rights of Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican Republic, as if this were not the responsibility of the Haitian government—while they're being victimized, even burned alive, without even a cry of protest, let alone any action, from this shameless government. All this shows that what we have in front of us is an anti-people, anti-worker state and government.

BATAY OUVRIYE: OUR POSITION

Inevitably, as they've done before, during the first workers' struggles in the Ouanaminthe FTZ, the reactionaries will cry: "Batay Ouvriye is opposed to development!" "Batay Ouvriye is opposed to the creation of jobs! They want the country to go bankrupt!"

We have already exposed all these lies. As always, we start from the class interests of the workers, of the working class. These interests are what guided us in our successful struggle for the reintegration of the workers who were fired from their posts in the FTZ (is this being opposed to the creation of jobs for the work-

ers?). It is this same struggle for workers' rights that forced the textile multinationals to reopen their closed factories in the FTZ (is this being opposed to the creation of jobs for the workers?). And it is this same struggle that has expanded these rights to other countries in the world where the World Bank gives out business loans to open factories (by forcing them to attach conditions that link these loans to social responsibility and sustained development).

We, members of Batay Ouvriye, defend the right to work for all workers. But at the same time, we also resolutely defend all workers' rights in all factories—all their rights, conquered and to be conquered, on the basis of the struggle of these workers themselves.

Only the interests of the workers correspond to the global interests of our nation. The interests of the antinational bourgeoisie have nothing in common with the global interests of our nation. Not even a minimum restructuring, not even a minimum improvement, except for their own class.

Today, the general context of the implementation of HOPE will lead to the total destruction of our collective identity. It is precisely for this reason that we clearly denounce and reject the HOPE Act, along with all the politicians who try to mystify us in order to be able to implement it in the country.

Today, Haiti finds itself at a dangerous crossroads (in the full sense of the word) where the ruling classes want to transform the country into a huge coffin for the population, where the imperialists have already planned the time necessary to control the country, and are taking measures in that respect.

The workers, the small peasants, all working people and the popular masses in general are confronting these enemies on a daily basis, in their own existence, in their struggles against exploitation and domination, for their own demands. All progressive people must be conscious that what awaits us is sure death if we do not wage a massive struggle against the blood-sucking plan of the maquiladora industry that pretends to make us believe that they are here to help Haiti when, in fact, what they bring to the people is permanent degradation, conflict, misery and death.

The plan of the bourgeoisie is to exploit us and extract the maximum profit from our sweat and blood. But we know that we, the workers, when we organize and struggle, we will win, despite all the sacrifices. Victory belongs to the workers who fight for their own interests. Victory belongs to the people in struggle.



Workers in Haiti, 2007—fighting exploitation and "free" trade

Marx's late writings on Russia after 125 years

continued from page 5

and Latin America—suggests, however, that he was searching for new sources of anti-colonial, anti-capitalist resistance from within the communal forms of these varied societies.

C. THE FUTURE OF THE RUSSIAN AND WORLD REVOLUTION

A third theme in the drafts for the letter to Zasulich concerned the prospects for revolution in Russia and the form that revolution might assume, issues barely hinted at in the letter Marx sent to Zasulich. Here, Marx weighed the Russian communal form's strengths against the threats it faced from capital and the state.

At an international level, however, other conjunctural factors operated in a more positive direction: "the contemporaneity of Western production, which dominates the world market, enables Russia to incorporate into the commune all the positive achievements of the capitalist system, without passing under its humiliating tribute."

What would be the character of the Russian revolution and how would it affect that society's future development? "To save the Russian commune," he writes, "a Russian revolution is needed....If the revolution takes place at an opportune moment, if it concentrates all its forces to ensure the free unfolding of the rural commune, the latter will soon develop itself as a regenerating element of Russian society and as an element of superiority over those countries enslaved by the capitalist regime."

But the point here in 1881 was that communal forms, when they were 1) thrown into crisis as they were undermined by capitalism, and yet 2) able to take advantage of the achievements of capitalist modernity, could give birth to new types of socialism. This lesson, I would suggest, had implications beyond Russia, stretching to India and the other non-Western societies taken up in the 1879-82 excerpt notebooks.

The last part of Marx's late writings on Russia was a preface, co-authored by Engels, to the 1882 second Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto*. In Rosa

Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, Dunayevskaya terms it "the most important of his writings on this subject." It was also the last essay Marx published on any topic before his death the following year. Dated Jan. 21, 1882, it was translated into Russian and published almost immediately in *Narodnaya Volya*, a Populist journal, and again later that year in a new translation of the *Manifesto* by Georgi Plekhanov. The preface also appeared in German in 1882, but has been largely ignored by Western Marxists ever since. It notes the rise of a serious revolutionary movement at a time when the rest of Europe was relatively quiescent: "Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe."

III. 1882: A NEW TYPE OF COMMUNIST REVOLUTION, AND ITS LINKS TO THE WESTERN PROLETARIAT

What would be the character of that revolution? Here, Marx and Engels sketch the revolutionary possibilities within the communal form of the Russian village, governed its communal association (*obshchina*): "Can the Russian obshchina, a form, albeit heavily eroded, of the primeval communal ownership of the land, pass directly into the higher, communist form of communal ownership? Or must it first go through the same process of dissolution that marks the West's historical development? Today there is only one possible answer: If the Russian revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that the two complement each other, then Russia's peasant communal landownership may serve as the point of departure for a communist development."

Two points stand out here. First, the last sentence makes crystal clear a point to which Marx alluded in the drafts of the letter to Zasulich, that a Russian revolution based upon its agrarian communal forms would be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the development of socialism in that country. What was also needed was a revolution by the Western working classes, which would allow the achievements of capitalist modernity to be shared with technologically back-

ward Russia. (In *Marx and the Russian Road*, Wada argues unconvincingly that Engels introduced this condition into the 1882 preface and that Marx signed onto a text with which he did not agree.) At the same time, however, a Russian revolution would not need to follow one in the West; in fact, it could be "the point of departure" for revolution in the West.

A second point implicit in the drafts of the letter to Zasulich is also made crystal clear here: A Russian revolution could lead to a "communist development." This is a very important point. In his otherwise careful examination of these texts, Paresh Chattopadhyay stumbles over this point when he asserts that the late writings on Russia "contain no reference to a 'proletarian' or 'socialist' revolution in Russia," but only refer to "the 'Russian Revolution' *tout court*" (See his 2006 article, "Passage to Socialism: The Dialectic of Progress in Marx," *Historical Materialism* 14:3, pp. 45-84). Marx and Engels's language about "a communist development" out of the Russian communal forms would refute this. Chattopadhyay also mounts a strong but ultimately unconvincing case for a sort of Russian exceptionalism, wherein Marx was seeking to link communal forms to revolution apply solely in Russia.

In the 1882 preface to the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels write that Russia would not need to go through an independent capitalist development to reap the fruits of modern communism, provided that its revolution became the spark for a working-class uprising in the technologically developed world. This is a different and more radical claim than the one Marx made in the late 1850s, when he hailed the national movements of resistance in China and India as, at best, carrying the potential for a democratic transformation in those lands.

Here, in the 1882 Preface, Marx and Engels are arguing that a communist transformation is possible in a technologically backward land like Russia. Did Marx also discern such possibilities in places like India, whose communal forms he had also been studying? I think the preponderance of the evidence points toward the affirmative on that score as well.

Labor unrest and economic distress impact U.S. politics

Continued from page 1

economic basis of progressive liberalism. The Social Democratic or liberal Left has proven unable to effectively challenge the Right because the objective basis upon which its policies were predicated has seriously eroded...adequate social services and a rising standard of living for workers is no longer compatible with the accumulation of capital on an ever-expanding scale."

MINING DISASTER MIRRORS CRISIS

The growing divide between U.S. rulers and workers was especially born out from the Crandall Canyon Mine Disaster in Utah in August. The death of nine miners there was no "natural" event. It was a **social consequence of the drive to increase coal production**, which is an integral component of the present stage of U.S. capital accumulation.

Half of the electricity generated in the U.S. now comes from coal, and each individual in this country consumes on average 25 pounds of coal daily. The drive to extract ever more coal in shorter amounts of time has led companies to use retreat mining in areas that are highly unstable and dangerous.

Retreat mining is a procedure in which pillars of coal that serve as support beams for underground mines are progressively removed in an effort to extract as much coal as possible. The disaster at Crandall was fully predictable, since retreat mining has been used for decades and has been condemned by miners for just as long.

Nor was there anything "new" about the technology used at Crandall Canyon. The mechanization used was the continuous miner—the same machine which miners opposed being introduced into the mines in the 1949-50 General Strike in West Virginia, which helped give birth to Marxist-Humanism.*

The disaster at Crandall shows that living labor remains the source of value, and the more intense is capitalism's "werewolf hunger" for it, the more it is compelled to employ workers in increasingly dangerous situations. That is starkly seen in China's massive industrial expansion, which largely rests on the backs of overworked miners; 180 perished there at the same time as the Crandall Canyon mine collapse in Utah.

Such conditions breed revolt. On Aug. 22, 800 miners in China's Hubei Province went on strike against a mine that denied severance pay. Few countries experience more labor strife than China; in the past 10 years 1.7 million labor disputes have been reported there.

CRISIS IN HOUSING INDUSTRY

The situation facing labor has to be viewed in the context of the overall economic problems afflicting the U.S. Key in this is the meltdown in the housing and mortgage markets. This year a record number of foreclosures occurred. Banks stand to lose billions of dollars because of the inability of many homeowners to keep up with their mortgage payments. Some fear that a default by even a few major banks could cause a crisis in the entire global financial system.

The bursting of the speculative bubble in housing and real estate may cause U.S. housing prices to plunge as much as 20% in the next few years. Since much U.S. consumer spending in recent years has been driven by homeowners essentially using their home mortgages as ATM machines by renegotiating their mortgages to take advantage of lower interest rates, some fear that a sharp decline in housing prices could send the U.S. economy into a recession.

The Federal Reserve responded on Sept. 18 by cut-

ting its benchmark interest rate to 4.75%—the first such cut in four years and a steeper cut than usual. While this will make it easier for financial institutions to borrow money, it will have little impact on most homeowners; interest rates on many mortgages will rise significantly in the coming period. And it will have no impact on those too poor to own a home; the Federal Reserve's action does nothing to address the fact that September marked the first time in three years that the nation lost jobs.

The response of politicians in both the Republican and Democratic parties has been to bail out wealthy investors who profited from the speculative bubble in the housing market. While international financial

and has begun to move toward a convertible currency. The radical fluctuations in U.S. capital markets over the past months are largely a result of the new reality produced by China's increasing role in the world economy. One analyst refers to this as "an indicator of a new world economic pecking order. Whereas it was long said that the world caught pneumonia when the U.S. suffered a cold, it is now the Chinese economy that has taken world leadership" ("Markets Around the World are Marching in Lock Step," by Floyd Norris, *The New York Times*, July 28, 2007).

The crisis in the U.S. mortgage market underscores this crisis of connectivity. The crisis wasn't simply caused by the actions of "greedy" capitalists. It flows from the separation of hundreds of millions of workers around the world from the objective conditions of production over the past 20 years. As more and more workers are "freed up" from working the land as part of the effort to supply global capital with a reserve army of cheap labor, downward pressure is exerted on wages. That has led to lower inflation rates in many countries, and in turn to lower interest rates. The latter helped create a speculative bubble in housing and real estate that now appears to have burst.

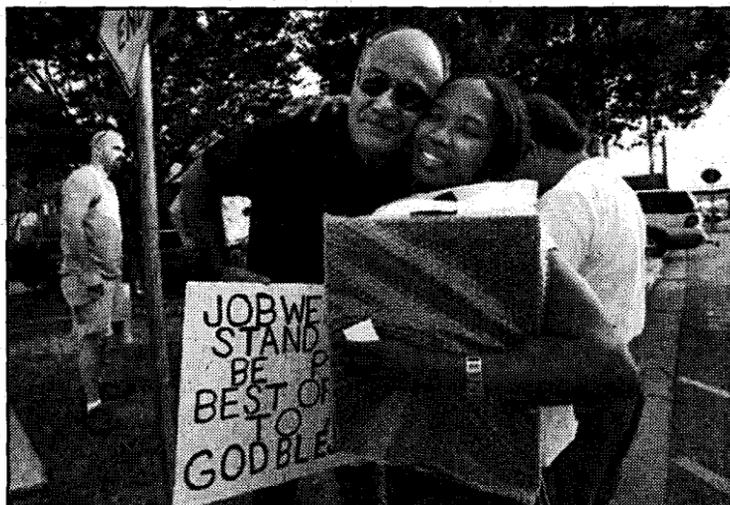
Some 93 countries experienced 112 systemic banking crises between 1975 and 2000. Such crises are becoming more common. It brings to mind the passage Marx added to the French edition of *Capital* in 1875: "Only after foreign trade began to predominate over internal trade...only after the world market had successively annexed extensive areas of the New World, Asia, and Australia; and finally, only after a sufficient number of industrial nations had entered the arena—

only after this had happened can one date the repeated self-perpetrating cycles, whose successive phases embrace years, and always culminate in a general crisis" (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 786).

Economic crises, of course, offer no assurance that a new society will come into being. They provide, at best, only for the **conditions for its possibility**. It is the **human factor** that is decisive—whether those subordinated to the laws of capital will rise up and consciously reorganize society on new, socialist humanist foundations.

For that to be achieved, political practice—though surely necessary—is not sufficient. Those committed to the revolutionary transformation of society must work out a comprehensive concept of a non-capitalist society that can give today's freedom struggles a direction. This has been the focus of our work in News and Letters Committees for many years, as shown in our Perspectives Thesis of 2007-2008. We invite you to join with us in further developing this work-in-progress.

*For more on this, see *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya.



Workers' solidarity in the face of concessions and austerity.

institutions pumped hundreds of billions into the economy over the past few months to bail out investors, working people face increasing austerity and cutbacks.

U.S. ECONOMY IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

A major predicament facing U.S. rulers is that the U.S.'s political ambitions have tended to outstrip its actual economic might. The U.S. is the sole superpower and it is the largest **national** entity in the world economy. But that doesn't mean that the U.S. **controls** the world economy. Although Europe's rate of economic growth has lagged behind the U.S.'s for the past decade, its overall economic output is higher than the U.S.'s. And China and parts of India are becoming increasingly important economic powers, even though most of the rest of the underdeveloped world continues to languish in poverty and backwardness.

When Marx wrote *Capital* the average income in the world's richest country was nine times higher than in the poorest; today it is 50 times higher. The number of billionaires in the world increased 66% over the past three years and their net worth grew by 86%, while tens of millions in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been thrown into utter destitution. The number of people living on less than a dollar a day in Sub-Saharan Africa increased by 100 million since 1990. And average life expectancy has fallen in 34 countries in the developed world since 1990 (see the World Bank's report on *Global Economic Prospects, 2005*).

Meanwhile, China plans to expel 600 million peasants from the land in the next 25 years to obtain the low-wage labor force needed for global capital. It plans on building 400 new cities to house these soon-to-be proletarianized workers, but few can doubt that the future that awaits most of them is sweatshop labor and poverty. By 2030 the number of slum dwellers in poor countries will double to **two billion**—50% of the world's total urban population.

At issue in today's global economy is not just the **quantity** of economic output but the ramifications of an increasingly **globalized** world. Globalization has boosted corporate profits by securing cheaper labor, reducing the turnover time between investment and output, and lowering the cost of capital through a host of competitive pressures. However, globalization's gains are also something of a curse for capitalism, since it increases the connectivity between different units of capital, making it easier for crises to spread from one national entity to another.

For instance, China didn't suffer much from the 1997-98 East Asian economic meltdown because it wasn't yet fully integrated into world capital markets and its currency wasn't freely convertible. Yet since 2000 China has joined the World Trade Organization

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EDITORIAL

Bush locks U.S. into long stay in Iraq

George Bush's televised speech on the evening of Sep. 13 made it plain that the U.S. will maintain a strong military presence in Iraq well into the next president's administration. The speech followed on the highly-anticipated Congressional testimony of General David Petraeus, Bush's military chief in Iraq and a strategist of counter-insurgency tactics. In his testimony, the general delivered precisely the message that the President wanted to hear: the "surge" strategy is working and further time is necessary for it to produce more results. Meanwhile, widespread frustration at the inability of Bush's Democratic Party critics to check his actions in any way is manifesting itself in events like the sizeable anti-war demonstration in Washington D.C. on Sep. 15.

All of the Democratic Party candidates for president claim to oppose the Iraq war. The reality is, however, that the disastrous war launched in 2003 has gone so badly that many in the U.S. ruling class believe that a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops would lead to a situation in which American interests in the Middle East would be seriously compromised. The major Democratic Party candidates realize this—Hillary Clinton has even expressed her opinion that Bush's strategy of arming Sunni tribes in Iraq's Anbar province has yielded results.

This situation has resulted in a kind of oppressive political stasis in which the presence of vocal yet ineffectual critics safely within the political system strengthens Bush's hand immeasurably, while perpetuating the intolerable situation serves Democratic Party electoral strategy in 2008. Further to Bush's advantage is that the nature of the war has, until recently, cushioned the administration from opponents outside the system. The U.S. commitment of a small number of troops relative to past U.S. military commitments limited those Americans directly impacted by the war to the families and loved ones of deployed soldiers—while the rest of the population was left untouched.

Now, however, the toll of dead and seriously wounded soldiers is beginning to be difficult to ignore. Addi-

tionally, the number of returned soldiers, military family members and ordinary people actively opposing the war has grown large enough that in his speech the President was forced to acknowledge—if only in passing—the strong opposition. He even attempted to appease those against the war by claiming to be committed to bringing the troops home through a gradual reduction of U.S. forces to pre-surge levels.

GRIM REALITY IN IRAQ

General Petraeus's tales of good news on the ground in Iraq are highly questionable. One of two main claims of success of the U.S. is its effort in Anbar Province. This highly dangerous strategy of assisting the so-called "Sunni Awakening," in which arms and money are being provided to tribal sheikhs who have begun fighting the hardline jihadist groups that formed in the wake of the U.S. invasion, amounts to simultaneously paying lip service to the Iraqi central government while actively aiding forces that are hostile to it. The Sunni tribal leaders of Anbar resent the dominant role of the Shi'a religious parties in the Iraqi government and the increasingly weak and divided central government for its part now fears that the U.S. is building up a counterbalancing force to itself. There is every reason to believe that this policy is setting the stage for the eventual de facto partition of Iraq into sectarian and ethnic enclaves, both large and small.

In fact, this partitioning of the country is already well underway. Formerly integrated neighborhoods of Baghdad are rapidly becoming divided on solidly sectarian lines through militia violence and intimidation. The U.S. is actually aiding and abetting this process as part of its surge strategy—its second claim to success—by identifying neighborhoods purged of members of the other sect and policed by militias as pacified areas in which violence has diminished. The U.S. military has even walled off one entire Sunni neighborhood from the rest of the city as a means of controlling access to it—literally setting into stone the sectarian division.

The increased U.S. presence in Baghdad has also served to elevate levels of violence in surrounding

towns. Insurgents fleeing the crackdown there simply relocated to carry out further sectarian violence and attacks on American troops. The intra-Iraqi violence itself is taking on an increasingly savage sectarian character, as witnessed by the huge bombing in a Turcomen village called Armili in July that left hundreds dead. Another bombing of a village of Iraq's small religious minority of Yazidis near Mosul in August resulted in a similar death toll.

Simply put, it is not clear how much more success as defined by Bush and General Petraeus the Iraqi people can take.

WILL BUSH PRESS ON?

Given Bush's determination to stay the course in Iraq, conditions there will in all likelihood decline. More families will be driven from their homes, sectarian killings will continue to take place, the grievous situation of women in Iraqi society will further deteriorate, and more people will be adversely impacted by the U.S.'s counterinsurgency campaigns. The extent of Iran's involvement in Iraq is such that the risk of an incident between the two countries that escalates out of control is also present.

Bush and his war cabinet know that the war is unpopular at home, but remain stubbornly committed to pressing on with it. The leaders of the Democratic Party claim to be against the war, but are willing, for their own political reasons, to let the President have his way. Despite these facts, the clamor for change from below is becoming more and more difficult for the politicians to ignore.

Anti-war sentiment is extending far beyond the ranks of the activists and organizers who claim to lead the movement and is now in evidence among people who are no longer willing to tolerate the seemingly open-ended conflict.

A day of nationwide demonstrations against the war in Iraq has been called for Oct. 27 and there is every chance that the turnout may serve to shake the Bush administration's confidence that it can prosecute its war with no accountability whatsoever.

Indigenous struggle in Chiapas continues

By Peter Weir

I traveled to the state of Chiapas, Mexico in March with a solidarity delegation hosted by Higher Grounds Trading Co., a fair trade coffee company based in Lake Leelanau, Michigan. Every year Higher Grounds takes delegations to the farms that grow the coffee eventually sold in the United States in order to establish lasting relationships. We visited the collectively owned farms of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), a movement of indigenous farmers that have created autonomous zones in the face of brutal oppression by both the Mexican government and paramilitary groups.

The Zapatistas first gained the international spotlight when they ignited an armed uprising against the Mexican government on Jan. 1, 1994, the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement went into action, a symbol of the oppressive economic policies that the EZLN were combating.

Their demands were simple, indigenous autonomy and rights protecting their communities, which are among the most dispossessed elements of Mexican society. Their demands were met in 1996 within the San Andrés Accords, an agreement between the EZLN and the federal government that ensured that indigenous autonomy and rights would be protected at the state and national levels.

However, in the 11 years since the signing at San Andrés, the Mexican government has not only left its end of the agreement unfulfilled, but has moved backward in its relations with the indigenous of Chiapas and engaged in campaigns of state-sponsored terror

against the Zapatista communities.

These communities have reorganized themselves into autonomous units, completely separate from the government, that work the land as ejidos, or communal land. Although the ejidos are officially recognized by Mexican law, the Zapatistas informed us of the military's attempt to systematically disassemble collectively owned land and sell it off as private property. Almost every EZLN autonomous zone has experienced this at the hands of the paramilitary group cleverly named, Organization for the Defense of Indigenous and Peasant Rights (OPDDIC).

While we visited the Zapatista autonomous zone of Olga Isabel, locals told us that daily the militia is positioned around the community for a possible land seizure. Frequently OPDDIC attempts to tear down signs proclaiming the existence of autonomous zones as well as paint over Zapatista murals.

The community noted they will not violently engage any official or paramilitary, as all Zapatistas are now practicing purely pacifist resistance. Supporters say that provocations by paramilitaries and the official military welcome a violent reaction, as the Mexican army has the capability to exterminate every Zapatista within a week.

We were invited to the autonomous zone of Nuevo Rosario to help document the atrocities committed there. Recently Zapatistas of other communities, as well as international observers, have come to Nuevo Rosario to deter future attacks.

Local residents of the community detailed events in February explaining that about 140 members of OPDDIC and government supporters came and torched houses, stole wood and animals, decimated trees with chainsaws, broke the community oven to pieces and burned crops such as corn and fruit. Of the Zapatista crops that weren't ruined, many were stolen.

As if the destruction of the community wasn't enough, members of the paramilitary physically attacked families and abused women and children. Practicing pacifism along with all other EZLN, the citizens of Nuevo Rosario could simply watch as the plunderers burned their homes and fields to the ground.

The point was clear. OPDDIC wants to force the Zapatistas to cooperate with government sponsored privatization and to turn their collective land into another free market for capitalists to use at their disposal. The EZLN voices of resistance in Nuevo Rosario echo those of all the autonomous zones, that the struggle is about more than land ownership, but culture as well.

Despite the devastation experienced at Nuevo Rosario one man's answer came easily when asked if they'd stay on the land: "We'll always stay, it's our land that we'll always work and we'll use our word as our weapon."



Zapatistas describe state harassment.

Queer Notes

By Ellse

This year's South Africa National Women's Day celebrations were disturbed by the July murders of three lesbians. Sizakele Sigasa's, Salome Masooa's and Thokozane Qwabe's murders exemplify the persecution GLBT people, especially lesbians—and, even more, Black and mixed-race lesbians—still face in South Africa, despite its constitution being the first in the world (1996) banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. Police investigations into Sigasa's and Masooa's murders are underway while a suspect in Qwabe's murder has been arrested and charged with her murder.

Immigration Equality and Human Rights Watch are concerned that Victoria Arellano, a transgender woman, died, in July, because she was repeatedly denied medical care, including HIV medication. Ms. Arellano was in federal custody at a San Pedro detention center. In late August AIDS/HIV advocates, doctors and lawyers allege that south Florida jails delay, up to months, dispensing medication to a number of HIV positive inmates, 15 of whom have filed complaints. Dr. Ron Shansky, of the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare, emphasizes that HIV medication must be delivered in a timely fashion for the health of affected prisoners.

—From gaynewswatch and 365Gay

Iraq war protests

MEMPHIS, TENN.—Even in a medium-sized city of the Deep South, the rejection of the Iraq War and occupation is strong. On Aug. 28, the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center held a rally outside the Federal Building here, which attracted dozens, though it was the middle of a work day. It featured the Eyes Wide Open Tennessee exhibit—a set of boots for every soldier from Tennessee killed in this war and occupation, together with another collection of 100 shoes, each pair representing 1,000 (or more) Iraqi civilians killed.

Originally, Eyes Wide Open was a traveling exhibit with boots for every U.S. military man and woman killed there, but the ever-climbing death toll made it too big to transport, so it was divided between the 50 states. Along with speeches, two activists—one of them a Vietnam veteran—read out the names of the fallen.

Two weeks later, a different group—the Peace at Pentecost Movement, which brings together laity and clergy from many denominations—held a remembrance of Sept. 11, 2001, which they called "A People of Faith, Not Fear: Working for Peace in a World of War." Along with workshops and an ecumenical service, this included a street-corner rally with over 30 people.

Four years ago, I would have half expected an anti-war rally held in Memphis on the anniversary of Sept. 11 to be attacked with physical violence, maybe even a pickup truck jumping the curb to hit us. But in 2007 we received overwhelming support: honks, waves, and peace signs from numerous passing drivers and passers.

—Anti-war activist



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OUR LIFE AND TIMES

By Kevin A. Barry and Mitch Weerth

Recently, Israel tightened its blockade on the 1.5 million people of the Gaza Strip still further, declaring it a "hostile territory." Already having cut off the movement of people and most goods, it announced on Sept. 20 that it would allow food, water, and medical supplies to cross into Gaza, but that henceforth it "would impose restrictions... to limit the circulation of goods as well as the supply of gasoline and electricity."

Gasoline is necessary for ambulances and electricity is required for the functioning of all medical institutions as well as the water supply, which comes primarily from wells with electric pumps. Such measures would particularly target the most vulnerable: chil-

Argentina's factories

The 156 workers at the Hotel BAUEN in Buenos Aires, one of Argentina's worker-run workplaces, have been threatened again with eviction. The four-star 20-story hotel, built in 1978, has been run entirely by the workers since they re-opened it in 2003, after it was abandoned by the former owners during the 2001 economic meltdown. The government is apparently trying to set a precedent by ordering the eviction, since BAUEN is a very visible example of the success of the cooperative movement, and because it is often used as a free meeting place for the radical movement. Like many occupied factories, more than 150 of which still function, their legal standing has never been resolved.

In August several mass demonstrations were held in Buenos Aires to support the workers, but the mass media in Argentina has mostly stopped reporting on the worker-run factories, so an international campaign has begun to draw attention to BAUEN's predicament. The June mayoral elections in Buenos Aires were a setback because a rightist business tycoon, Mauricio Macri, was elected. He assumes power in December and has already been promising to evict some 19,000 squatters living in abandoned buildings in the capital.

Guatemalan elections

Nearly 50 people, including campaign workers and family members of candidates, were murdered in the months leading up to the Sept. 9 presidential elections in Guatemala—the bloodiest election in 20 years.

Thirty percent of the vote went to General Otto Perez Molina of the Patriotic Party (PP), who promises to crack down on the violence that wracks the country. Perez Molina, former head of the government intelligence agency was involved in some of the massacres of the indigenous population during the 1960-1996 civil war that claimed some 200,000 lives.

Alvaro Colom of the National Union of Hope (UNE), a center-left coalition, took 36% of the vote, and a runoff election is scheduled for Nov. 4. Rigoberta Menchu, who only formed her party (Encuentro por Guatemala) in February, garnered 3%. In another sign of the weakness of the Left, the URNG, the coalition party of former insurgents formed in 1982, fared so poorly that it might lose representation in Congress.

Another sobering element is that Jose Rios Montt, who ruled the country with Ronald Reagan's help in 1982-83, and presided over a campaign that slaughtered some 10,000 people (and displaced another 100,000, according to Amnesty International), won a seat in Congress. This means he will have immunity from prosecution for the next four years, at which time he will be 86 years old. Rigoberta Menchu has succeeded in getting a Spanish court to issue a warrant for his arrest for genocide, but within Guatemala he has been protected by the oligarchy that the U.S. has historically supported.

dren, the elderly, and the ill. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon declared Israel in violation of international law, which prohibits collective punishments on the part of an occupying power.

As usual, the U.S. supported Israel's moves, on the grounds that the fundamentalist Hamas movement, which took power in Gaza, is a terrorist group. Here again, the notion is one of the collective punishment of Palestinian people. They are "guilty" of having voted for Hamas in the January 2006 elections and then for largely supporting Hamas during the mini-civil war last June, which overthrew the remnants of the more secular but corrupt Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Gaza.

Under the grand illusion that they can impose a settlement on the Palestinian people, the U.S. and Israel are now supporting the PLO's Mahmoud Abbas, who holds power in the West Bank. But Israel has only played at negotiating with Abbas. Its biggest concession has been the release of a few hundred Palestinian prisoners, out of the 11,000 Israel is holding! Abbas's

Israel...and its lobby

support shrinks further every time he's photographed with an Israeli or U.S. official, while no concrete moves are taken to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state. The reactionary Hamas is the gainer here.

The U.S. gives Israel wide latitude to attack neighboring states. Thus, it said absolutely nothing after Israel bombed Syria, also in September. Neither the U.S. nor Israel will publicly discuss the raid, but leaks to the media suggest the possibility of an attack on a nuclear power facility.

In the U.S., there is not a hint of criticism of Israel's occupation, of its aggression, or of its apartheid-like wall through the West Bank in the speeches of any of the leading presidential candidates. In addition, a McCarthyite campaign of vilification on the part of the Israel Lobby rains down upon any and all critics of Israel. The Lobby succeeded in getting Professor Norman Finkelstein fired from DePaul University, despite strong faculty support for his scholarship.

Some critics of Israel, whether on the Left or those on the Right like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, authors of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, argue that the Lobby is distorting U.S. foreign policy. This too is an illusion, behind which hides the notion of an "honest" imperialism, not swayed by "special interests."

As historian Mark LeVine noted in a review of *The Israel Lobby*, "In fact, it is the other way around. The United States has been using Israel to fulfill its policies objectives for four decades, right up to last summer, when the Bush administration encouraged a disastrous proxy war with Hezbollah as a way of testing the weapons and tactics of Iran, Hezbollah's main sponsor, in the event of a U.S. attack" (*Asia Times*, Sept. 7, 2007).

Human Rights Watch has just issued a damning 243-page report on the 2006 war, which concludes: "Most of the civilian deaths resulted from Israel's frequent failure to abide by a fundamental obligation of the laws of war: the duty to distinguish between military targets and civilians.... Hezbollah did at times violate the laws of war by firing rockets from or storing ammunition in civilian areas, but those violations were not widespread and did not account for the vast majority of civilian deaths that we investigated."

Japan resignation

The resignation of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his replacement by fellow Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader Yasuo Fukuda represents more than a changing of the guard, for Fukuda hails from a less reactionary wing of the LDP.

Abe had pursued a hard-right politics, whether on the death penalty, militarization, denial of World War II war crimes and sex slavery, or cooperation with the U.S. war machine in Afghanistan. Moreover, he lacked the populist touch of his equally right-wing predecessor, Junichiro Koizumi.

Japan now dominates global capitalist markets in robotics, flat screens, digital cameras, and microchips, with Toyota having displaced General Motors as the world's largest automobile company. At the same time, Japan exhibits the most rapidly growing domestic economic disparities between citizens of any of the industrialized countries.

This has finally come back to haunt the LDP, resulting in their crushing defeat at the hands of the opposition Democratic Party (DP) in July elections for the upper house of parliament. The DP, itself fairly conservative, took advantage of government callousness toward pensioners and of a major accident at a nuclear power plant. The DP has also vowed to end the Japanese Navy's involvement in logistical support for the war in Afghanistan.

Burma awakens



As we go to press, the military rulers of Burma (Myanmar) seem to have gained the upper hand over the democratic movement, which brought tens of thousands onto the streets in anti-regime protests in September. Not since 1988, when a mass uprising involving millions was bloodily suppressed, has the movement been able to mobilize this kind of numbers.

In August, the regime provoked the long-suffering working people with a sharp rise in the prices of fuel and cooking oil. Within days, student youth were taking to the streets, in the face of the government's vigilantes. In September, young Buddhist monks took the lead, a group the regime hesitated to attack as forcefully as it had the students. It was at this point that tens of thousands came into the streets.

Some called openly for the military to step down, while others spoke quietly of "revolution." There have been scattered reports of rank-and-file soldiers refusing orders. It would take deep cracks inside the 400,000-strong military to topple a regime that has not hesitated to wage war on its own people.

Burma's students, working people, and national minorities have a long history of struggle. They are working out new forms of resistance, using cellphones and the internet to contact each other and the outside world. Win or lose, they have written a new page in their country's long and painful struggle for liberation.

—Oct. 1, 2007

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.