

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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## WORKSHOP TALKS

### Affirmative action on job and campus

by Htun Lin

On March 8 I attended a teach-in and rally to reverse the ban on affirmative action at the California-Berkeley campus. Over 3,000 students participated, many from high schools from all over the Bay Area. There were huge contingents of high school students bused in from West Oakland, East Oakland, and San Francisco Hunters' Point—predominantly Black, Latino, and Asian student districts.

School bureaucrats from both sides of the bay chided the students as well as their teachers for attending a "political rally instead of doing curriculum." Many of these bureaucrats, like new Oakland School Superintendent Chaconas, are uncomfortable with students taking up a real life curriculum which includes one's overall concrete future and not just academics.

The demand for affirmative action came out of the much broader Civil Rights Movement. Affirmative action as a government concession to the movement started with the "Great Society" under President Johnson and expanded under President Nixon. Even before the Vietnam War took off, some of the youth who went to Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964, such as Mario Savio (a student at this very campus), began to ask what the fundamental nature and purpose of an education was. He went so far as to declare that some-

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## BLACK/RED VIEW

### Ashcroft's racism

by John Alan

While nothing can legitimize the presidency of George W. Bush even as the protests have died down, we have to focus on his administration's plans to deal with the historical and vital issue of African-American civil rights. Bush told the nation that his theory of governing is "to work with every Cabinet member to set goals for each area of our government...I hope the American people realize that a good executive is one that understands how to recruit people and how to delegate."

Bush selected the ultra-conservative Senator John Ashcroft to serve as the U.S. Attorney General in this collective team-like version of his administration. When he was the attorney general of Missouri, in the late '70s and early '80s, he waged a bitter legal battle against court-ordered desegregation of public schools for St. Louis and Kansas City. Later, when he ran for Governor of Missouri, he attacked his opponent for not being hostile enough to desegregation. And when he became governor, he vetoed laws designed to promote voter registration in predominantly African-American St. Louis. Hence, Bush will "work and set goals" with a cabinet member who has a terrible public record on race.

Ashcroft recently met with the Congressional Black Caucus. He told the Black lawmakers that he wouldn't oppose any African American Bush chose to appoint to the Supreme Court or federal district courts and that he hopes the Congress would pass legislation to address the problem of racial profiling by the police. If Congress fails to act, he would draft his own recommendations unconstitutional deprivation of equal protection under our Constitution."

Ashcroft was not a repentant racist when he spoke to Black lawmakers, he was just complying with Bush's concept of a "compassionate conservative." The limit of that "compassion" was revealed when Rep. Charles Rangel of New York asked him to reopen the Justice Department investigation into the death of Amadou Diallo, who was shot and killed by New York City policemen as he was preparing to enter his own apartment. According to the Black lawmakers, Ashcroft told them that he was not inclined to reopen

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## Layoffs pile up, reality of global capitalism sets in

by A. Anielewicz

The United States and Japan, the world's two largest economies, now both stand on the brink of recession—if indeed they have not succumbed already. Simultaneous recessions in these two nations could well bring down the whole world economy, since together they account for about two-fifths of world output and the whole of the global capitalist system is linked to them in myriad ways. This threat comes scarcely two years after the last global economic crisis which ripped throughout East Asia and beyond threatened the world's financial structure with collapse.

The case of Japan's economy is an instructive one, since it may show the U.S. the image of its own future. Analysts are increasingly pointing to several striking parallels between the Japanese economy of the 1980s and the U.S. economy of the 1990s, including an explosion of stock and real estate prices, a deterioration of savings, and rapid growth of business investment and GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

### OMEN IN DOOMED JAPANESE ECONOMY

In the case of Japan, these trends proved to be unsustainable. The bubble burst, sending the economy into a deep recession, followed by a full decade of relative stagnation and now the prospect of another serious downturn. The question facing the U.S. is whether the fallout from the recent bursting of the Nasdaq stockmarket bubble will be confined to the dot com and high-tech sectors, or whether history will repeat itself.

Far from "priming the pump" to an economic recovery, the Japanese government's 13 rescue packages during the last decade have instead contributed to a soaring public debt. This debt, which now exceeds 130% of the country's GDP, has recently been downgraded by Standard and Poor's to "junk-bond" status.

Although growing GDP at the end of 2000 reversed a decline earlier in the year, more recent statistics tell a different story. Japan's unemployment rate has risen to a record 4.9%, industrial production is plummeting, unsold goods are piling up, household spending is falling, and the country is suddenly importing more than it is exporting.

## Power struggle in a polarized Ukraine

Kiev, Ukraine—March 9 was in many respects a turning point in the development of the Ukrainian political situation. The united bourgeois opposition and pro-fascist group UNA-UNSO took to the streets, while the police and the security apparatus (the SBU, formerly the KGB) used force to defend the other bourgeois clan, President Leonid Kuchma's. The street fighting was a serious test for militants of the recently established anti-fascist Left United Front, which our organization helped found.

The events developed as follows: In the early morning of March 9, about 300 police and SBU troops had blocked Shevchenko Park, where President Kuchma was planning on bringing flowers to the monument of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. A column of 150 people from the bourgeois opposition (followers of Prime Minister Viktor Yeschenko) came to the park, attacked the police and tried to break through the cordon surrounding Kuchma.

By 9:30 a.m. over 4,000 persons from groups associated with the rightist opposition came to the park. About 100 persons of the anti-fascist Left United Front and other Left organizations arrived at the park around the same time.

The task of leftists in such a situation is to use it to sharpen the conflict with the aim of presenting a real Left alternative to the struggle between the two bourgeois clans and the neo-Nazi groups. Our contingent was subjected to a double attack. From the park we

The threat posed by deflation—falling prices—is even more alarming. Japanese real estate and stock prices have fallen throughout the last decade, joined by declining consumer prices during the last two years. By depressing incomes, this deflationary trend has made the payback of debts more onerous, helping to push bankruptcies to a record high. As a result, Japan's banking sector stands in danger of widespread collapse, especially now that declining stock prices have made it harder for the banks to use their stockholdings to paper over losses from bad loans.

Perhaps the best measure of how dire is Japan's economic situation is the fact that even the government itself now speaks about it in the frankest terms. In recent weeks, its

finance minister has conceded that Japan's "public finances are very near collapse." The central bank has warned that the economy faces the "threat of deterioration." And a leading member of the ruling party and potential prime minister has characterized the economic situation as "a life-or-death crisis for the country."

### U.S. CAPITALISM SLIDES TO THE EDGE

Like Japan, the U.S. economy as a whole narrowly avoided falling into recession at the end of last year. The manufacturing sector, however, has certainly experienced a steep decline. Between last July and February, 426,000 manufacturing jobs—2.3% of the sector's total employment—have been eliminated, and overtime hours have been cut back to the lowest level since 1992. Output has fallen by about 2.5% since September in the sector as a whole, and by a whopping 22% in the auto industry.

Through February, employment in the economy as a whole kept growing at near-normal levels. Yet it seems likely that this trend will reverse itself. Falling profits are causing companies to announce tens of thousands of layoffs—18,000 at Motorola, 13% of its total workforce; up to 8,000 at Cisco Systems; 5,000 each at Compaq and Intel... and the list goes on.

Several other phenomena also suggest that recession is likely. Among them are the decline in prof-

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were attacked by police, and from Volodymyrska Street we were attacked by neo-Nazis from the groups Tryzub (Trident, led by Stepan Bandera) and the Social Nationalist Party of Ukraine (SNPU).

We succeeded in repulsing the attack of the Nazis, but police shoved us back. Our column included about 15 injured persons and even more arrested.

At 4 p.m. the police began to make mass arrests of the participants of the pro-fascist UNA-UNSO and some left activists. About 200 persons are still in prison, including 50 left activists. Two members of our organization were also arrested and released after two days. Everyone arrested may be put in prison from two to ten years for organizing and participating in mass disorders.

### BATTLES OF IDEAS IN THE LEFT

On March 15 the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) and its satellite organization, the All-Ukrainian

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## ON THE INSIDE

FROM THE MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES—

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## Woman as Reason

by Terry Moon

*"In our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary... Even the pure light of science seems unable to shine but on a dark background of ignorance. All our inventions and progress seem to result in endowing material forms with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other hand; this antagonism between the productive powers and social relations of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming and not to be controverted."*

—Karl Marx, 1856

The clash over embryonic stem cell research and how, in the reactionary political climate in the U.S., it

cannot be separated from the debate over a woman's right to an abortion, reveals a right wing so crazed that they claim a grouping of a few cells is a human being. That's why the anti-woman Pope condemned stem cell research as "not morally acceptable," despite the great promise it offers to alleviate a host of debilitating diseases from

Parkinson's to brain, heart and nerve diseases. President Bush, more than anxious to appease his anti-abortion fanatic backers, said in his campaign he "would oppose federally funded research for experimentation on embryonic stem cells that require live human embryos to be destroyed." When Bush's choice for Health and Human Services secretary, Tommy Thompson, said he was troubled by the law restricting embryonic stem cell research, he was slapped back into his usual reactionary place by the White House.

Most illuminating of the misogynist Right's attitude in conflating stem cell research into an anti-abortion agenda, is an Arizona law only recently overturned on account of "vagueness." It bars any research involving fetal tissue gathered from an abortion unless the procedure is "strictly necessary to diagnose a disease or condition in the mother... and only if the abortion was performed because of such disease or condition." In other words, only stem cells from abortions from "good women," that is, women who have to have an abortion because they are sick or would die, will be used. No

# Religious Right fetters stem cell research

woman who chooses an abortion because she doesn't have enough money to raise a child, or because her husband abuses her and the children, or her birth control failed, will be allowed to feel that the product of her body, her abortion, might be used in research that could help others. This retrogressive punitive attitude to women is a hallmark of the right wing's anti-abortion fanaticism and has polluted emerging stem cell science.

What should be science—how stem cells help cure disease and better human life—has for over a decade been denied federal funding because of the anti-abortion zealotry. It also has meant that what science does exist has been unregulated, leaving the reproductive technology industry—where most stem cells used in research come from—open to doctors, researchers, and

businessmen who care more, much more, about profit than women's lives.

That's one reason it's not a simple question. While we oppose the right wing's suppression of research that could transform medicine, in our alienated world the liberal alternative has another set of problems that impact women negatively.

Even the guidelines drafted by the National Institutes of Health under former President Clinton go out of their way to disempower women. They state that women "will have no control over how the embryos and the stem cells are used and who will get them." It takes away from women—especially poor women—any power they might have had in obtaining medicine created by research done on their own cells, for those they love and themselves.

Feminist writer Ann Pappert points out another serious repercussion of stem cell research done under the racist, sexist, capitalist system we inhabit. She warns in the June/July 2000 issue of *Ms.* that if stem cell research proves successful:

"The potential for exploitation is staggering. For the first time since the development of ART's (assisted reproductive technologies), women could be used to 'manufacture' a product—their eggs—in a way that was inconceivable in the past... It's not hard to imagine that a market in women's eggs could spring up.

"Poor women of all races, both in the U.S. and

abroad, could be vulnerable to exploitation as a source for eggs."

This is exactly what Marx meant when he said, "To have one basis for science and another for life is a priori a lie." With stem cell research we see how science has become so divided from life, so determined by capitalism and by the right-wing ideology that is inseparable from it, that "this antagonism between the productive powers and social relations of our epoch" is being played out with women's bodies and lives. Nothing drives home more forcefully the need for a society built on new human foundations.

## Women Worldwide

### On International Women's Day 2001

by Mary Jo Grey

More than 1,000 women demonstrated in Colombo, **SRI LANKA** demanding an end to a 17-year civil war and protesting increases in taxes and utility prices.

Amid rumors that two Somali women had been sentenced to death for "unnatural behavior," tens of thousands of women in traditional dress rallied in Mogadishu, **SOMALIA** demanding an end to killing in the Horn of Africa.

Thousands of Kurdish women in **TURKEY** held a minute of silence for victims of rape and honor killings—often by members of their own families.

Women's groups in **KENYA** were outraged at President Daniel arap Moi's IWD remarks that women "should have gone very far" but "have not made much progress" because of their "little minds." "What gains are we celebrating if the gains are being taken away?" asked Adelina Mwau of the Coalition on Violence Against Women.

Women farmers in **BRAZIL** demonstrated in major cities against unfair economic policies worldwide.

A group of 2,000 mostly South African women held a mass Women in Black vigil in Capetown, **SOUTH AFRICA** protesting—everything! Slogans ran the gamut from "Stop Abuse of Women," "Say No to Fundamentalism," "End Exploitation by the IMF and World Bank," to a few Israeli Occupation of Palestine and many other causes. —Gila Svirsky



### Emergency Action for Women's Lives

Join NOW on April 22, 2001 to help  
**Keep Abortion Legal!**

Declaring the current threat to women's reproductive rights a state of emergency, NOW is targeting the U.S. Senate to save abortion rights and reproductive freedom and to stop Bush's upcoming attempt to pack the Supreme Court with nominees who do not support the right to abortion.

NOW is also calling on activists to organize lobbying events at district offices during the Senate recess, April 7-22, and at federal courthouses in the event of a Supreme Court vacancy. The demand is that all nominees to the Court pledge to uphold *Roe v. Wade*, and that Senators reject any who do not. This is the first time in decades that the national board of NOW has called on all its branches to make one issue their priority.

The April 22 demonstration will begin at 11 a.m. at Senate Park and march to the Capitol steps. For information, call (212) 627-9895.

## WAC is back!

**Memphis, Tenn.**—WAC (Women's Action Coalition) has started up again after about a six-month hiatus. One of the first things we decided to do was to investigate one of the many phony abortion clinics here, with plans to picket them and give out information to women going in who think these sectarian right-wing non-clinics will help them get an abortion.

We chose Life Choices, partly because their owner is one of the main people harassing women going into legitimate abortion clinics—you know, the kind with real doctors who don't tell a pack of lies.

Our WAC operatives—Adrian, pretending to be pregnant, had saved a bottle of urine from a pregnant friend for a week—found exactly what we'd expected. The "counselor" was scolding and condescending, and extremely self-righteous. She asked personal questions like "What would your father say?" to "Have any in your family had unexpected pregnancies?"

She preached about "God's plan" and when directly asked why they list themselves under "abortion" in the Yellow Pages, she replied: "So that we can help those like you and hopefully show you the right path."

In trying to threaten women out of an abortion they offer them The Baby Steps Program, portraying it to be bigger than it is. Only after attending workshops, watching videos, and being monitored and "counseled" by anti-abortion Christian fundamentalist volunteers, can a woman redeem her "baby steps" for a few items of clothing and toiletries.

The lies they ply women with include horrific descriptions of abortions, saying women's cervixes were removed, that babies' skulls are penetrated with scissors, and that abortions cause breast cancer, and that women experience "post-abortion syndrome," which they claim is just like post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by soldiers who've been in wars.

Our next step is creating a leaflet that tells the truth about these clinics and handing it out in front of "Lying Choices." For too long we've put up with them. We want to put them on the defensive and our weapon will be the truth. WAC is watching! We will take action!

—WACer

## Women rethinking the future

**Chicago**—On March 10, 300 women converged at the DePaul Center in downtown Chicago to attend the "International Women's Day 2001: Rethinking Our Future" conference. The day opened with a plenary made up of a diverse group of powerful women. Nandita Das, the famous Indian actor who starred in the internationally acclaimed film "Fire," spoke of her days of working as a social activist as well as about her impressive catalogue of films by and about women.

Toni Bond, the first minority director of the Chicago Abortion Fund and a founding member of African American Women Evolving, spoke on reproductive rights in a global and human rights context. The third and youngest speaker, Migdalia Jimenez, spoke of her work in the anti-sweatshop campaign and urged the movement to break down the division between global and local. This sentiment caught the spirit of the conference as a whole. (See "Latina Sweated Labor," page 3.)

Workshops throughout the day dealt with issues essential to the present and future of young and old women of all colors and persuasions. The discussions were wide-ranging—environmental problems, hate/discrimination, reproductive choice/health, violence, both personal and institutional, globalization of capital and theories of liberation. This showed the range and depth of what a new women's liberation movement could look like in 2001.

At the workshop "Feminism and Theories of Liberation" speakers and participants alike battled out the question of alternatives to capitalism, taking a closer look at anarchism and Marxist-Humanism. All there, especially the youth, seemed to feel the need for a theoretical and philosophic discussion. Representatives of the vanguardist Left that decided to show up did not help matters by trying to dominate discussion with their party lines, but the youth there did not let them funnel the discussion into their perverted version of

history and "Marxism."

At the workshop "Women Fighting Back Against the Criminal Injustice System" Gwendolyn Hogan told the harrowing story of her "progress" through the Illinois prison system and the havoc her framed-up, wrongful conviction wrought upon the lives of herself and her two bright children. We were highly privileged to hear her story and felt inspired by her firm and effective resistance.

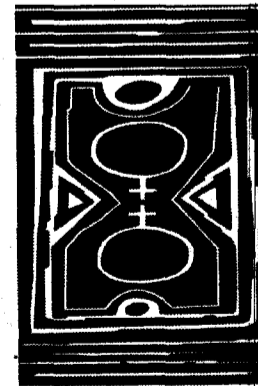
All of the workshops showed the creative struggles of women from all classes and races. The conference gave everyone the opportunity to put their particular struggles in the context of a larger movement.

Over 100 women stayed until the end of the day for the wrap-up session where we discussed the possibility of continuing to "Rethink Our Future" as an organization until next International Women's Day. Some of our discussion dealt with whether we could be satisfied with less than a completely new society. Would reform satisfy us? How could we make the kinds of revolutionary changes that would really

improve the lives of people on the planet? This led to the question "What is a movement?" especially pertinent for the post-1960s generation that was represented. Some contradictions did come out in the wrap-up, particularly a tension between those who just wanted to get out there and do activity—"each one teach one"—and those who thought we needed to educate ourselves as a movement to decide what our goals and visions for the future are.

After a few ideas on this question were aired, three actors performed sketches from the "Vagina Monologues." Then we watched the movie "Jane," about the pre-*Roe vs. Wade* underground abortion providers in Chicago. All in all, it was an important day for women's liberation in Chicago, and showed the possibility for a new beginning for the women's movement.

—January B. and Maya Jhansi



## Sealy flees union in Memphis

Memphis, Tenn.—Sealy Mattress Company has said they will close this plant and transfer our work to plants in Georgia, Texas and Ohio. Only the Ohio plant is unionized.

The rumor is that they are going to close soon. So we, with IUE/Furniture Workers Local 282, had meetings to negotiate the closing. The company said there wasn't anything we could do to keep them from closing because of the low quality of the mattresses.

They did agree that if they reopened a plant within 100 miles of Memphis, the employees working here now would have preference in hiring. The workers could vote on still being represented by Local 282.

While they blame the workers for poor quality, mismanagement is a lot of it. They have daily teardowns. Some days we score high and some days we don't. We'll be running out of material and supplies to work with. The plant manager, the production manager, and two of the supervisors knew nothing about mattresses when they came here. The inspectors would pull poor quality stuff off the line and then be told to send it on.

Sealy crumbled after the current plant manager, John Luke, came in. With the attendance policy he pushed through, you can't be off for any reason. If you're off a day, you will get two points. If you don't call in, you get three points. If you work 60 days, only one point comes off. After 12 points they fire you. A lot of people got fired under it.

Their expectation is that you complete your scheduled production no matter how long it takes. We have business to take care of, doctor's appointments or whatever, and we try to schedule them after work. You

know what time you go to work but you don't ever know what time you're going to get off work. Just because I couldn't do overtime one day they gave me a point!

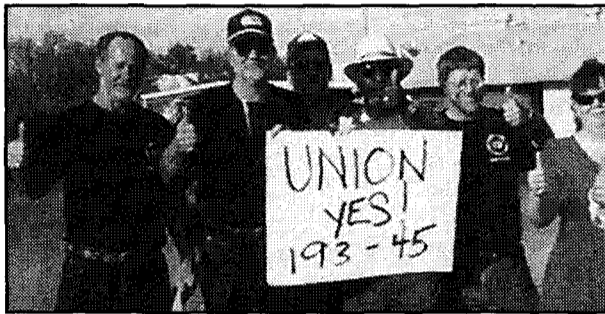
They hired a lot of people because they fired a lot of people, but no one was training new hires. Luke was mainly hiring Mexicans. They didn't have anybody in management to train them, so they learned from the other employees. I'm sure the Mexicans and Blacks were all told the same thing, don't join the union.

I feel that they are closing the plant because of the union. The production manager told me and several other workers that the reason the plant was closing now was because of our attitude. Even the plant manager said that to some of the workers.

The morale is very low, and has been for quite some time. We're not really surprised and not really upset. We've been expecting this because we know that this just ain't the way to run a business. With the way management has treated people, we feel we can do better than this.

—Black woman worker

## Globalization at home



Texas mailhandlers celebrate union victory.

St. Paul, Minn.—Rank-and-file workers who had spearheaded union organizing on the job were the heart of the labor conference at Macalester College here at the end of February. Truckdrivers with privately contracted intercity mailhandlers from Texas to Pennsylvania and North Carolina shared their experiences organizing their fellow workers into the APWU alongside government postal workers.

Other panels included activist meatpackers, nurses and flight attendants. Panelists from Eritrea to Mexico proved the observation of Globalization at Home conference organizer Peter Rachleff that anywhere in the country union organizing would involve immigrant workers—until recently, that had been true only in port-of-entry cities like Chicago or Los Angeles.

More than one participant repeated the sobering statistics that union membership has fallen under 13% of the workforce, and has plummeted farther to just 9% in the private sector. That would be grounds for despair in this era of plant closings and privatization if unions continued to rely only on bankrolling mostly Democratic politicians, especially in the face of roll-backs which George W. Bush is set on implementing.

Testimony at the conference indicated how readily workers have responded to unionization campaigns even, as in the earliest days of the U.S. labor movement, when workers are newly arrived immigrants with little English. A film shown on last year's victory of HERE workers at the Holiday Inn Express detailed the rallies in ethnic communities and translations into 14 languages that supported the strike of native-born Black and white workers alongside Tibetan, Bosnian, Latin American and a world of other workers. The divisions which many a union has regarded as obstacles to organizing may be the basis of self-organization.

—Bob McGuire

## Migrant labor runs capitalist machine

In the 16th century Africa became a major source of cheap labor and Africans were looked upon as socially and racially inferior. Modern capitalism has changed only the standard and degree of the system of slavery. This time it is not only Africans but the workers of the majority of the world's populace who are being integrated into global capital. Ancient slavery is being replaced with modern, industrial slavery—with the spirit of ancient slavery largely kept intact.

Most people in the developed world are living longer and their societies are importing younger workers. While Third World countries' populations continue to grow and become younger, the developed world's population is shrinking before our eyes.

The Japanese government has predicted that during the next 50 years it will have to import 47.5 million workers. Each year 1.1 million workers are immigrating to the U.S. Some 500,000 "illegal" immigrants are smuggled into West Europe each year.

The German government has called for an extra 20,000 software specialists to be recruited in India. Ireland is considering proposals to import 200,000 skilled workers over the next seven years.

At the same time, these governments want to admit only cheap, skilled foreign laborers who can be easily expelled once they are no longer needed.

Those who are influenced by capitalist ideology and media propaganda do not blame elected governments for this situation, but victimize refugees and foreigners. Life as a foreign laborer in Europe today is one of second-class citizenship: poverty, unemployment, low-paying jobs. Such attitudes are fanned by politicians chasing votes.

Human rights groups have documented that since 1993 over 2,000 refugees have drowned in rivers trying to get across a European border. Many others have been killed by border guards or fascists.

In order to make Third World people immigrate to the West, the imperialists need to create instability and civil war in their homelands. It's no wonder that the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO impose harsh conditions on Third World countries.

In 1994 the World Bank and IMF imposed a currency devaluation on 14 West African countries. About 80 million people woke up one morning to find that their basic goods had doubled in price. The government cuts demanded by the IMF usually fall heaviest on poor people, affecting health care, education, food subsidies and housing.

The western countries do not recognize their responsibility for the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees. They have replaced refugee rights with an immigration policy designed to import skilled, cheap, and selective immigrants.

—Naser, refugee in Holland

## Latina sweated labor

Chicago—Latinas in this country and abroad are still very poor, working class and exploited. Working women as a community have to start putting ourselves in a much larger context. We have to stop thinking of ourselves as just from the U.S. and realize that we are working-class women of this world. To me this is an issue because sweatshops and exploitation are not just overseas. But many organizations limit it to helping people somewhere else. They don't realize that a couple steps away there's a sweatshop.

Across the board, day laborers or the people who work in factories are Latinas. We have to stop the dichotomy of global and local. When you see austerity measures in the Third World countries as people call them, with the IMF and neo-liberal policies, we have to look at our own country in the U.S. Under the Clinton regime there were social cuts and welfare reform. We're not separate from the women of these other countries.

I'm a student at DePaul University. I also do a lot of work with SLAP, which we like to call "SLAP the Bosses." It's actually Student Labor Action Project. It tries to get students like me to do work with labor, to make sure that we're getting connected with issues in Chicago. If there are any strikes, if there's anything going on, we're there. We don't want to be separated as students and we don't want to become bourgeois just because we are college students either.

I was able to go to the outskirts of Chicago, to Rosemont and do salting, going undercover to document the labor laws that are being violated. This was real easy because I went in to ask for a job only speaking Spanish. They thought that they were going to be able to exploit me. Instead we turned the tables and took advantage of that situation, the power structure that exploits women, and women of color especially.

It was everything that you hear a sweatshop is: forced overtime, you stay until they tell you to; you don't get all the pay on your pay check for all the hours you do; dangerous fumes, they don't tell you what they are. I was working next to a 14-year-old girl who just came from Mexico. Everybody there was an undocumented immigrant. I was able to document these things and take them to the union. Right now they're still unionizing.

—Migdalia Jimenez

From remarks at the celebration of International Women's Day which Women's Liberation-News and Letters Committee helped organize in Chicago.

## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

times you have to put your body on the grinding wheels in the machinery of this rotten system to stop it.

He saw the existing educational system as part of that overall machinery of destruction and exploitation, because the university is "a factory to a large extent...it has its manager...and employees, the faculty...and raw materials, that's us... That is the issue. Arbitrary power, alienation, the managers and the managed...after a while the people get tired of being treated, you know, by managers, as managed."

As a healthcare worker, the question for me about affirmative action is whether it means a new way of being managed from above or does it mean workers and students managing their own lives. At Kaiser Hospitals where I work the AFL-CIO, our health workers union, and Kaiser management marketed a top-down "partnership" to us by promoting more service-worker type jobs for more minorities.

They sold out striking nurses who rejected management's restructuring cuts in staff and patient care, as well as hospital and ER closures, which were hurting predominantly poor and minority communities. But, that didn't stop our union from posturing as an "advocate" for the predominantly minority service workers.

It's not enough to simply demand more job positions or more college admissions or seats at Boalt Law School or, worse, to be simply "equal" on a par with our white counterparts, while staying within the limits of a narrow vision of abstract "equality" within the present bounds of exploitative production relations.

When youth begin to challenge the whole educational establishment whose ideology is to treat students as mere raw material for the job market, youth activity also challenges the alienated job world of capitalism, where workers are treated as mere raw material for commodity production and capital's accumulation and expansion.

In fact, even before the teach-in was finished, students had already begun to gather around the GAP and Foot Locker stores, two well known chains of over-priced commodities produced by sweatshop labor in impoverished countries. Some students began to leave those stores with goods in hand. Soon enough, the Berkeley police arrived in full riot gear, even though no riot took place. The corporate media then predictably dubbed the teach-in event as "marred by rioting and looting by Black teenagers."

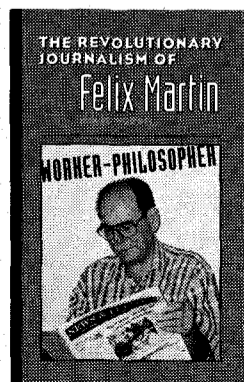
Some adult organizers managing the event adopted this stereotypically cynical view and even said "this is embarrassing...this teach-in is not about this." This attitude fails to see that the youth by their very bold actions step outside of capitalism's rules of commodity exchange.

A similar divide between the leaders and those who are led, between the managers and those managed, also exists in the workplace. When we rank-and-file workers actively enforce a strong picket line, management will call in the cops to prevent "violence" against their property.

That's why we workers feel an affinity with students educating themselves about the whole society and the way it functions, because they are beginning to ask just what kind of education do we really want, and to what ends, and what kinds of jobs do we really want, and to whose benefit? These questions will not be answered when we limit ourselves to only fighting for more of what the other side is keeping from us, be it college admissions or wages and benefits.

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From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya  
MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES

Editor's Note

The following consists of excerpts of comments made by Raya Dunayevskaya during the 1978 Convention of News and Letters Committees, in response to a question from the floor about the meaning of dialectical philosophy. It has never before appeared in print. We publish it now as part of our ongoing effort to raise and work out the question "Why Dialectics? Why Now?" (See the announcement for an upcoming series of discussions on this, below.) The original can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 5791.

I come from Russia 1917, and the ghettos of Chicago, where I first saw a Black person. The reason that I'm starting that way is that I was illiterate. You're born in a border town. There's a revolution, there's a counter-revolution, there's anti-Semitism. You know nothing, but experience a lot, especially if you happen to be born a revolutionary. You don't know that you're a revolutionary, but you're opposed to everything.

If the capitalists were only exploiting us they wouldn't last a minute. It's because they have all the mass media, as well as the exploitation, all the education, everything with which to brainwash us and make us think that their ideas are our ideas—"If I only think about myself and my family, I will get somewhere" is that type of idea—that they are able to perpetuate this exploitative system.

Now how does it happen that an illiterate person, who certainly didn't know Lenin and Trotsky, who as a child had never seen a Black person, had begun to develop all the revolutionary ideas to be called Marxist-Humanism in the 1950s? It isn't personal whatsoever. If you live when an idea is born and a great revolution in the world is born, it doesn't make any difference where you are. That becomes the next stage of the development of humanity. You know it in your bones in something as simple as when you say, "No!" to your Mama who wants to put you in pink and the boy child in blue....

Take Rosa Parks. Do you think she thought she was starting a revolution? No, she was tired as all get-out! She had just worked a full day. She was tired and just wasn't going to get up again to move to the back of the bus to give her seat to a white man who hadn't labored as hard as she. And the Black youths who were sitting there seeing this middle-aged woman being dragged off to the police station, said, let's not let Rosa Parks be all alone there.

What did Rosa Parks do by that one action? She started the entire Black revolution in the South! She's the one that made Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. the "leader." King would never have been leader if a movement for freedom hadn't started from below, spontaneously.

What is important is that you are so natural an opponent of this system that you will bring on the revolution. Your one action of opposition to the system makes you part of that revolutionary movement, and you did it, not because you were "unconscious"—that's what they think you were—but because you were born a revolutionary and don't like the damn system under which we live!

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

The reason it is important not only to be a revolutionary and not like the capitalist system and want to start a revolution—is that we have had too many aborted revolutions, too many unfinished ones! We have to contend with the fact: What is it, why is it so?....

Take any one of the revolutions that have happened. What was great about Russia 1917? They had a successful revolution. They had a Lenin! Was Trotsky the same as Lenin? It sounds like he was. He was not only on the right side of the barricades. He led that great proletarian revolution, he built up the Red Army, and he was next to Lenin in political stature. But did he undergo the same reorganization of himself [as did Lenin]? When World War I happened and there was the Second International's betrayal, did Trotsky think that, though he didn't betray, nevertheless he too had to reorganize his thinking because the historic respon-

Dialectics: The algebra of revolution

sibility for such a betrayal of existing Marxism needed more of an answer than just: "I didn't betray?"

Yes, Lenin and Trotsky found themselves on the same side of the barricades, and that's what the Trotskyists always paraded out—and I as a Trotskyist for years helped Trotsky parade out that fact. But how did it follow from that that there was no difference between Trotsky and Lenin? It's not true! Trotsky was on the same side of the barricades as Lenin, but Lenin had undergone a transformation on philosophy as well. Lenin was leaving us a heritage, the steps by which to recapture the philosophic, historic link of continuity with the Marxian-Hegelian dialectic.

Put differently, Lenin said: We Russians are backward. We have done the revolution in a country that is not supposed to have had it. Without the revolution in Germany, we'll certainly die! But the other revolutions will know not only from something we did and were successful but also from where we pointed to in a world context, in a new relationship.

He was saying: We have found out that we whites are so conceited, because we have run this world for so long, that if [the revolution] didn't happen in Germany, with the tradition of Hegel and Marx, and of being technologically advanced—if it didn't happen there, what are we going to do? Fold up and die? No! We have to point to new beginnings.

And the new beginnings in 1920, at the Second Congress [of the Communist International] was that [Lenin said] despite our conceit, the majority of the people in the world are Black and Red and Yellow. If the counter-revolution can be stopped, and on a world scale, not from Berlin but from Peking or wherever, then we should be willing to sacrifice [the Russian Revolution] for that world revolution.

[Lenin also told] the editors of the new theoretical journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* to publish Hegel, naturally from a materialist point of view, but the dialectic is the pivot. He said call yourselves "Materialist Friends of the Hegelian Dialectic."

So he left us beginnings, both global and philosophic. What did Trotsky do? Trotsky said, I was on the right side of the barricades, but we lost the revolution, and therefore because I'm a revolutionary the difference between us is reformism. But that wasn't the only difference. A new philosophic ground he did not have, a new Subject of revolution he did not have. He kept repeating: the peasantry is reactionary, as I showed in my theory of Permanent Revolution. They did play a revolutionary role in the Russian Revolution, but that is their last time.

The only thing he added when he lost to Stalin was not new beginnings, but: if only I can build up a new cadre, that will do it.

NEW FORCES, NEW PASSIONS

Look what happened. We got World War II and we're waiting for a revolution equivalent to the Russian [Revolution of 1917]. We get at most the Chinese, in other words a great national revolution [in 1949]. So you have to reconsider what is happening. You had always thought the revolution would come out of the war. Had you noticed any new forces that now have emerged? Had you built out of those new forces? And

those revolutionary peasants in China? Is that only a mirage? Is that only Stalinism in Chinese dress?

Consider Africa. Do you think the Zulus knew they were leading a revolution? They knew they didn't like British imperialism trying to take their country over. We learned of that because: 1) we had a world revolutionary perspective; 2) we knew that the 1905 [Russian Revolution] couldn't have been only in Russia; something was "in the air" globally; and 3) in the post-World War II period we said there must certainly also be something happening in Africa. If that idea of revolution came to France, or to Japan, where else is it?....

Take the question of male chauvinism. Suddenly just a "personal," "family" affair makes you rebel. It isn't that you made a category called "a movement from practice to theory; a movement from theory to practice." It isn't in any book you read. The book may have made a generalization about it, but it was in life, in your life, and because it was also in other lives, and they too rebelled, it became a movement, and a "book," and an organization.

One other incident hasn't to do with women, but with Black. I was in Paris in 1947, trying to convince Trotskyists they should believe that Russia isn't merely a

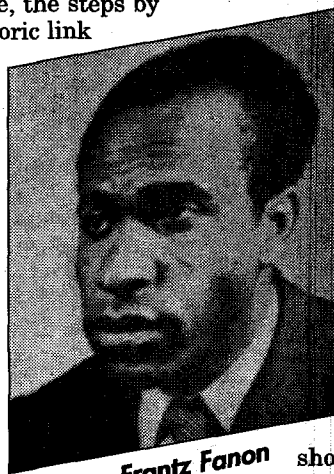
"degenerated workers' state," it's a state-capitalist society....When I go to Lyon, France, where I addressed the Socialist youth, somebody is sitting in that audience whom I didn't know. But now I read all the histories and biographies of Frantz Fanon, and not only was he there, in Lyon at the same time, interested in Trotskyism, but though he was also finding an affinity with Existentialism, the Black nature leads him away from it all to an independent path he will later call "new Humanism." These happenings aren't "accidents." When there are great stirrings in life, in revolutions-to-be, something gets "in the air" and crosses national boundaries.

The point is: it doesn't make any difference whether there was an in-person relationship. If you know the exact relationship between objective and subjective, between philosophy and revolution, and don't consider any of that as abstract, you then realize it is abstract only if you haven't made the connection of objective and subjective, and seen how the actual subjective genuine human new beginnings which then unite with the movement from theory can make up into this Absolute Idea as new beginning....

A theory is good for the answer of what you're going to do this year or next year, but you need an entire philosophy for a vision of your age's "breaking the barrier," that is to say not only overthrowing the old, but creating the new.

The greatest thing in relation to Marx's philosophy of revolution is this—Even before he worked out all of historical materialism, he is saying: If we are going to be serious about a new type of person, a new type of society, we really have to begin with the beginning, the Man/Woman relationship. Isn't that tremendous! In other words, he wants to uproot not only the exploitation, or the racism, or the sexism even—he means it has to be so totally different that you have to begin, so to speak, with your moment of birth, or the moment after you're born.

Ever since Marx, every Marxist tendency is trying to make it narrower and narrower. We cannot get into it further here. I'm simply indicating what the goal is of the book—Rosa Luxemburg, *Today's Women's Liberation Movement*, and Marx's *Philosophy of Revolution*.



Frantz Fanon



Rosa Parks

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Contact the News and Letters Committee in your area for a schedule of meetings and a syllabus of suggested readings. See page 10 for a directory.

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## ESSAY

**Beyond materialism, beyond post-Marx Marxism**

by Fred Bustillo

Raya Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* provides a rigorous examination of why Hegelian philosophy supplies the working class with the framework through which it can develop answers to the persistent confusion and distortions of post-Marx Marxism.

To understand Marx's dialectics one has to go to its roots, which lie in Hegelian philosophy. Part One, "Why Hegel? Why Now?" indicates that to fully comprehend the concrete issues found in Parts Two and Three of the book one must be clear on the abstract disputes about the significance of the Hegelian dialectic. However, Dunayevskaya insists throughout her book that questions of class, political power, and political economy must be accorded a dominant position in understanding the present questions that *Philosophy and Revolution* must answer as the working class experiences self-movement, self-activity, and self-development.

The first chapter on the relevance of Hegelian philosophy discloses that it is not really idealism vs. materialism in antagonistic struggle which characterized the dialectic of Marx's *Capital*, but a unity of both, Hegelian dialectics and Marx's materialism. It is not because of fortuitous circumstances that the dialectical method originated in its most developed form in Hegelian philosophy, which one can define as objective idealism.

**WHY SO MANY FAILED REVOLUTIONS?**

For me *Philosophy and Revolution* is important not only for the immediacy of its subject matter, but also because it exposes the inexcusable distortions and perversions of Marxism by the Soviet bloc. It does so by reaffirming Marxism as the genuine philosophy of liberation, freed of encumbrances originating in post-Marx Marxism. Reading *Philosophy and Revolution* supplies me with the basis for a new stage of cognition of the class struggle and the self-development of the working class.

It is beyond dispute that the distortions and perversions of the Soviet bloc created conditions for aborted revolutions throughout the Third World, as disclosed by Dunayevskaya throughout Part Three in dealing with the African Revolutions and the East European revolts. Dunayevskaya unequivocally demonstrates in *Philosophy and Revolution* that all Stalinist political currents prevalent in Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as the industrialized world, were and are counter-revolutionary political tendencies that can lead only to state-capitalism.

The Left here and throughout the world now has a book that constitutes a quantum leap forward in our ability to understand the philosophic and political reasons behind so many aborted revolutions, commencing with the October 1917 Revolution in Russia and ending with the most recent debacle in Congo.

This book also illustrates the necessity of a philosophy that continuously recreates the dialectics of liberation—which brings me to the question of Lenin's philosophic ambivalence.

**WHAT WENT WRONG IN RUSSIA?**

When Lenin wrote (in 1903) that the working class in Russia was unable to transcend trade union consciousness, he was undoubtedly referring to "moments" of a totality. The working class can and does become docile for numerous reasons during its development, but at other times it is able to become the most militant class in society—as ascertained by events in Seattle and recently in Mexico City.

For a long time I had perceived the Mexican working class as docile. But Mexican working-class solidarity demanding the release of workers, students, and intellectuals arrested in Seattle and the release of the Black revolutionary targeted for murder by the state, Mumia Abu-Jamal—as reported by Ron Brokmeyer in the January-February 2000 issue of *News & Letters*—proves the contrary.

Lenin's statements between 1908 and 1915 confining the Russian working class to trade union consciousness was not meant to be construed as a universal or to even reflect correctly the self-development of the proletariat after 1917 and during the creation of the soviets. Only by assuming absolute control over production and seizing political power can the proletariat become the dominant class in society in a permanent sense.

In the Russian Revolution of 1917 a revolutionary political party first seized state power, and subsequently attempted to create conditions for the working class to move to center stage. But it occurred only in a limited sense. The political and economic gains secured by the working class were not permanent but merely abstract gains which could be taken away by someone like Stalin.

Lenin's universal—that production and the state must be run by the whole population "to a man"—was not complete, since despite the party's seizure of power, there was nothing concrete binding the working class to the means of production in a permanent sense. Its control over production could be and was taken away

by the state.

If the proletariat had assumed collective ownership of the means of production through the soviets during or after the seizure of state power—or exercised some other means of absolute control over production so that it could not be taken away without armed struggle by the Party or some other state organ—any organization assuming the role of executive committee would have no choice but to represent the class controlling production.

That is, the relationship of theory to practice becomes less difficult to work out once the working class



Lenin at the founding of the Third International in Moscow, 1919

exercises absolute control over production in the fashion of the Paris Commune of 1871.

No class in history has been lifted by a political party or a similar organization into the position of being a ruling class in the transition from one mode of production to another. On the contrary, the nationalization of major industry and the elimination of some of the personifications of capital by a vanguard party has become the material basis for most aborted working-class revolutions.

**LENIN'S PHILOSOPHIC DUALITY**

I agree with Dunayevskaya's finding that Lenin's failure to prepare his *Philosophic Notebooks* of 1914-15 for publication reflects a philosophic ambivalence at a bare minimum. Moreover, his giving the green light to reprinting previous books like *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and other works written from the standpoint of Feuerbachian materialism—Lenin urged students of political economy to study the vulgar materialism of Plekhanov even after he gained a new revolutionary understanding of the unity of materialism and idealism—appears to create an absolute contradiction. This could have been easily resolved by way of a simple introduction warning the reader of the undialectical pitfalls of vulgar materialism that contributed to the collapse of established Marxism and the slaughter of German Social Democracy in 1914.

Lenin wrote extensively between 1914 and 1923; in those years he published *Imperialism, State and Revolution*, and other writings associated with the National Question. In them he used Marx's dialectical method and the new understanding he acquired from Hegel. Nonetheless, Lenin chose not to make public the new stage of cognition acquired from his studies of Hegelian philosophy. He failed to tell Russian revolutionaries and those throughout the world that none of the Marxists had completely understood Marx's dialectics of liberation and could therefore rightly be deemed as vulgar materialists.

I also agree with Dunayevskaya's view that Lenin's reasons for keeping his *Philosophic Notebooks* to himself lie "deep in the recesses of time between the years 1915 and 1923, the revolution, the counterrevolution," the fact that the most esteemed theoretician of the Party did not understand dialectics—Bukharin. There were too many seemingly insurmountable political, economic, and social contradictions for one man to struggle against and resolve. At the same time, the *Philosophic Notebooks* clearly contain incomplete and undeveloped conclusions, notations, obscure markings,

jottings difficult to discern, and other elements suggesting the necessity of further development and completion instead of publication.

Lenin's discovery of the Hegelian dialectic presented a monumental task for him during a very critical and inopportune time frame. The task of unraveling the theoretical and practical errors of post-Marx Marxists, including himself, was too awesome for Lenin to act upon between 1915 and 1923. With the Bolsheviks still trying to consolidate their political power over the revolution, and with bureaucratic tendencies beginning to emerge within the Party, the flames of defeat were fanned.

Despite his domination over the Party, Lenin was walking on very thin ice during these years. The timing of an attempt to establish that all post-Marx Marxists had not fully understood the dialectics of Marx was inappropriate in those years and certainly counterproductive—even though he took numerous concrete steps such as by trying to get the editors of *Under the Banner of Marxism* to work out a new and firm theoretical ground.

Though Lenin expressly asked them to systematically study Hegelian Logic, he was approaching the subject matter very cautiously, probably because the majority of the Bolsheviks not only did not understand dialectics, but also considered idealism and materialism as two hostile antagonistic philosophical camps. To publish his *Philosophic Notebooks* during that time frame was to endanger the revolution. Hence the philosophic ambivalence perhaps might have been grounded in the nature of a turbulent period as "moments" of a totality.

Historically, post-Marx Marxism is a distorted stage in the development of a philosophy of liberation leading to Marxist-Humanism. In other words, the negative aspects of post-Marx Marxism, which included Leninism, is a proximate cause of the development of Marxist-Humanism as the philosophy of liberation. One was not possible without the development of the other as a qualitative new stage of cognition of the class struggle.

**BEYOND MATERIALISM**

Lenin's misreading of Hegel—as discussed in the Introduction to the Morningside edition of *Philosophy and Revolution*—centers on the difference between the sections of "The Idea of Cognition" and "The Absolute Idea" in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *Smaller Logic*. Lenin concluded his *Philosophic Notebooks* by saying that the last paragraph of the *Science of Logic*—where Hegel discusses the "free release" of the Idea—was "unimportant." He preferred instead the conclusion of the *Smaller Logic*, where Hegel ends on "go forth freely as Nature," because it's emphasis seems to be on the concrete, on practice.

To vulgar materialists, under all conditions and circumstances the concrete is the real and the ideal is merely a photocopy of reality. The residue of this notion prevented Lenin from making a complete and total transition from the old Lenin to a new Lenin armed with the Hegelian dialectic that emphasizes the concrete and the abstract on an equal footing—even though one aspect of the dialectic might play the dominant role at any given time.

That is, Lenin's misreading of Hegel on key elements and his preference for that concluding paragraph in the *Smaller Logic* is due to a fixed and undialectical bias and prejudice characteristic of all vulgar materialists. He alleged that the concrete (practice) is always higher than theory, as opposed to seeing both aspects as a dialectical relationship.

In a word, Lenin's Hegelianism lacked the moment of the theoretical idea in viewing subjective cognition as always subordinate to social practice.

It appears that this is connected to his ignoring the negation of the negation as a fundamental law of dialectics. This oversight contributed significantly to the distortions and vulgarizations characterized by post-Marx Marxism. He, like the Bolsheviks, stopped short at the first negation.

Lenin was at best an incomplete Marxist who did not fully stand on Marx's philosophic ground. His incompleteness derived from his vulgar materialist background. Even after 1914, after having studied the Hegelian dialectic, he failed to completely embrace absolute negativity as new beginning.

Dunayevskaya appears to assume that Lenin's error in misreading Hegel was due to concrete factors, that is, because Lenin had not suffered through the distortions and perversions of Stalinism. On the contrary, it seems to me that his dismissal of the subjective aspect of the dialectic as "not important" is the primary reason he misread Hegel. In declaring that practice was higher than theory, Lenin did not consider the theoretical dimension of the dialectic as on an equal basis with the concrete dimension. Therein lies the source of his error.

The element of incompleteness runs throughout Lenin's theory and practice. A partial success cannot possibly lead to revolution in permanence. Therein lies the primary lesson of the October Revolution, which renders Lenin even more relevant than ever.

**A TRILOGY OF REVOLUTION....**

Raya Dunayevskaya's major philosophic works

<b>Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao</b>	<b>Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution</b>	<b>Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today</b>
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To order see page 7

## BEYOND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY— THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

I have a feeling that the outpouring at the International Women's Day Conference in Chicago this year may have been a sign of how worried people are since Bush's election. What was especially exciting was that the Conference was called "Rethinking Our Future." That's the question that brought together several hundred women and some men for a whole day of workshops exploring that question both in our activities and in theoretical debates.

**Participant  
Chicago**

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You know how women get paid less than men for the same job? Well, nationally 200 billion dollars is lost due to that wage gap. The figure gives you some idea of how much the government and the corporations are gaining by keeping us in a lower status. I think it's our responsibility as women to keep on fighting.

**Young Latina  
Chicago**

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It was a matter of self-preservation to have a Conference such as "Rethinking Our Future" to celebrate International Women's Day in the year 2001.

**Supporter  
Illinois**

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Three loud and enthusiastic cheers for the Massachusetts Nurses Association! The MNA once again leads the world pack and everyone else will have to scramble to catch up. The MNA is the organization which has put the questions of whistleblower legislation, board of nursing repression of staff nurses, and mandatory overtime on the national agenda. The effectiveness of MNA is why we saw, for the first time, a U.S. Senator, Ted Kennedy, demand that a cabinet level nominee, Elaine Chao, verify her commitment to nurses on the issue of mandatory overtime at her confrontation hearings, as televised on C-SPAN.

**Patrick Duffy  
Britain**

\*\*\*

The articles by Gila Svirsky in the January-February issue of *N&L* on the demonstrations by women in Jerusalem show what women are for, as opposed to so many of the protests here which are only against Israel and the U.S. What really scared the fundamentalists was the audacity of Jews and Palestinians to hang out together. She was right to call the rally she reported on "a great moment in modern history."

**John  
California**

\*\*\*

It was important to see how Maya Jhansi's essay "Feminism and Speculative Philosophy" (March 2001 *N&L*) related the current problems of the women's movement to the fact that, though there is a current revival both in Marxism and in Hegel studies, they are on two parallel tracks that never meet. To show how that is also true in the realm of feminist philosophy and praxis lets us see how it leads to "a reiteration of old vulgar Marxist concepts—the assumption, for example, that Marx only dealt with class, narrowly defined." I'm taking a Multi-Racial Feminist Theory course and found the essay perfect for the class.

**Women's Liberationist  
Tennessee**

\*\*\*

It wasn't clear to me why Jhansi put so much emphasis on "speculative" philosophy. Was she trying to distinguish between philosophy which focuses on immediate experience and a second-order kind of "speculative" philosophy which focuses on pure thoughts? Isn't the latter alien to the spirit of Marx's work, in which social practice is always the object of investigation?

**Veteran Marxist  
Chicago**

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In his first thesis on Feuerbach Marx said idealism was better than bourgeois materialism, since it developed "the active side" of history. Materialist philosophers tend to treat humanity contemplatively, as if it is some kind of dead

matter, whereas idealist philosophers developed the idea of self-activity. But isn't idealism also limited since it doesn't grasp "human activity itself as objective activity"? I'd like to hear more discussion of that in *N&L*.

**Student  
Illinois**

\*\*\*

When we speak of speculative philosophy we are referring to a philosophy with a total view. Nowadays the word philosophy is used in a very general sense. But speculative philosophy refers to an effort to grasp human experience as a whole. That's much rarer, as the work of Hegel and Marx shows.

**Philosopher  
Chicago**

\*\*\*

The March issue of *N&L* was a great one with which to celebrate International Women's Day. Besides the fine essay on feminism and philosophy, the issue was full of pieces that might not have jumped out at you as International Women's Day issues. Dunayevskaya's Archives column revealed important history about Iran and women that is mostly unknown today, and you couldn't help putting it alongside the article by Cyrus Noveen about the recent arrests in Iran. And of course there was Balinda Moore's article that showed women's leadership in the Environmental Justice Movement, and the book review about women and the Left in the auto union struggles, and the letters about the way women have been the strongest part of the struggle for a just peace in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. It's an issue that will be current all year.

**Terry Moon  
Memphis**

### MACEDONIA AND MULTIETHNIC STRUGGLE



In light of the current fighting in Macedonia, we should keep in mind the struggle for a multiethnic society in Bosnia. My understanding is that the Albanian rebels in Macedonia are not fighting to break up the multiethnic character of the country, but are trying to force the government to address long-held demands to end ethnic discrimination in schools and workplaces. Greece and Bulgaria, on the other hand, have long had their eyes on parts of Macedonia and they may favor the breakup of the country.

**Balkan Solidarity Activist  
Illinois**

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I do not oppose the efforts of ethnic minorities in the Balkans to fight for independence, but after what we have seen wouldn't it make more sense to have a federation of peoples, rather than everyone being split up into these increasingly small states? These national borders are largely artificial creations of imperialist powers.

**Solidarity Activist  
England**

\*\*\*

Now that the U.S. and NATO are openly opposing the Albanian rebels in Macedonia, and are contemplating whether to respond to the Macedonian government request for armed assistance in its fight against them, will leftists finally begin to wake up to the fact that the U.S. war against Serbia wasn't fought for the sake of the Albanians of Kosova?

**P.W.  
Chicago**

### BAYER'S LOCKED DOORS

Bayer, even though it doesn't sell AIDS drugs, has joined several pharmaceutical giants in a lawsuit against the South African government for allowing manufacture and importation of far less expensive generic HIV treatments. A Bayer spokeswoman compared buying

# READERS' VIEWS

generic medication this way to "attacking intellectual property rights." How can anyone justify capitalists stealing poor folks' lives by accusing poor folks of stealing "intellectual property"?

At a March 5 protest at Bayer Laboratories, I couldn't help thinking about Terry Moon's article in the March issue of *N&L* on the locked doors at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory. Those locked doors were no more brutal than the attempt by multinational pharmaceutical firms today to "lock out" indigent AIDS victims from a chance to buy a little more time.

**Berkeley reader  
California**

### THE WORKING DAY IN 2001



Having worked at UPS I can vouch that the supervisors are portrayed as a higher group of people with a great deal of authority. On days when the weather outside was about 80 degrees, the temperature inside the building was 100 degrees. The workers continually had to work until lunchtime, which was whenever the supervisor decided that it was time to eat. It didn't matter that a worker got extremely hot or tired, the supervisor would still make him or her work as long as he said to. They would say the workers were lazy and needed someone to "put them in line." I overheard one saying "I love being that man." No surprise that a majority of the men and women who unloaded the packages were from different minorities and that the supervisors constantly made racial comments to each other about those below them.

**Disgusted student  
Illinois**

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In March of last year, a young man named Miguel Garcia Plaza was fired by the Parador Company at a hotel in Granada, Spain for speaking out against the physical abuse of employees by management. He began a hunger strike in an attempt to be reinstated on his job, other workers at Parador declared a work-stoppage in support and the hotel workers union CNT asked for solidarity. The hunger strike was ended when the matter was taken into the Spanish courts, which ordered that Miguel be reinstated. But Parador refused. Now, a year later, Miguel has begun a new hunger strike and the CNT is asking that messages of support and solidarity be faxed to 011.34.91.420.2749. The U.S. agent for the Paradores Company is "Marketing Ahead" at 433 Fifth Ave., NYC 10016.

Faxes of protest may be sent to them at 1.212.686.0271. They also have an 800 number: 1-800.223.1356. The members of my union, the International Workers Association in the U.S., have pledged to warn American tourists of the dangers in Spain as evidenced by the unjust behavior towards Miguel. Business and Government in Spain are very sensitive about tourism-boycotts.

**Seamas Cain  
Minnesota**

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Two nurses were busily removing a used sheet on the examination bed and replacing it with a new one when I walked into the Ford Hospital room for a prostate biopsy last week. I took off my clothes and lay down on the bed; the doctor came in, took some quick snips and left; the nurses told me to go into the bathroom where they had already moved my clothing to clean myself. As I did, one of the nurses said, "Just like a Ford assembly line, isn't it?" They already had a new sheet on the table for the next patient coming into the room. I wondered how many "cars" had been produced that day.

**Patient  
Detroit**

### KILLING WITH URANIUM

At the end of your article on "Depleted Uranium" (January-February 2001 *N&L*) the author pointed out that, while there is finally an uproar over the deaths from U.S. use of radioactive ammunition in the Balkans, not one word was being said about the workers who produce, pack and load the shells. Now miners who dug uranium in Colorado in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, and are dying painful deaths from it, are exposing the depth of capitalism's inhumanity. It took all the way to 1990 before the government admitted their responsibility and began paying a little in compensation claims. But now the government says it is out of those funds and has been giving out IOUs instead. We're not talking about a few workers; there are thousands of these claims waiting for action. One Colorado ex-miner put it bluntly; "They're talking about a \$1.6 trillion tax cut and can't pay their debt to the people who did the dirty work for them during the Cold War. It stinks." That's putting it mildly!

**Outraged  
Pennsylvania**

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On what Franklin Dmitryev wrote about "Depleted Uranium" in *N&L*, our European allies are angry with us for using it and should be. Although our military claims that DU is quite safe, there is substantial evidence to counter military doublespeak. For years we denied using DU. We are no longer denying it. Now we are trying to deny the dangers of DU. We can't let the word "depleted" fool us. Depleted uranium is both radioactive and chemically toxic. Our military has documented danger from DU since 1974. U.S. Army manuals warn that exposed personnel should be warned of its radioactive properties and wear protective gear. But no warnings were issued during our Gulf War. The first warning came on March 7, 1991 three weeks after the fighting ended. Despite U.S. denials, the truth will eventually become undeniable and our government will be held accountable. Meantime, it has made it available to 17 other countries, continues to use it on firing ranges and there are 54 sites in the U.S. where it is produced and tested.

**Hattie Nestel  
Massachusetts**

### PHILOSOPHIC DIALOGUE

I liked John Alan's essay in the January-February issue on the idea of freedom in Black history. I agree with him that the leaders of the African revolutions were burdened with the concept of the backwardness of the masses, and so chose the path of technological development and the world market, whereas the masses wanted to create a totally new, non-exploitative society. When I read this I realized there is not only a two-way road between the U.S. and Africa, but also between Africa and Iran, since the Iranian revolution is suffering from much the same problem.

**Iranian exile  
Chicago**

### REMEMBERING DUSABLE

The first person other than Native Americans to build a permanent dwelling in the Chicago area was Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, in 1779. This being Chicago, the powers that be only want to begin counting our history with the incorporation of the City of Chicago on March 4, 1837. They have refused to build a statue honoring DuSable. You may be wondering, "what do the powers that be have against a French man?" Well, DuSable's father was white but his mother was of African descent, from Haiti. The last thing Mayor Richard M. Daley would ever do is acknowledge an African from another country as founding the City of Chicago. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said "This is the most racist city I've ever been in." Courtesy of Mayor Daley, it still is.

**George Wilfrid Smith Jr.  
Chicago**

**THE UGLY FACE OF RACISM**

There were plenty of reports on the massive voter disenfranchisement in Florida during the November election, but very nearly everything that happened there—and much more—happened in Tennessee. Yet nobody seems to have heard anything about it. Newspapers, radio stations, TV programs have been silent. The only coverage has come from the Black press. And yet the evidence is massive that thousands were disenfranchised, the majority being Black of course. We had the same outrageous incidents of college students not being permitted to vote even though they were registered, of former felons being disenfranchised even though they do not automatically lose their rights as they do in Florida, of too few voting machines in operation causing mile-long lines in Black, Hispanic and/or poor districts. And similar evidence has come out of 21 other states, as well! Tennessee may well end up being added to a national suit to stop unfair voting practices being filed by the national NAACP, ACLU and others. So far the state attorney general has showed little interest in investigating any of the charges.

**Fighting mad  
Tennessee**

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I've been rereading Langston Hughes' "Selected Poems" from just before his 1967 death. His poetic kaleidoscope of historical racism takes us into a new administration of ominous foreboding. As we see intensified racism and continuing ignominies and a contemporary scene of fervent protests and struggles for freedom, his works resound with a similar history. Read his "Roland Hayes Beaten (Georgia: 1942)":

*Negroes,  
Meek, humble, and kind:  
Beware the day  
They change their minds!  
Wind in the cotton fields,  
Gentle breeze:  
Beware the hour  
It uproots trees!*

**Correspondent  
New York**

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Every time I start to think that there's really no way that a revolution is on the horizon, even a distant horizon, something always happens to convince me that we have no choice but to make a revolution. The most recent was the election of George W. Bush, who had already made it clear that, for Black people especially, there is nothing in our future but more repression and that the only way out is through a revolution.

**Black retiree  
Detroit**



**PRISONS  
AND  
SLAVE  
LABOR**

I have worked in the slave shop here as a fork lift driver, and as a welder. I made 35 cents an hour. Now I work as a plumber and I make about \$1.25 a day. I look forward to reading your paper each issue and make sure to pass it around.

**Prisoner  
Michigan City, Indiana**

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I'm sorry it took so long to thank you for *Philosophy and Revolution*. I wanted to wait until I finished it and due to prison life, it took longer than I anticipated. I really received some great insight from it. I was not aware that Marx had employed the Hegelian dialectic in his philosophy and that subsequent practitioners had failed to incorporate this vital aspect.

**Prisoner  
Texas**

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I'm a Yugoslavian (Serbian) male from Chicago, locked up for my young wild days. Right now I'm in a Supermax in Tamms, which is called the worst of the worst. Even though my body is locked up my mind and spirits are elsewhere. I can relate to a lot in *N&L*. My mind, heart and soul are with all the people fighting for their rights as

human beings. Don't change anything about *N&L*. It's right to the point with no cover up.

**Prisoner  
Illinois**

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I find *N&L* to be an informative work and publication that keeps me aware of the various struggles for equality, justice, and peace locally and abroad. I utilize your publication not only in my personal life and in talking with friends and family, but also as a resource in a "Social Perspectives" class I teach as an inmate Adult Education tutor. We discuss a wide variety of social issues and the forces in the social systems throughout the world that influence these issues, along with what the alternatives are. Please express my appreciation to the donor who made it possible for me to subscribe to this publication.

**Prisoner  
Utah**

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*A note to our readers: Can you contribute the price of a sub to help us keep N&L going to those who have no funds to pay for their own subscriptions?*

**SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA  
SOLIDARITY VS. FTAA**

A multinational day of non-violent protest is being planned for Saturday, April 21, in the San Diego-Tijuana region, in solidarity with the protests scheduled in Quebec that—all as part of the campaign against the so-called Free Trade Agreement and for humanity. We invite all who can to come help us liberate the border by supporting the struggles of Baja California's maquiladoras workers and San Quintin farmworkers.

**Solidarity activist  
California**

**DNA AND 'BIG BROTHER'**

Robert Taliaferro, in his column on "DNA Profiling" (Jan.-Feb. *N&L*), says these databanks are legally maintained for 50 years or more and not only on felons but also their family members. It

reminded me of the eugenics of fascist scientists who categorized people on their phenotypes and now can do it on their genotypes. The author also reminded us that a lot of our workplace surveillance systems were invented in the prison system. He says the same genetic markers that could trace our roots centuries back can also track a blood relative in another state. It's an ironic identity of the Afrocentric politics of invention into its opposite, repression. The same trap awaits those looking for the gay gene or gay brain theory. DNA science, like all science in this system, gets turned into one more way to commodify workers and gets used as a controlling mechanism.

**Health worker  
California**

**TEXTS FOR LIBRARIES**

Enclosed is our payment for a copy of *Voices from Within the Prison Walls* by D.A. Sheldon. We are a community college library in British Columbia, Canada. One of the criminology instructors at our college requested the library to purchase it.

**Librarian  
Kwantlen University College  
Canada**

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*The Revolutionary Journalism of Felix Martin, Worker-Philosopher* "sells itself" once someone opens the cover and starts to read it. I took a copy along with a number of other books to a friend of mine who was very ill in the hospital. She is a young Black woman student and started to look through it before I even left. When I went to see her again a few days later she said, "This is a great book—it's right from the inside." She has contacted her labor history professor at her university to ask him to use it for his classes.

**G. Emmett  
Chicago**

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Editor's Note: Copies of *Voices* are available from *N&L* to libraries at a 40% discount. A review copy of *Revolutionary Journalism* is available to those who are considering it for use as a classroom text.

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# West Papuan freedom struggle: 'One People, One Soul'

Since the Indonesian takeover in 1964, nearly half of West Papua's indigenous population has been eradicated under one of the most brutal military dictatorships in history. The name Suharto is associated with the massive killings and atrocities in East Timor. Yet seldom is the story of the "Last Great Frontier" (as *National Geographic* once referred to Irian Jaya/West Papua) brought to light. Why? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that West Papuans retain an entirely distinctive culture and ethnicity from that of their most recent colonizers.

They are a Melanesian people, the very name "Papuan" referring to their "curly-haired" negroid appearance which the first Portuguese settlers likened to the people of Guinea in Africa. Viewed by the world at large as a primitive, savage group of more than 700 distinct tribes, they have faced virtual genocide by a regime hell-bent on prospering from the region's rich natural resources. Entire tribes have been wiped out or have simply "vanished," while Indonesian and Western perpetrators have gleaned prosperity and profit through policies of deforestation, transmigration, and what can be seen as a careless, inhumane indifference toward ancestral and traditional rights.

And yet the West Papuans have never given up their dreams of full independence. They will settle for nothing less, even in the face of death. Here then is a recent tale of dreadfully typical injustices faced by West Papua's new generation. I refer to the students and activists who have given their all to preserve not only their culture and an independent future, but the very existence of a nation known as "One People, One Soul."

## STUDENTS IN STRUGGLE

On Dec. 1, 2000, university students from the Indonesian province of West Papua/Irian Jaya honored their families, forefathers and homeland by attending an independence rally outside the Dutch and American embassies in the capitol town Jayapura. In an act symbolic of national integrity and solidarity, they raised the Bintang Kejora, or Morning Star Flag, to mark the 1964 anniversary of West Papua's questionable transfer from Dutch control to Indonesian control. This task was accomplished through passage of the U.N.-sanctioned referendum: "The Act of Free Choice." The Papuans have since referred to this plebiscite as "The Act Free of Choice," or "The Act of No Choice."

As reported by the National Front of West Papuan Students (NF-WEPS), Josep Wenda, Mathius Rumbapuk, Hans Gobay, Luan Wenda, Piet Morin, and Adolf Rumaropen—all youths from various regional universities—brought pamphlets to disperse, performed the traditional dance "Yosimpancar" and waved the Morning Star Flag. Although they were demonstrating and celebrating on what was designated a "peace area" by the American ambassador to Jakarta, the Indonesian police ordered the students to cease all activities at once. Rubber bullets were shot at random. The police fired tear gas, and began kicking

the demonstrators and striking at unprotected heads and bodies with heavy sticks and guns.

Many escaped, but for those named, the ongoing cycle of brutality that has plagued this nation under Suharto's barbaric dictatorship would once again resurface. The seven youths were taken into police custody in the Central Police station of Jakarta and interrogated for 24 hours without medical attention, food, or water.

Three students managed to "make easy on the interrogations" by pledging devotion to Indonesia and in the process, fully submerging their Melanesian "Negroid Papuan" ethnicity/heritage. Late that evening on Dec. 1, the four remaining student activists, led by

Mathius Rumbapuk—from Salatiga Central Java—chose to remain "constant" to their homeland and refused to pledge allegiance to Indonesia. As a result, the police charged them with subversive activities. Like many of their predecessors, the students were to be used as witnesses for punishment—for the sake of "public regularity."

## POLICE REPRESSION

The students faced a minimum of 60 days in jail. The police subjected them to racial degradation tactics and threats. Mathius, Josep, Hans, and Luan became dehydrated and were starving. No health services were provided for the so-called "extremists" and separatist "rebels." Their families and friends were denied visitation "privileges." No outside food or communication was permitted. Mathius suffered injuries on his right leg. Josep's right ear was also seriously injured from the initial police assault.

On Dec. 22, Mathius was taken to the Jakarta Police Medical Center, where he remained for one week. NF-WEPS installed a "Wok" team to observe and monitor any care brought to "Brother" Mathius while he was incarcerated at the Medical Center. The team carefully noted that he was given only one injection during those seven days at the infirmary, and he received virtually no follow-up medical care. Finally, with the help of several NGOs, the Wok team managed to reason with some officials, and Mathius received medicine. It was by no means enough to cure any infection or damage already sustained.

The students were transported to Salemba prison in Jakarta on Feb. 2. On Mar. 15 they appeared before the Central Jakarta district court. According to TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, the students were pale and obviously suffering from "the psychological effects of continuous confinement, interrogations, and possibly torture." Mathius appeared on crutches. Hans' ear infection persists and he is said to be almost totally deaf. The four faced the charge of "rebellion" under Article 106 of the criminal code (maximum penalty: life in prison) as well as "hate sowing" charges under the same criminal articles. At the time of this writing, complete details of the students' indictment have not been released to media reporting from within West Papua/Irian Jaya.

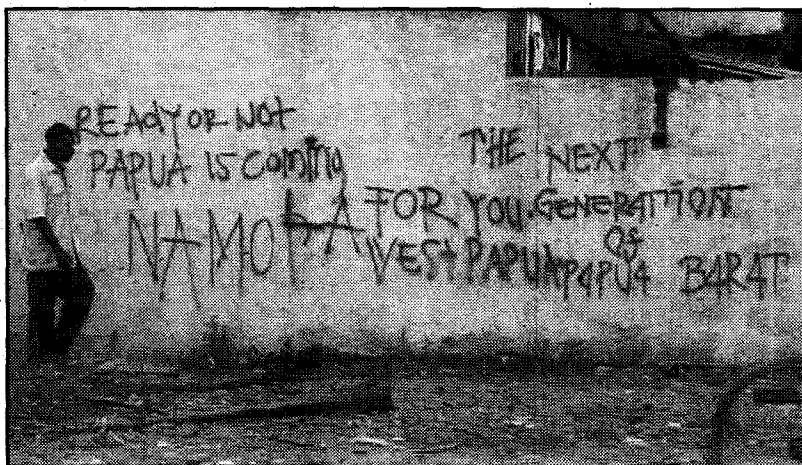
While their fates remain uncertain, this much can be asserted: the four Papuan students are lucky they

are alive. Four other student demonstrators were killed in a subsequent protest last December. Hundreds of others were arrested and tortured. One student died a slow and agonizing death before the eyes of Swiss journalist Oswald Iten, who was arrested and thrown in the same cell for recording events while staying in West Papua on a tourist visa. Iten has since written an account detailing his eight days of imprisonment, during which his now-deceased Papuan cell-mate's head was bashed into prison bars like a "golf ball."

For most students of the world, the right to speak out is par for the course. But for the students of West Papua, to do so can mean death. The students of West Papua, along with their fellow freedom seekers in Aceh, ask for outside support. They hope their plight is mentioned as the United Nations Human Rights Commission now begins its annual session in Geneva.

Ironically, what most indigenous or native inhabitants have wanted from the beginning was simply to be left alone and in peace. In today's world, such a wish is perhaps superfluous or idealistic at best. But should the right to govern one's nation be left to the powers that be, or to those who have proven they will fight until virtually the last drop of blood has been shed?

—j. jonas



## Elections in Haiti

**Oakland, Cal.**—Along with over 100,000 others, I witnessed the inauguration of President Aristide on Feb. 7. I want to tell you the news about Haiti has been very much misrepresented.

The bosses have mastered the art of manipulating elections. In March 2000 there were massive demonstrations protesting election manipulations. The U.S. was financing the elections. They hired a Washington firm to organize it. Everyone felt that International Republican Institute (IRI)—a favorite of Jesse Helms—which was banned from Haiti, was doing the organizing.

For example, they were going to require a photo ID to vote. But most of Haiti has no electricity. How can Haiti get photo IDs to 3 million in 30 days! Many times there were not people trained to take those photos. So elections were postponed to May 26. On the day of the elections people turned out en masse and put Lavalas overwhelmingly in power, both the president and parliament.

**Suddenly the organization (AID) overseeing the elections said that instead of declaring victory for Lavalas candidates, there should be a runoff election. They made phony charges of voting inaccuracies. There was another round of elections on Nov. 27 for the president and eight of the parliament seats. Aristide's candidates were presenting issues. His opposition was riding on character assassination of Aristide. So they couldn't win!**

In smearing Aristide, AID and others are really smearing the movement. They call "riots" any demonstrations against their own machinations. The media really attacked the elections and Aristide after the election. They called for a boycott of the inauguration, calling it a circus. There was a movement to create trouble to prevent the inauguration. There were 20 bombs placed in different parts of Port-au-Prince. Two people were killed, a 7-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy. There were drive-by shootings to discourage people from coming for the inauguration. The international press played up the violence, and the U.S. called for all U.S. citizens to evacuate Haiti.

The opposition did not recognize the election results and selected their own president. They went on a massive campaign to "prove" Aristide's unpopularity. The IRI gave \$3 million to stage a "mass" rally, which drew 800 people. On Feb. 3 they called for another "mass" protest, which drew 100 people. It was pathetic. On Feb. 7 their president gave a speech in which he said his program is to bring back the Haitian military. He invited all the military who are abroad to come back. That tells you the whole thing.

**When I arrived on Feb. 6, people were rejoicing, painting the streets, putting up Haitian flags, to welcome Aristide into office. I've seen a lot of stuff in the progressive media calling it a personality cult of Aristide. But it is not that. It was a celebration of our struggle. The people were celebrating not just our brother, but our own achievement.**

We see very politically mature, sophisticated people who got their training not in words, but from working in the trenches. So huge crowds were there for the inauguration in a demonstration of solidarity and support. The slogan of the people was "we surprised them once again."

The international press said it was shunned by all international delegations. But that is not true. Many countries sent representatives in addition to their full diplomatic corps. The president's talk laid out the program for the next five years. There are 565 communal sections, which are rural and do not have any schools. All the schools and hospitals were in the cities to serve the bourgeoisie. So the topmost issue is building at least one school and one clinic in each of those communities. The second is rebuilding the judicial system. It was a speech of great objectives to be accomplished.

—Pierre L.

## Black/Red View

(Continued from page 1)

the case because he "didn't want to go back and try to second-guess the former Attorney General."

Ashcroft expressed an historical inconsistency in American politics, which projects the ideal of American equality and justice for all regardless of race or class, yet is incapable of concretizing it in political and social practices because of the underlying racist character of American civilization. More than 200 years ago Thomas Jefferson was bothered by that same inconsistency when he wrote that slavery "would divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of one or the other race."

Jefferson was absolutely right that the issue of slavery would divide this country and produce convulsions. However, he was totally wrong about the "extermination of one or the other race." He had no concept that the idea of freedom, embodied in the rebellious slave, could be a pole of attraction across race lines. He didn't live to see this happen, but he would have recognized it in the birth of the Abolitionist Movement, having its origin in runaway slaves. It sounded the death knell of his slave-based society.

I recall this not for history's sake, but to remember that the original foundation of American civilization was built on African-American slave labor and not the Jeffersonian idealism that "all men are created equal." For several centuries African Americans have organized and revolted against the legacy of that contra-

## Ashcroft's racism

diction and its perversion of the notion of freedom. Martin Luther King Jr. thought that the Civil Rights Movement would uproot that legacy. In his famous "Letter From Birmingham Jail" he wrote "we will reach the goal of freedom because the goal of America is freedom."

Political freedom for African Americans is still in a racially divided society with extreme inequities. This is the very substance upon which American politics feeds. Both the Democratic and Republican parties have played the race card by manipulating the fear and tension between races. At the same time Bush's African-American cabinet appointees are mere window dressing to hide the actual policies he wants to implement.

Ashcroft's ideological battle is also on the terrain of history. He thinks that the Confederacy should not be criticized, that Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis should not be denigrated because they stood up for a principle, states' rights. But the right of states to supersede federal laws has consistently been a threat to the civil rights of African Americans. The Civil War was initiated by the Southern states to uphold their "right" to impose slavery, and during the Civil Rights Movement African Americans have depended on federal laws to enforce their rights.

In spite of all of the reaction we are facing today, a new form of struggle will emerge fighting for freedom. As it always has that struggle will likely have a Black dimension out in front. Our challenge is to be prepared to meet this movement by articulating now the way its irrepressible idea of freedom is such a universal pole of attraction.

## EDITORIAL

## Politics behind Afghan devastation

With women being imprisoned and even murdered in a system of gender apartheid, with four million of its people on the verge of starvation, with nearly a quarter million fleeing to refugee camps in Pakistan, with thousands freezing to death for lack of shelter in internal camps near Herat, the Taliban government suddenly decreed there was nothing more urgent than to destroy thousands of historical artifacts, including the two Buddhas of Bamiyan. Taliban's self-anointed "king of the faithful" and supreme demagogue Mullah Mohammad Omar issued the decree on Feb. 26, claiming Muslim sanctions against idolatry. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Most analysts and reporters seem to be at a loss to explain the savagery against Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage. Taliban spokesmen repeatedly ridiculed the rest of the world for their overblown concern with a bunch of stones. The world outcry led by UNESCO calling Taliban actions a "crime against culture," and the appeals by delegates from the Islamic States Organization rejecting the Taliban's religious justifications, failed to convince Mullah Omar to

## Protests in Iran

In Tehran during the festival of fire (Chahar-Shanbeh Souri) in March there were several explosions. Many observers said that some of the explosions were directed at security forces and against the Islamic regime. Most of the women wore heavy makeup to show their rejection of anti-women Islamic roles. Thousands of people came out to the streets and showed their rejection of Islamic theocracy.

These days there are raging debates both inside and outside Iran over how the Islamic regime is trying to stop any movement for freedom and how it is attacking any basic demand for political freedoms such as freedom of speech, press, and public assembly. Over the last few years Iranians have been demanding more political and economic freedoms from this regime. But now they have seen that this regime is not only rejecting these demands but also attacking what gains have been achieved with their struggles. There have been large numbers of demonstrations, strikes and different forms of struggles happening this year.

During the last few months we saw uprisings in several cities—Abadan in the south of Iran, Sanndaj in Kurdistan, Ajabshir in Azerbaijan, Kashmar and Esfahan central cities, Khoramabad in Lorestan, Tehran, and some other cities in central and southern Iran. In some of them, like Sanndaj, the city was under the control of the people for several hours.

We also had workers strikes, demonstrations and protests including: Autobus Rani workers (the transit company); workers in Sherkat Ghataat Fouladi Iran (Ghataat Steel Company of Iran)—Karaj (near Tehran); workers from Nassaj Poush textile factory situated in Sari (northern Iran); Chit Rey (textile and knitting factory) workers in southern Tehran (this was their second protest), and workers in Tehran protesting for the minimum wage to be in line with the rate of inflation.

More than 500 workers in the Simin weaving factories in Isfahan (south of Tehran) were demonstrating in the city center and Isfahan security forces attacked these demonstrators. Most of these protests are for non-payment of wages and benefits for several months, unemployment, and difficult and health-damaging conditions of work.

I believe that Ayatollah Khamenei's order last year to the parliament to stop any discussion of freedom of the press put an end to the reformers' illusions, but did not stop people's struggles for freedom. Events in Iran during the last several months are an indication that people want the Islamic regime to go, but at the same time are looking for a lasting alternative. They learned from past experience that it is an illusion that the political overthrow is automatically going to bring them freedom. We never should forget how in the 1979 Iranian revolution counter-revolution arose within the revolution. What people are searching for this time is not only what we are against, which I believe they know, but what we are for—or what Marx called revolution in permanence.

—Alireza Ardebili

rescind the decree.

## METHOD BEHIND 'RAGE'

The destruction continued unabated from late February until mid-March when the two tallest Buddhas of Bamiyan were blown up using tanks and rocket launchers. The most prominent relics of a direct meeting of

Greek and Buddhist civilizations, the remnants of the Gandhara civilization have now been blown to pieces.

Many journalists and observers tend to attribute such savagery by the Taliban to their purist Islamic views or to an alleged "rural idiocy" of the Taliban's young adherents. As Barbara Crossette points out, Taliban's adherents "are educated in rote sectarian

blindness." (*New York Times*, March 18) But these actions are not just expressions of an unthinking rage, just as Mao's Red Guards in China during the Cultural Revolution, or student "followers of the Line of Imam" in Iran during the hostage crisis were used for very specific factional purposes to achieve certain political goals.

It was no accident that the decree was issued on the same day that an international delegation arrived in Kabul to investigate the looting of the Kabul museum. They were told to expect a major decision on the "preservation" of that country's cultural heritage. Nor was it a coincidence that on Feb. 20 Human Rights Watch reported a new massacre of nearly 400 Hazara ethnics by the Taliban in the vicinity of Bamiyan.

Feb. 20 was also the day the UN security council's sanctions introduced jointly by the U.S. and Russia went into effect. The joint U.S.-Russian-sponsored sanctions bill passed over the objections of China. The sanctions package bans the sale of arms to the Taliban but not to the northern based Mujahedeen Alliance who are backed by Russia and Iran. The Mujahedeen (reduced mostly to ethnic Tajiks) are expected to start their spring offensive any day.

## VYING FOR INFLUENCE

In any case, the systematic and totalitarian character of their conquest of Afghanistan over the last four years, their assaults on all aspects of non-conforming Afghan society, first and foremost women, their articulate spokesmen and roving ambassadors carefully recruiting sympathizers in U.S. universities (while

## Queer Notes

by Suzanne Rose

Namibia's President Sam Nujoma has called on police to arrest, deport and imprison gays and lesbians, saying homosexual behavior is not permitted despite the country's liberal constitution. "The Republic of Namibia does not allow homosexuality, lesbianism here. Police are ordered to arrest you, and deport you and imprison you," Nujoma told students during a speech at the University of Namibia.

\* \* \*

Almost 100 people were arrested in London in a series of early morning raids as part of a crackdown on hate crime. According to Scotland Yard, officers swooped on dozens of addresses across London targeting people suspected of a range of homophobic, racist and domestic crimes. The crimes include homophobic harassment, racially aggravated threats to kill, publication of racist and homophobic material, and assault within the home. The arrests are part of a high-profile police anti-hate crime campaign.

\* \* \*

The right to courtly sustained a dangerous attack when the 14th Court of Appeals voted seven to two to uphold Texas' sodomy law, which makes oral or anal sex between same-sex partners—but not opposite-sex partners—a crime. Overturned by this ruling was an earlier vote by a three-member panel of the same body that declared Texas' sodomy law unconstitutional because it did not punish heterosexuals for the same thing. The ruling began in September 1998 when law enforcement officers entered a private residence on a false report of an armed intruder and found two men having sex. Both of the men were arrested and charged with engaging in homosexual conduct. Similar same-sex-only sodomy laws exist in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas.

being given space and sympathy even by some left groups) show they are far from "illiterate sons of peasants," as bourgeois reporters like to see them.

The decree to destroy the statues had little to do with Islamic rules against idolatry. Years of Saudi backing and U.S. training, as well as arrogant misogynist organizing in the refugee camps of Pakistan, have taught the Afghan fundamentalists how to exert power.

The Taliban is also aware of the regional context of jockeying for power and influence over Central Asia. They know that the U.S.-Russia sanctions are not aimed at weakening their assault on Afghan society. As James Ingalls recently wrote: "By focusing on Osama bin Laden, drugs, and the terrorist associations of the Taliban, the U.S. government effectively blocks discussions of its own considerable role in decimating Afghan society. The new sanctions do not diminish that role" (*Z Magazine*, March 2001, p. 49).

The Russians also bear a major responsibility for the horrible destruction of Afghanistan during the 1980s and early 1990s. Central Asians are well aware of the imperialist role of the Russian army not only in the 1980s but as it continues today in Chechnya and the horrible destruction of Grozny.

In the end, the Taliban decree to destroy the irreplaceable Bamiyan Buddhas wasn't just an assault on the remnants of a great civilization. It is also a calculated assault on the diverse cultural heritage of the masses, especially on Afghan women. Our responsibility is to search for and solidarize with those opposed to the Taliban's inhuman practices against both live human beings and their historic memory.

## Ukraine struggle

(Continued from page 1)

Union of Workers (AUUW), had mobilized 5,000 activists from different Ukrainian regions onto the streets of Kiev. This decision of the bureaucratic CPU leadership was brought about by pressure from the Left United Front. The Left United Front also had about 150 militants in the rally.

Some of the older CPU activists accepted the slogans of our Marxist organization. Sharp criticism was directed at the CPU leadership from ordinary CPU members due to its longterm inactivity—both in fighting fascist bands on Kiev's streets and its lack of support for establishing an independent left camp.

At these recent events our organization, the Ukrainian Workers Group, also distributed leaflets which briefly explained the program and principles of *News & Letters* and the UWG. We discussed the Marxist-Humanist theory of Raya Dunayevskaya and its application on the present situation in Ukraine. The fact that so great a thinker as Raya Dunayevskaya was born in Ukraine was enthusiastically greeted by many.

## ONGOING POLITICAL CRISIS

From 1998-2000 President Leonid Kuchma and his oligarchic allies in major industries conducted the privatization of the largest Ukrainian enterprises, taking into account the interests of the Russian monopolist organizations. The sharpest example of this policy was the sale to the Siberian Aluminum Corporation of the giant Ukrainian aluminum industry.

The IMF and Western capital, preferring to have control of this capital for themselves, thus had sufficiently serious reasons to begin fighting for the reversal of the present pro-Russian course of Ukraine. They now favor kicking out Kuchma and his oligarchic circle.

The murder of the young internet journalist Georgiy Gongadze, who was close to bourgeois opposition forces, became the first casualty in a bloody struggle between the various bourgeois clans. The U.S. State Department has finally made a decision to support the opposition, while at a recent summit in Dnipropetrovsk, Kuchma received clear support from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Both sides in this conflict are going to act more aggressively and destructively.

These conflicts between the bourgeois clans don't provoke much feedback from the working class. Ukrainian workers understand that neither bourgeois group reflects their real interests. However, the Left camp still hasn't become the real third independent force of the current moment. It's explained by the fact that the most influential force of this camp—the CPU—is an amorphous post-Stalinist social-reformist creation.

Ukrainian workers don't trust CPU slogans about returning to socialism because they know that socialism has never existed in the Soviet Union and Ukraine. Our organization explains that it was state capitalism, the theory of which was developed by Dunayevskaya.

The Left United Front isn't a monolithic union. It consists of different organizations, including a lot of Trotskyist sects. The union does not always engage in productive activity, as it spends a lot of time in internal scholastic discussions and has threatened to leave the United Front in case it does not accept their Trotskyist interpretations. For this reason anarcho-communist-influenced and environmental groups still haven't joined the Left United Front.

The situation is under dynamic development, and it is extremely difficult to make forecasts. But we're sure that the working class hasn't said the last word.

—Vadym Yevtushok

# Layoffs pile up, reality of global capitalism sets in

(Continued from page 1)

itability, massive indebtedness and negative saving in the private sector, and a large and growing international trade and investment deficit.

It is mostly because corporate profits have fallen, and are predicted to fall further, that U.S. stock prices have plummeted in recent weeks. Late last year, analysts were forecasting that profits would increase at a 5% annual rate throughout the first half of 2001.

Less than three months later, these forecasts have been drastically revised in light of an ever-growing series of announcements of losses and falling profits, and equally dismal projections of profitability for the second quarter of the year. The announcements have come from firms in all sectors of the economy. Corporate profits are now expected to drop by 6.3% in the first quarter and another 4.1% in the second.

It is true that the 64% drop in the Nasdaq stock market index over the past year is largely a high-tech phenomenon, not a result of falling profits. Fetishization of the supposed "New Economy" had earlier sent technology stock prices to wildly excessive and unsustainable levels. Especially in recent months, however, the plummeting of stock prices has extended far beyond the technology sector. By March 21, the broad-based S&P 500 index had fallen by 27% from its peak a year earlier. Declining stock prices in the U.S. and Japan have also helped cause the world's other stockmarkets to fall by comparable amounts.

The drop in stock prices is important for two reasons. One is that stockmarket fluctuations are a good predictor of economic activity in the near future. The market is in essence signaling to workers that they can expect more layoffs and declining incomes, as a result of future declines in profits and the cutbacks in productive investment spending and production that such declines typically trigger.

Far more now than ever before, declining stock prices are also important because of their direct impact on workers' incomes and spending. The 401k retirement plan has allowed businesses massively to shift onto workers the risks of providing for their retirement. Increasingly, workers invest directly for their retirement, and suffer the consequences when their stockmarket wealth disappears.

To date, about \$5 trillion of it has disappeared in the U.S., an amount equal to about half of GDP. Now that they find themselves so much poorer, Americans will be cutting back on their spending. The size of this spending cut is hard to predict, but it alone—even leaving aside the cuts in workers' spending due to unemployment and in business spending due to falling profits—will almost certainly be more than enough to send the U.S. economy into recession. Much more than in the past, the lost wealth consists of workers' retirement incomes, which they will have to try to restore by cutting their spending, not excess funds that the wealthy can afford to have gambled away.

The flip side of this story is that the decade-long expansion in the U.S. has been built largely on an excessive pile-up of debt that has been used to fuel

unsustainable levels of spending. In 1992, consumers spent 91.3% of their after-tax incomes, saving the other 8.7%. Since then the spending share has risen continually, largely because of the stockmarket bubble—huge stockmarket gains became viewed as a substitute for saving. By the middle of last year, consumer spending began to exceed income. In January, it surpassed income by a record 1%. Clearly, this "overconsumption" is another bubble waiting to be burst.

## A MOUNTAIN OF DEBT

Over the last three years, moreover, business debt grew more than twice as fast as GDP. On paper, everything seemed fine as long as firms' stockmarket wealth kept ballooning enough to counterbalance their ballooning debt. When the market fell, however, it became clear that the debt build-up had been excessive. Firms then slowed their investment spending in a belated attempt to improve their balance sheets. Yet this slow-down has helped send profits tumbling downward.

The recession on the horizon is fundamentally a result of these and other structural imbalances in the U.S. economy. It is not something the Federal Reserve has artificially engineered (either intentionally or by mistake). Although the Fed did raise short-term interest rates from mid-1998 to mid-2000, they rose only by about one percentage point. When adjusted for inflation, moreover, the interest rates actually declined during that period.

This also suggests that there are definite limits to what the Fed's current interest rate reductions can be expected to accomplish. There are deeper structural imbalances that must be corrected. In particular, both theory and the Japanese experience suggest that excess debt will probably need to be paid down, through lower consumption and productive investment spending, and/or wiped out, through personal and business bankruptcies and similar means.

If the U.S. economy turns downward, working people can expect to be greeted with half of President-select Bush's "compassionate conservative" agenda—the conservative half. His, and Congress's latest policies make clear that theirs is a government tailor-

made for capitalism in a time of crisis, dead-set on restoring profitability at any cost.

Last month, Congress passed a bankruptcy "reform" law that will make it impossible for millions of workers to escape from debt. With lightning speed, the Republicans also pushed through a repeal of recent regulations designed to reduce carpal tunnel syndrome and other repetitive motion injuries that 1.8 million U.S. workers suffer on the job each year. Appealing to economic necessity, Bush reneged on a campaign promise to regulate power plant emissions of carbon dioxide, the chief contributor to global warming.

The President-select has also gone on the offensive against unions, which have recently begun to reverse a long decline in membership. Last month he issued a ban against "project labor agreements" on federally funded building projects. He also used his executive powers to stall a threatened strike at Northwest Airlines for 60 days, and weighed in heavily on the bosses' side of contract negotiations at the other three major U.S. airlines, by declaring ominously that he would take "the necessary steps" to prevent their workers from striking.

## TAX CUTS SMOTHER SOCIAL SPENDING

Bush's massive proposed tax cuts will do next to nothing to help the U.S. economy pull out of recession or to stabilize workers' incomes during a recession. They were not designed to do so. They were designed to make the rich richer and to prevent budget surpluses from being used to restore any of the spending on social services that was slashed during the past 20 years. Moreover, almost all of the tax cuts will come into effect too late to have an anti-recessionary effect.

Nor will Bush's plan help the economy by "paying down the debt." The much ballyhooed paydown of federal debt is at best a matter of "creative accounting"; the Congressional Budget Office's own wildly optimistic figures project that total Treasury debt will actually rise from \$5.6 trillion in 2000 to \$6.7 trillion in 2011. By causing tax revenues to fall and social insurance spending to rise, a recession is likely to turn the current budget surpluses into deficits once again.

Working people certainly have a serious fight on their hands, especially if the economy does fall into recession. For more than malice or greed underlies the Bush administration's reactionary agenda. Without sufficient profit and sufficient "unpaid labor" of workers that produces this profit, the capitalist system simply cannot survive. So the economic necessities that Bush invokes in justifying his reactionary agenda are real ones under the capitalist system. What is not necessary is the system itself.



## Nuclear energy, and its waste, make comeback

For years the nuclear industry has been quietly preparing for an opportunity to gain its lost prominence as an energy provider. Now, with the administration's support, they are using California's apparent energy crisis as the pretext for reviving an industry once struck down by mass opposition. In sync with President Bush, Senator Murkowski (R-Alaska) is pushing the "National Energy Security Act of 2001" that goes far beyond opening up the fragile Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling.

Declaring "We have an energy crisis in this country," Murkowski says the solution is increased energy production, so his bill will "concentrate on increasing the supply of conventional energy—clean coal, nuclear, gas and oil." Subsidizing those industries is the focus of the bill—to the tune of \$20 billion to be handed over to corporations such as Exxon-Mobil which made record profits of \$17 billion last year.

It's no surprise that Murkowski, Bush, and Cheney want to award their oil industry buddies gigantic subsidies from tax money. But less noticed is the nearly \$1 billion in spending on nuclear power. Besides proposing tax credits, subsidized loans, and direct state funding for nuclear power reactors, the bill extends the Price-Anderson Act, a kind of free liability insurance just for nukes. And where Bush and his allies are for the free market when that means rejecting price caps on electricity for California's working people, they are all for price guarantees for nuclear power producers, in case the electricity they produce should get too cheap.

What's not in the bill is anything more than token support for renewable energy such as solar or wind power, or any measures to improve efficiency. Small increases in auto fuel mileage standards would save more oil than could ever be pumped out of the Arctic. But would that help oil and nuclear corporations?

As if Congress could decree it, Murkowski's act declares nuclear power a "renewable energy resource!" He even wants nukes to qualify for Clean Air Act non-pollution credits. The Clinton administration similarly wanted international global warming accords to allow industrialized countries to earn greenhouse gas credits for building nukes in the Third World—until vociferous protests from below forced a near-unanimous rejection of this position in last November's talks at The Hague.

As for nuclear waste, Murkowski and the administration not only want to shove the proposed Yucca Mountain high-level waste dump down Nevada's throat, the bill would also establish an Office of Spent Nuclear Fuel Research to encourage "recycling" of radioactive waste, including spent nuclear fuel. Recycling, long ago banned by the U.S. because it would

provide an abundant source of plutonium for whoever wanted to make an atomic bomb, also multiplies the amount of radioactive waste, which cannot safely be disposed of. Today this waste is piling up at reactors across the country, and is one of the biggest obstacles to reviving the industry.

What has been occurring with deregulation is a major restructuring of the nuclear industry, with big mergers and a handful of companies buying up old nukes at bargain prices. By 2005 there may be as few as five companies owning all U.S. commercial reactors.

Ratepayers are paying three times over for this restructuring. First, nuclear, which was supposed to be "too cheap to meter," turned out to be so costly that it drove up electricity rates wherever it was used, which gave part of the impetus for deregulation. Second, in California and other deregulating states, part of the high rates consumers are paying goes to reimburse utilities for "stranded costs," that is, the money they wasted building nukes that so many of us vehemently opposed in the first place. Third, the cash in their decommissioning funds, collected from consumers to pay for the eventual dismantling of highly contaminated plants when they shut down, would go untaxed under Murkowski's bill, and we should not be surprised if all the cash is spent and taxpayers get stuck with the tab a second time.

Internationally, the global warming talks illustrate part of the restructuring strategy: Western governments would obtain greenhouse credits by building nukes in Central and Eastern Europe that would generate electricity with less environmental and safety regulations. China, desperate to power its massive industrialization, would guarantee the industry business by receiving virtually unregulated nukes. Mexico and Canada would be energy satellites for the U.S.

Beyond the vested interests of the nuclear and fossil fuel industries, there is a deeper cause for the desperate drive to intensify energy production even to the point of exhaustion of all oil reserves and to lift all environmental restrictions. Capitalism's inherent tendency is toward ever-growing production, with such reckless compulsion that it "allows its actual movement to be determined as much and as little by the sight of the coming degradation and final depopulation of the human race, as by the probable fall of the earth into the sun" (*Capital*, Vol. I, by Karl Marx).

The hunger for ever more oil-burning and nuclear fission proves that capitalism is not sustainable ecologically. Its total disregard for human life calls for nothing less than a total uprooting of this anti-human, nature-destroying social order.

—Franklin Dmitryev

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## Views from the Inside Out

by  
**Robert  
Taliaferro**

# Students sweat corporate abusers

Evergreen students feel that it is immoral to allow such entities on campus.

One of the biggest tests for the WRC was the consortium's investigation into allegations of abuse at Kukdong International Mexico, a Korean-owned company that does contract work with Nike. The investigation found that the company had violated everything from child labor to minimum wage laws that were contrary to the university's code of conduct.

This investigation was in support of workers at Kukdong International who had gone on strike demanding recognition of their union and the reinstatement of worker-leaders who had been fired. The report filed by the WRC forced Nike to appoint a mediator, rehire some workers that were fired, and hire an independent monitor for the company.

Student demonstrations concerning the abusive conditions of corporate America—and its peers around the world—embody the best tradition of "masses in motion," and Marx's "revolution in permanence." The abusive conditions of workers in the factories, the proliferation of private for-profit prison concerns, and the treatment of the poor in general, have become rallying cries for aggressive student campaigns that embrace everything from 1960s-style occupation of administration buildings on campus, to the theatrical.

Economists and business leaders, generally silent in the past, have realized the enormity of these new movements on campus. After some colleges decided that the better part of valor was to concede to some student demands, they decided to react. This resulted in a letter being sent to college administrations by a group calling themselves the Academic Consortium on International Trade (ACIT).

The ACIT is a conglomeration of economists and academics who have ties to industry, though the scholarly credibility of the ACIT is rather questionable, especially when one considers attempts to intellectualize abusive conditions.

The July 2000 letter, written by the ACIT steering committee, requests that college administrations consult with them first, before making concessions to their students. One of the ironies behind this request is that this committee generally relies on news reports for information about protests that occur on their own campus.

The systemic nature of abuses by companies that hire out work to corporate subsidiaries in Asia, Central and South America, and Mexico is not without its documentation. This makes such a letter—and request by those academics—even more surprising when it is they who must act as teachers of the next generation.

But perhaps that is the new manner of propagandizing the less activist-oriented students on campus, and applying pressure to school administrators that give subtle warnings about the future of corporate funding for their programs.

Perhaps the academics should spend more time studying the historical aspects of the direction that they support, thinking more in humanist terms than in the ill-defined terms of capitalistic greed.

"The law of motion of capitalistic society," wrote Raya Dunayevskaya, "is therefore the law of its collapse" (*Marxism and Freedom*, p. 124). It is the students who—like the 1960s and 1970s—are beating the drum, and signaling the end of an era, and the beginnings of new awareness. It is the students and young who will be at the forefront of that collapse.

University students around the country and around the world are uniting and embarking on political crusades that are reminders of campus demonstrations of the 1960s that protested the war in Vietnam.

Undeclared wars seem to be a galvanizing force on campus, and today's students are finding no exception to that concept. Unlike the 1960s, however, the war inspiring the wrath of student activists is against the globalized slavery of corporations.

In February of last year, the students at the University of Pennsylvania protested sweatshops that were used to make University of Pennsylvania apparel, and demanded that the university withdraw from the Fair Labor Association (FLA) and join the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). The FLA is supported by industry while the WRC is independent of industry influences.

Recently, students at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington claimed victory in their "Not with our money" campaign that ousted the French company Sodexho-Marriott from their campus. Sodexho Alliance, principal owner of Sodexho-Marriott (with 48% of its stock) is one of the largest supporters of private for-profit prison concerns in this country.

Evergreen students took issue with the company's support of abusive conditions in its companies, and in its ownership of stock in the scandal-ridden Corrections Corporation of America (17%) and Prison Realty Trust (9%). Aligning with students around the world,

## New Luxemburg collection highlights feminist dimension

It has been over 25 years since a new collection of Rosa Luxemburg's major writings, other than letters, has appeared in English. With the collapse of statist communism in 1989-91 and the post-Seattle search for a truly revolutionary alternative to capitalism, the important theoretical contributions of this fiercely independent fighter for socialism and democracy have taken on a new importance.

This makes the publication of *Rosa Luxemburg: Reflections and Writings*, edited by Paul Le Blanc (Humanity Books, \$22.95), a most welcome event. Le Blanc has divided his collection evenly between commentaries on Luxemburg and selections from her writings. This means that rather than a single interpretation, we are offered no less than six different voices commenting on Luxemburg. Le Blanc's volume thus serves as a lively and timely introduction to Luxemburg.

Two chapters give us different takes on Luxemburg as feminist. In her chapter, Raya Dunayevskaya questions a commonly held position when she asks rhetorically: "Has the Women's Liberation Movement nothing to learn from Luxemburg just because she hasn't written 'directly' on the 'Woman Question'?" She adds immediately that "the latter doesn't happen to be true" (p. 79). Dunayevskaya stresses Luxemburg's close links to Clara Zetkin, the acknowledged leader of the large pre-1914 German socialist women's movement. She also argues that Luxemburg's life and work as a woman thinker and revolutionary, when taken as a whole, offer many points of connection for later feminists. In her chapter, Andrea Nye suggests that Luxemburg's concern with grassroots working people and their "experience...circumvents the relativism and political stasis" (p. 110) as well as the elitism of academic feminism.

Le Blanc's essay revisits the issue of spontaneism versus vanguardism as he compares Lenin and Luxemburg. He shows that, in its internal structure, Luxemburg's own Polish socialist party was even more centralist and elitist than was Lenin's vanguard party. However, one could easily question Le Blanc's rather condescending conclusion, rooted no doubt in his overall Trotskyist perspective, where he calls for "a critical-minded integration of 'Luxemburgist' into Leninist insight and experience" (p. 100). To be fair however, it should be added that Le Blanc's introduction to the volume, written more recently than this chapter, is not as permeated with such an attitude.

The chapter on Luxemburg and dialectics by Lelio Basso is a disappointment. Basso vastly overstates the link between Luxemburg and Lukács. He also fails to note that Luxemburg wrote nothing of substance on dialectics, this in contrast to Lenin's 1914-15 Hegel Notebooks, or to Lukács himself.

The second half of the book, with the texts by Luxemburg, is mainly given over to her post-1914 writings. Included here are critiques of the 1914 betrayal of socialism, moving letters from prison, and her 1919 speech to the founding convention of the German Communist Party. Among the rest of the Luxemburg material are excerpts from her major work *Accumulation of Capital* (1913) and from *Theory and Practice* (1910), the latter an important attempt to connect the 1905 Russian Revolution with the struggles of the Western European working class. These are all magnificent

writings.

However, there is nothing from either Luxemburg's 1918 critique of the Bolshevik single-party state during the Russian Revolution or her 1904 critique of Lenin on organization. This unfortunately deprives the reader of a first-hand sense of Luxemburg's key disagreements with Lenin. In addition, given the concentration on feminism in the first half of the book, one might have expected at least one text by Luxemburg dealing with women. (One thinks, for example, of her

1916 prison letter comparing herself to the Amazon queen Penthesilea.)

As a whole, however, this volume offers an engaging and timely introduction to the life and thought of a great Marxist theorist. It highlights the neglected feminist dimension in Luxemburg's life and thought, not least because Le Blanc has included several very different women commentators on Luxemburg.

—Kevin Anderson, author of *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*

## Lives of Rosa Luxemburg

The publication of Paul Le Blanc's Luxemburg collection gives N&L an opportunity to excerpt a passage from a review by Russia scholar Linda Edmondson of three books on this important revolutionary. Edmondson's review, published in the *Journal of Revolutionary Russia* in 1989, discusses J.P. Nettl's *Rosa Luxemburg*, Elzbieta Ettinger's *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life and Raya Dunayevskaya's Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

The argument about Luxemburg's ambition touches on an aspect of her presence in revolutionary politics that only Raya Dunayevskaya considers at any length: the fact of being a woman in a male-dominated political movement and her response to the women's movement of the time. The consensus of all but Dunayevskaya is that Luxemburg had little interest in the "woman question" and felt a "distaste for the women's emancipation movement."

Ettinger quotes from an article which Luxemburg wrote in 1904 for her paper *Gazeta Ludowa* in Poznan. In this she attacked the Berlin congress of the International Council of Women as "a congress of ladies...representatives of the fair sex from the bourgeoisie" who "bored with the role of doll or husband's cook, seek some action to fill their empty heads and empty existence." To these ladies she counterposed working-class women, who understood the connection between women's emancipation and social revolution. However, these were exactly the terms in which socialist feminists, from Zetkin to Kollontai and Kuskova, assailed the "bourgeois" women's movement and for that reason it cannot be produced as conclusive evidence of Luxemburg's indifference to the question of women's emancipation. Elsewhere in her book, Ettinger suggests that Luxemburg never shook off "a slightly patronizing attitude towards women in general," though she had close women friends, including Clara Zetkin. And she was not above publishing her articles in Zetkin's SPD feminist journal *Die Gleichheit*, when she was encountering difficulties getting published elsewhere.

Raya Dunayevskaya's case for Luxemburg as feminist is rather chaotically presented, but is well worth considering. She proceeds from the evidence that other biographers have presented of the per-

vasive "male chauvinism" (Dunayevskaya's words) in the SPD and argues that Luxemburg developed "tone deafness" to it in order not to be deflected from her goals. According to Dunayevskaya, Luxemburg had an interest in the question of women's emancipation from the very beginning of her political work and she provides a few snippets of evidence which, if representative of Luxemburg's thinking, support the view that she took a characteristically socialist feminist line: women's oppression could not be fought separately and would be solved by the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a socialist society.

Perhaps one day, an intrepid new biographer will disregard her apparent indifference to sexual politics and attempt an analysis of Luxemburg as a woman in a none too sympathetic political and social environment. Women in politics have very rarely, if ever, been allowed to forget the fact that they are outsiders and on perpetual probation. Whether or not they insist that gender is irrelevant to the task they have undertaken, those who analyze their conduct and performance will always find occasion to remark on it. Unfortunately, most such analyses are simplistic in the extreme.

To make simplistic judgments about a complex individual like Luxemburg would be a waste of precious effort. But the time is surely ripe for an imaginative study of the sexual politics of European social-democracy and of Luxemburg, a prominent socialist theorist, and emancipated woman in a patriarchal culture, but one whose response to feminism was, to say the least, ambivalent. But the ways in which her male comrades responded to her were also riddled with ambivalence—both she and they brought inherited expectations of gender difference into a revolutionary political realm where such expectations were supposed to have been supplanted by sexual egalitarianism. The extent to which old patterns of thinking about gender influenced the ideas and behavior of socialists before 1914—and of their present-day biographers—has not yet been fully recognized. A study of Luxemburg and her world that focused on her experience of being a woman in a highly gender-conscious society could prove to be an exceptionally illuminating project.

