

## Pitting one worker at another



by B. Ann Lastelle

The supervisor announced before the shift's start that the temp who had been working regularly with the crew's women on their section of the line would be moved to work with the only man on the team, and we would have someone else. That temp was a good worker and had been a great help to us, so we asked, "Don't we have anything to say about this?"

No, replied the supervisor. The decision was between the male team member and himself, and he did not intend to discuss it with the entire crew. "But it affects the entire crew," the women protested. The supervisor responded that, if we had a problem with the replacement, he would get rid of him. He couldn't understand what all the fuss was about; he was just moving a "simple" temp.

The sexism underlying this exchange was unmistakable. This was the same supervisor who had told us at the beginning of the year that his goal was to have men make up half this crew by the end of the year. The temps over whose bodies we were arguing at this meeting had neither presence nor voice, but we did not protest that.

Another regular temporary worker later walked off the line without waiting to be relieved for break. When he returned, he explained that he had had to wait two days and argue with both the company and the agency to get paid for his previous week's work. "If they won't cooperate with me, I won't cooperate with them," he said. But, I argued, we're not "them"; we're the people you work with every day.

Is that true? I asked myself as I returned to my spot on the line. My motives for saying what I did

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## Black World

### Clinton 'down in the Delta'



by Lou Turner

President Clinton's July 6 stop-over in Clarksdale, Miss., during the poverty tour he christened his "New Markets" initiative, shed more light on American poverty at century's end than Clinton and his entourage ever intended. At his stop at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, what got exposed was not only the obvious, namely that with a 75% unemployment rate the Oglala Sioux at Pine Ridge haven't exactly partaken of "our boom economy," but that radical Native American opposition to these conditions continues.

Clinton's trip to the Mississippi Delta, too, exposed more than he intended. It revealed that the whole reason behind the five-stop poverty tour to Appalachian Kentucky, Pine Ridge, a barrio in Arizona, South Central Los Angeles and Clarksdale lay in the Delta. For it was there that Bill Clinton, as governor of Arkansas in 1990, headed the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission, which gave the green light to the glitzy casino industry development that has become widespread throughout the South and on Indian reservations.

Now he's back, a decade later, with Jesse Jackson and an entourage of government and corporate honchos in tow, talking about "New Markets." Casinos docked on the Mississippi River in some of the poorest counties in the country, adjacent to mass production catfish ponds and cotton fields, are the legacy of Clinton's Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission. It's a legacy in which the wages for choppin' cotton, working in the casinos and processing catfish are roughly equal to the wage minimum.

So why has he "returned to the scene of the crime," as it were? Is it to tout the economic "boom" he, at every opportunity, takes credit for? Is it to cover his left flank by admitting that the same "booming" economy has also produced one of the greatest income gaps in the nation's history? Or is it in order to play one more card in the game of capitalist globalization by taking credit for initiating an economic policy that, in any event, capitalists have practiced for nearly three decades, that is, pursuing the same investment strategy in the South that they have in Third World developing countries?

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Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1999-2000

# World crisis and the theoretic void: Taking responsibility for Marxist-Humanism

As part of the preparation for our upcoming national gathering, News and Letters Committees publishes the Draft of its Perspectives Thesis each year directly in the pages of *News & Letters*. We urge your participation in our discussion around this Thesis because our age is in such total crisis that no revolutionary organization can allow any separation between theory and practice, workers and intellectuals, "inside" and "outside," philosophy and organization. We are raising questions and ask you to help in working out the answers.

## I. Kosova reveals Achilles heel of the Left

Ten years after the collapse of the state-capitalist regimes that called themselves "Communist" in Eastern Europe, the war over Kosova has brought to the forefront the depth of reorganization needed to concretize a philosophy of liberation for our life and times. The war has exposed new fault lines in world politics, exposed the missing link in the radical movements, and demonstrated anew the need to meet the challenge posed by the self-determination of the Idea of Marxist-Humanism.

The post-war occupation of Kosova by 50,000 NATO troops, 7,000 from the U.S., will be no short-term affair. Officials talk of the troops remaining there for years, even decades. As Carl Bildt, UN Kosova mediator said, "An international military presence to guarantee peace in the Balkans must be seen in the coming decades as something as natural as it was to have troops in divided Germany during the cold war years."

As we pointed out from the start of the crisis, the U.S. intervention in Kosova had nothing to do with aiding the victims of genocide.<sup>1</sup> Since 1991 Serbia murdered hundreds of thousands in Bosnia and thousands more in Kosova, and the U.S. did nothing to stop it. It instead treated Milosevic as an ally for his help in supporting the partition of Bosnia through the Dayton accords. Clinton decided to intervene against Serbia only after Milosevic's murderous attacks against Kosova threatened to make NATO look like a helpless giant. Yet despite the U.S.'s attack on Serbia, what it has never wavered about, even after killing hundreds of Serbian civilians in its imperialist air war, is opposition to Kosova's independence.

No sooner had Serbian troops begun withdrawing from Kosova in late June than the Kosovar Liberation Army (KLA) moved in and set up interim governments in several cities, establishing new schools, community centers and other associations. A kind of self-government sprang up in the aftermath of Serbia's defeat. This



On the 8th anniversary of the declaration of Kosovar independence thousands celebrate in the streets of Pristina.

led to conflict between the KLA and NATO troops as to who is in control. One report noted, "Western officials here have been startled by the guerrillas' move to take the helm of nascent civil structures being formed in Kosova, and they are uneasy about it." U.S. troops responded by aggressively disarming the KLA.

The speed with which the KLA filled the vacuum left by the departing Serbian army did not come out of thin air. Throughout the 1990s the Kosovars created a second, underground society in direct opposition to Serbia's oppression. Though Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Kosova was aimed at destroying this, he did not succeed. Even in the refugee camps Kosovars opened up newspapers, internet services, schools, and other forms of communication and development. As they returned to Kosova, they further re-created the nascent political and social structures that had held them together during the years of Serb military rule.

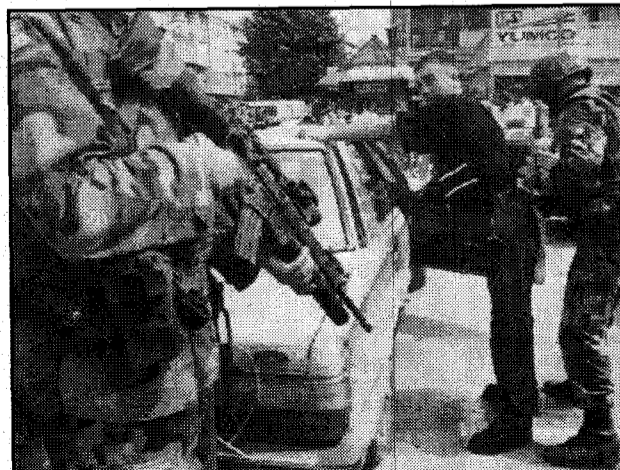
NATO's military occupation of Kosova is actively undermining this by denying the central aim of the Kosovars— independence. As R. Jeffrey Smith of *The Washington Post* put it, "A long held Western objective in Kosova is to drain away the KLA's militant spirit by integrating its leadership into more moderate ethnic Albanian political structures. The strategy is meant in turn to make the KLA more vulnerable to Western pressures and undermine the group's demand for independence from Serbia." Whether or not Serbia will eventually be able to assert sovereignty over Kosova, NATO's protectorate over it will stifle any move for real independence.

Meanwhile, Serbia's military defeat has enabled new opposition to arise in Serbia. Serbia's defeat resulted not only from NATO's air war, but also from the resurgence of the KLA which put thousands of fighters in the field despite a U.S.-imposed arms embargo. This had a remarkable effect on Serbian nerves. Whereas during the war few in Serbia spoke out against Milosevic, large rallies now demand his dismissal. For the first time, many Serbs are speaking out openly against ethnic cleansing.

Regardless of whether or not Milosevic retains power, it remains to be seen whether these voices of opposition will fully come to grips with Serbia's responsibility for genocide in Kosova and in Bosnia—and centrally its horrific responsibility for the mass rapes of tens of thousands of women. What is already clear, however, is that any opposition in Serbia that tries to go beyond the bounds of bourgeois politics will face the presence of 50,000 NATO troops across the border.

The U.S. intervention in Kosova has also produced new intra-capitalist rivalries. Though West Europe seemed willing to play second fiddle to the U.S. during the war, as soon as it ended the European Union announced plans to form its own military force to free itself from military dependence on the U.S. This may turn out to be a quixotic move, given the time and expense that would be needed for West Europe to catch up to U.S. military firepower. Yet it is a sign of the unease that exists just beneath the surface about the extent of U.S. power.

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U.S. soldiers in Gnjilane, Kosova search Albanians for weapons

1. See our analyses of Kosova in the April, May, June and July issues of *News & Letters*, as well as *Bosnia Herzegovina; Achilles Heel of Western 'Civilization'* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1997).

# Women debate war in Kosova

by Terry Moon

No question is outside the realm of women's liberation, including the genocidal war against the Kosovars. That is seen not only in the call for the release of Flora Brovina, the president of the Albanian Women's League, who was kidnapped on April 22 from her apartment in Pristina, Kosova by eight men, some wearing masks, who forced her into a car and drove off. It is as well evident in debates being waged on email lists and in magazines like *off our backs* (oob) and *Ms.*

Belgrade Women in Black (WiB) has issued a call to free Brovina. It was only after considerable difficulty that she was located in poor health in a prison hospital in Serbia where she was taken after being tortured. She is being denied any contact with a lawyer.

Brovina was singled out because in 1989, when Serb policies forced her from her position as pediatrician, she created an Albanian women's medical center. When "ethnic cleansing" escalated, she established a center for displaced women and children. And in March 1998 she helped organize women's demonstrations against the Serbian forces in the Drenica area.

We can't take for granted that Brovina will be freed without a sustained and united effort. But what the events in Kosova reveal is that the women's movement is not immune from the disorientation the NATO bombing of Serbia and Milosevic's genocidal war against the Albanian people have caused in the Left.

Some of that disorientation is evident in an interview in the latest *Ms.* with Vivian Stromberg, the executive director of MADRE, a group supporting women in other countries. One problem revealed in this interview is the disappearance of the concept of people's right to self-determination along with the distinction between wars of liberation and imperialist wars.

## Indigenous women struggles in Mexico

Zoila José Juan is a member of the women's commission of the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Northern Zone of the Isthmus, UCIZONI. She spoke at *Calles y Sueños* in Chicago on June 20. Her remarks on resistance to the "Trans Isthmus Megaproject" appeared in last month's *News & Letters*. Geoff Valdes translated.

We as a women's commission work out production of various handicrafts, address matters of health, environment and culture, and work on vegetable production and totopos, a kind of tortilla. We also make hand-embroidered blouses. We work with other projects for which we get international support. In addition we hold workshops on women's rights, indigenous rights, reproductive rights, and maternity.

A lot of women suffer from cervical cancer in our country. The reason is there are no doctors or no money to see them. We protested in Boca del Monte to get a clinic and now we have one, but it's empty. There's just a nurse or two and no medicines. They give you a pill to calm you down but they won't send a doctor, just an intern.

It's important for us to take the pap test, but we had to go to Mexico City to look for resources to get these tests done here. Because we are participating in the workshops, we now know how to do the tests ourselves. But after the pap tests are done, we still don't have a place to send them for results.

The government-run clinic, located in another community, doesn't support us; they want 200 pesos for the test. There's no way we can afford such a thing. The Coordinadora [La coordinadora nacional de mujeres indígenas, national coordinating body of indigenous women] has found a way to get the test cheaper. But even when you get the tests back, we find there are people in the later stages of cervical cancer. There's no money to treat them. How are we going to help comrades when we don't have the resources? People die. One was a 36-year-old woman.

We work together in a women's group in the community; there are men too. We do human rights work, agrarian work, and other work as well. There are eight of us in the women's commission. There's also a women's group that deals with violence in our communities—sometimes we have to struggle against the men. We exist in 97 communities and have had our ups and downs.

When men took us to marches in the past, they wouldn't let us talk. Since then we've achieved some things, like the international coordinadora of women. I have met with women from Peru, Guatemala, Canada and other countries. We talk about our countries and our work.

Men don't want to hear us talk about rights, but we work in the fields too and so we know how to use axes and machetes, and we can show them that we know how to farm too. When we started the workshops, they asked questions like, "Does this mean women are going to start drinking in bars?" and "Are you going to have two or three husbands now?" After working for years and years, men are beginning to understand. Now we're doing workshops with men.

—Zoila José Juan

## Woman as Reason

Rather than seeing the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) as a group fighting a war of liberation for their country from those who would destroy it, Stromberg counterposes the KLA to the non-violent opposition, saying, "The KLA is a nationalist force that does not look kindly on people who have visions of a society different from theirs." But even when this interview was written in March, the non-violent approach had been left behind by the masses and the KLA was being transformed by the thousands pouring into it.

In the abstract, Stromberg proposes that "we should start talking about ethnic cleansing throughout history." But she only names instances she can tie to the U.S., leaving out, for example, the Holocaust, what's

happening now in Sudan, and the genocide of Armenians by Turkey. The reason for this becomes clear when Stromberg says that "MADRE's mandate is to work in places where the crises women and their families face are caused directly or indirectly by the U.S."

Does this mean we are to forget those oppressed by others than the U.S.? Does this mean that MADRE would put the call to free Flora Brovina at the bottom of their list because it was Serb fascists who are holding her rather than the U.S.?

In contrast, carol anne douglas in the May issue of *off our backs* supports women wherever they are oppressed. Her article, "This War I Support, With Tears in My Eyes," reveals her struggle between her hatred of war and her condemnation of genocide.

She asks: "When, if ever, can a radical lesbian feminist support a war?" She decides that "where a government is carrying out or appears to be starting to carry out a policy of genocide, intervention by other countries is the only possible solution." (My emphasis.)

Because she was so stricken by the ongoing genocide, douglas, like many others, was fooled into thinking that NATO and the U.S. cared about the Kosovars. What is missed is the revolutionary character of women and men fighting for their own freedom.

We get a glimpse of that subjectivity of women in the same issue of *Ms.* on a page where Albanian activist Igo Rogova described how "every night my friends in Belgrade from the Autonomous Women's Center Against Violence would call." Rogova, living in Pristina, unlike douglas, did not support the bombing: "The words of the secretary-general of NATO, that they were bombing 'to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe,' were a joke."

On the other side of that page, WiB member Lepa Mladjenovic refuses to spare anyone influenced by Milosevic's genocidal ideology from sharp criticism, writing that: "The wars in the former Yugoslavia are a series of culturally, politically, and militarily inspired hatreds. In Serbia, even so-called opposition leaders took part in this I-don't-mind-if-you-are-cleansed game."

It may be that the ideological pollution makes it difficult to hear the determination to bring the idea of a freedom-filled future into today's world. Yet that is what is implicit in the struggles of women like Flora Brovina, Igo Rogova, and Lepa Mladjenovic. It is what gives power and vision to their struggle. It is up to us to help make that vision explicit, and then to realize it. We can begin by joining the struggle to free Flora Brovina.

## Clinic defense struggles ongoing

Chicago—The sun cast a steamy, 90-degree glow on the heavily bedecked Knights of Columbus as Cardinal Francis George's procession inched west toward Centro Medico Panamericano, a clinic for women at 10:30 a.m. on June 26th.

The occasion was George's decision to hold a prayer service for 900 Catholics outside the clinic. However, only about 300 showed up.

Ten horses and 20 to 30 cops stood staunchly between the Catholic protesters and 60 pro-choice activists. The Coalition for Positive Sexuality, Emergency Clinic Defense Coalition, International Socialist Organization, Lesbian Avengers, News and Letters Committees, Refuse and Resist, and Solidarity were represented. In addition, some pro-choice activists came on their own.

People from the neighborhood came to see the Cardinal, or, as one put it, "to see the Pope." Several of the neighborhood people claimed Catholicism, but objected to what the Cardinal was doing and felt that if a woman chose to end a pregnancy, it was her own business.

Many passing cars reacted to our "Honk for Choice" signs. When there was a reaction from the street, it was usually pro-choice.

Centro Medico Panamericano caters to a largely Catholic population in the Latino community of Logan Square. George chose a venue not only where he would experience the least neighborhood opposition, but also where his super-righteousness can do the most damage.

For me, clinic defense is the worst of times and the best of times. I'm an old hand so I know that another long Saturday morning standing in blazing sun, freezing rain, or 20-below winds on noisy, ugly streets is something a person can't anticipate happily. But the experiences are interesting, and I love re-telling the stories about "what happened at the clinic." I've become acquainted with court, trial, bailing people out of jail and going to meetings with the police, the corporation counsel and defense lawyers. I've written newsletter articles, shouted vulgarities in public, been criticized for being too old to be "out there," and told I was going to hell at least once a Saturday for years on end. (Make my week. Tell me I'm going to hell.)

And clinic defense has given me the chance to give lip to patriarchal religion. I learned that the "People of the Book," no matter how much they may disagree on other points, will unite and use any tactic, psychological or physical, to keep women under patriarchal control. I was once shocked upon learning that Catholics and Muslims formed a coalition to squelch sex education and pro-choice language in the documents that have been generated at the UN's World Conferences on Women and the International Conferences on Population and Development. Such obvious political coalitions don't surprise me now.

Anti-choice protest at women's clinics, with its inconveniences, noise, ugliness and shouting is only one part of a "seamless garment" of oppression that begins with the infanticide of little girls and femicide to protect family honor and extends here in the West to public disrespect for crones because they are old, because they are women.

Thus women are the major component of one of the four currents of revolution: age, race, gender and economic class. We need to be out there expressing our rage against the patriarchy. Clinic defense is one way of doing that.

—January

## Adelaide Abankwah finally freed

New York—After nearly two and a half years in an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) jail, Adelaide Abankwah, who fled Ghana to avoid genital mutilation, was released July 19. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit decided July 9 that the INS had wrongly denied Abankwah refugee status and ordered further proceedings in her application.

Vindictive INS officials still refused to let her out on parole, but did so a few hours after a demonstration at the Federal Building by a small collection of feminists who had lobbied intensely for her release.

Abankwah came to the U.S. for political asylum after defying her tribe, the Nkumssa in the central region of Ghana. Her mother had been Queen Mother of the tribe and, in spite of the fact that Adelaide had given up the tribal religion, she was supposed to take on that role upon her mother's death in 1996. She would have been forced into religious duties and marriage to a man selected by the tribe, which would have resulted in public disclosure of her lack of virginity. The punishment for that would have been genital mutilation or even death.



Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the ritual cutting and/or removal of the external genitalia, is practiced in many countries in Africa and the Middle East. More than 85 million women and girls have undergone FGM, and today 8-10 million more are at risk. Some countries have outlawed it, but the practice continues in individual households and small communities. FGM

is most often done under unsanitary conditions that can lead to death. It results in long term physical, sexual and psychological damage; it can cause child birth, sexual intercourse, and even menstruation and urination to be painful and dangerous.

A campaign to grant Abankwah asylum was mounted by the National Organization For Women (NOW), Equality Now, and Marie Clair and *Ms.* magazines. Gloria Steinem and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney participated and were present at the July 19 demonstration demanding Abankwah's release from jail. Maloney has introduced legislation in Congress that would compel INS judges to follow standards for granting asylum due to gender-based fear of persecution, instead of leaving it to their discretion.

—Anne Jaclard

# Which road shall steelworkers take?

*Editor's note: On July 19 workers at Inland Steel voted strike authorization after the United Steel Workers (USWA) advised the membership to reject management's proposal for a new contract. At meetings held to authorize the strike vote, USWA officials said they couldn't report on specifics of company demands, nor could they discuss the issues on the table because "we don't want these issues to divide the union along the lines of young against old." No discussion from the floor was allowed at the meetings. Many workers complained afterward about this and demanded an open discussion of the issues. The following article was written by a worker-militant at Inland shortly before the strike vote.*

**Chicago**—This July the USWA leaders have been trying to negotiate a new contract. Our militancy is low. At Inland Steel we are foreign owned. We need international allies and labor solidarity. We don't want cheap American steel slapped in our face either and our union on its knees. But this may happen. Already, half the total tonnage of raw steel produced in the United States is made in non-union enterprises. We are already on one knee. We need allies and it's not management.

Where is our union headed? Foreign competition, layoffs, take-away contract bargaining? Free trade? Tariff protection? Did our "Partnership" with steel companies pay off for us?

Let's be really clear: By speaking on the same podium with management, the USWA leaders have weakened the vision of its members. We haven't been looking for international steel worker allies in Mexico, Brazil, Russia, South Korea. They have miseducated us about our real allies and the struggle ahead to build solidarity. This is the only way to win.

## PROFITS FROM LAYOFFS

Last year, steel imports rose when foreign-made steel prices dropped. U.S. steel companies laid off 10,000 of us steelworkers. But as a whole, they made over \$1 billion in profits and shipped more steel than they had in 19 of the last 20 years.

Our union joined the company owners to stop this flood of cheap imports. We were told, "This is best for us both." The government did slap big taxes on Japanese steel and got big reductions from Brazil and Russia. Results? Bigger shipments from South Korea and others with modern facilities and low-waged workers. We're told the only way out is to stop "unfair trade," meaning get big taxes on foreign-made steel to "protect our jobs." It's either that or "free trade," which means more cheap imports. Is this the only choice?

## Mass rally at Detroit News

**Detroit**—Some 400 Detroit newspaper locked out workers and community supporters, along with Teamster President Hoffa, filled the street in front of the Detroit News building on the fourth anniversary of the strike that began on July 14, 1995, to loudly remind newspaper management that the battle continues for a contract and rehiring of laid off workers

Across the street from the newspaper building AFSCME unfurled an 8- by 16-foot banner on the side of their building that read, "Detroit News & Free Press: Obey The Law! Settle with the Unions." But we in ACOSS, the community support group, have been begging the AFSCME leaders for years to do that, only they never paid any attention to us.

**My own feeling is that there will be a settlement before Labor Day with all of the unions. Two unions have settled: My own Detroit Typographical union #18 signed a 10-year contract with a buy out for all who wanted them, including all fired workers and workers over 65. Part-timers were not included. About 65 of the 100 printers, including myself, took the buyout package, which provides five years of medical care, then we'll be eligible for Medicare.**

The Engravers signed a three-year contract. Some of the 20 engravers took buyouts, and the others were told not to expect to be called back. Both unions will receive a 2% wage increase each year of their contracts, which seriously weakened provisions dealing with work rules and day-to-day operations, the things that matter the most when you are working.

**The Teamsters have been offered a retirement incentive package due to a surplus of money in their pension fund. The Pressmen's union did the same thing two years ago. I don't blame the members for taking the offer, but in the case of the Teamsters and the Pressmen, the company is using the members' own money to buy them out and get the company off the financial hook. All who take the retirement incentives have to sign off on all back pay issues that are now in the courts.**

Gannett and Knight-Ridder are huge companies with huge financial resources that hate the unions and workers so much that they will jeopardize their businesses in pursuit of their anti-labor goals. The company thought it could dump the unions, which it will not be able to do, although the unions will be weaker than they were. The newspapers lost 35% to 40% of their circulation and many millions of dollars in this debacle. I think there is a good chance that one paper will close.

Help change the laws in this country that allow companies like these to get away with what they did. One way is to join and help the Labor Party.

—Armand Nevers,  
Detroit Typographical Union #18

We don't see it that way, at all. We think that labor solidarity—here and overseas—is our "stealth" bomber, not joining the companies for unreal job protections. Consider that in 1980, we had about 400,000 steelworkers in basic steel. Now, we're down to about 160,000. It took about 10 man-hours to make a ton of steel in 1980. Now, it's down to less than four man-hours. "Progress" means it takes fewer of us to make the same amount of steel, regardless of "dumping."

Our work produces the profits that go into the newest technology. The owners use that technology to produce more steel with fewer of us. Who gets the benefits? Mostly, big investors and top managers. We steelworkers who remain get a small piece. The laid off and never hired get squat.

## 'TEAMWORK' OR LABOR SOLIDARITY?

What if we fought for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, like the metal workers in Germany, who got it down to 35 hours a week? That would mean the owners would have to hire more workers to make the same amount of steel. That would mean we would work less for the same money AND we'd get huge support from the laid off and low-wage workers out there. Who's the more reliable ally? Low-wage workers we'd be opening doors for or steel company owners and managers?

The union's policy is to play along with the owners, getting our pay tied to producing more steel with less waste for less work. That looks fine, but we're still faced with growing job losses due to using technology to replace workers and lower costs. This "teamwork" pays some good results for us; at the same time, we're digging our own graves!

The USWA sent a delegation of workers and officials to Japan a few years back to get support for the [tire-makers] who'd been beaten in a strike. The company tried to impose worse conditions on workers here than back in their "home" country, Japan. Results? The union and workers in Japan gave us great support. They were happy as hell to have solidarity with American workers and our Union against their employer. They saw that the employer would use worse conditions here in America against them there, back in Japan.

Let's stop foreign bashing and labor-company "teams." Let's build labor solidarity, here and overseas: That is neither "fair trade" protectionism nor "free trade" race-to-the-bottom globalism.

There is an alternative, if we create it!

## Reasons for Overnite strike

*Editor's note: The Teamsters staged a national strike of Overnite Transportation, July 5-10. Over 500 workers in Memphis, represented by Local 667, were more than ready, having fought for a union contract for almost four years. But before any serious negotiations could begin, the International asked the workers to end the strike. Several Overnite workers discussed conditions they face at the Memphis hub.*

**Memphis, Tenn.**—Two of us were fired. Supposedly someone overheard us saying that we were working too fast and should slow down. I didn't tell anyone to slow down. But they have been working us 50, sometimes 60 something hours. We have no choice. If you leave after 10 hours and tell them you need to see the doctor, you have to bring a doctor's excuse back

## Quebec nurses strike

Nurses belonging to the 47,500-member Quebec Nurses Federation (QNF) have ended their 23-day strike which began June 26. The nurses walked out after 14 months of fruitless contract negotiations with the Parti Quebecois government. The nurses, lowest paid in Canada, are demanding a 6% raise over two years, plus 10% in catch-up wages. The government has refused to offer more than 5% over three years.

Support by the public and from patients has been solid for the nurses, who have continued emergency and other essential services during the strike. In part this is because nurses stand on the front line in combating the deterioration in the national health care system.

Provincial Premier Lucien Bouchard tried to break the "illegal" strike by imposing fines on union locals as well as individual nurses. For some, these fines have mounted up to over \$C7,500 for each nurse. French- and English-speaking nurses have maintained the firmest unity during the strike.

The nurses withdrew their own support for the strike after the QNF leadership caved in to government negotiators and recommended a "yes" vote on essentially the same package which the government had offered all along. The nurses voted overwhelmingly "no" since the proposals did not meet their minimum demands concerning pay increases, working conditions, and removal of strike penalties. Back to work for now, local unions are adopting on-the-job tactics including "work to rule" and double or triple time for overtime work.

The QNF is also looking ahead to the fall, when 360,000 Quebec public sector workers will negotiate contracts. Bouchard is offering them the same take-it-or-leave-it 5% over three years. The PQ, which once claimed to be ideologically "social democratic" as well as nationalist, has adopted a "zero deficit" policy, planning to play to the Right by proposing a tax cut with Quebec's budget surplus.

## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

certainly were not pure. If that temp had gone on "strike," running the line would have become much more difficult for the rest of us. Why not let him slow down the line? His anger was justified. Why did I feel compelled to soothe him into cooperating?

How thoroughly our relations with one another are conditioned by and permeated with the capitalist drive for production! Yet the sexism women workers face daily from supervisors and coworkers seems to have an independent existence as well.

**While I worked on a different crew one night, a male team member went to the supervisor, without consulting me, and received permission to switch positions on the line with me. It wasn't that I wasn't doing my job. He wanted the change because he was bored and sleepy on his machine. Did he think I, a woman, wouldn't be? or that it didn't matter if I was?**

How persistent the divisions! Perhaps one cannot find a way through this morass in the absence of an organization, a movement, a struggle—none of which now exist at this workplace—which can challenge relationships and change ideas. One only has to look, however, at the history of organized labor and Black workers in the U.S., or the proliferation of sexual harassment suits against UAW-organized auto plants in the Midwest, to see that even with organization, movement and struggle, no change is automatic.

Karl Marx saw that historically the content of workers' revolt against capitalist production was the "quest for universality." It is the struggle to become a whole human being, to overcome the division between mental and manual labor, to overcome all barriers—including racism, sexism and elitism in all its forms—to developing all of one's capacities, both natural and acquired.

Capital strives to fragment the individual, to use and develop only those talents which serve its purpose: more and more production. The idea, Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, is to replace this class society with "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." That idea is the absolute opposite of what is happening every day on the shop floor and must be where any struggle against capital begins.

proving you went. So many unfair labor practices are going on here.

**They're improperly training new hires. We have hazardous spills as many as six times a day. We've got radioactive stuff, all kinds of flammable stuff, corrosives of all kinds, and a lot of the stuff is all on one trailer. If this mixes with that or with water, it can become explosive. The crews who handle hazardous material around Memphis say: "If it wasn't for Overnite, we'd go out of business."**

What they're trying to do is get rid of the union people. The CEO told us that if we wanted \$19 an hour, he'd give it to us. But he was going to have full control over us and that was all there was to it. He would control when we come, when we leave and how this freight comes and goes and with whom. When you go in there with a grievance and they write you up, you're in there by yourself.

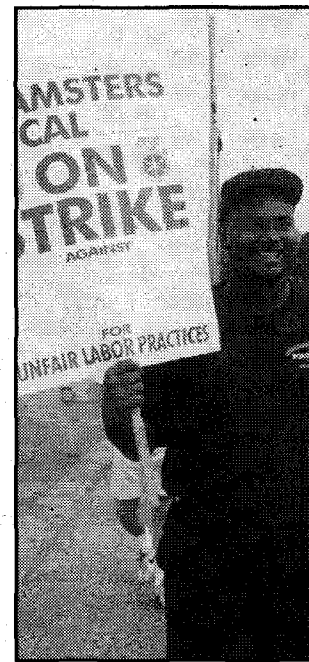
They won't recognize anyone coming in there with you.

About three months ago Overnite thought we were going to go on strike because they weren't bargaining with us on the contract. They brought in about 70 workers in a big yellow bus to show us that they had replacement workers if we went on strike. I just told those guys that we've had a lot of injuries up here on the dock, people getting run over with forklifts and everything. I said, "Look, you guys don't really want to come to Memphis, this is a dangerous place to work." That's all I said. They said that was a direct threat and they fired me for that.

**The company is playing all kinds of games. The strike is over, but they're not putting people back to work. They are working the temporary people in front of us. I feel like we had Overnite against the wall so we might as well have kept them there until they screamed.**

I didn't agree with going back, but the IBT decided this was the best thing to do. We let them off the hook and they're treating us like dogs now. Initially their goal was to show Overnite we have the power to do whatever we want. But after we've gone back in, I don't think Overnite sees anything.

—Overnite workers



News & Letters

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya  
MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES

Editor's Note

In early years of the 1970s leading up to the completion of her book, *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*, Raya Dunayevskaya engaged young revolutionaries in the ideas presented in that work. An example is a Jan. 15, 1971 letter, excerpted here, to young members of News and Letters Committees. Her discussion of the connection between subjects of revolt and philosophy speaks to concerns presented in our "Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives" (See pp. 1, 5-8). The original can be found in *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 14110-11. Footnotes are by the editors.

First, let me take up the question of language. [No word] is more important than Subject. Whether we mean by that the Movement, or a specific group like News and Letters Committees; whether we mean the workers or a single revolutionary; whether we mean women's liberation, Blacks, Indians, "organization," it is clear that "Subject" is the one that is responsible for both theory and practice. Therefore, we must not say "Subject must unite with its theory"; it is the subject who unites, or fails to unite, theory and practice. In a word, the preposition "with" is wrong.

Perhaps part of the looseness of expression is due to my stressing how crucial theory is, that, as you put it, quoting me, "Philosophy is itself revolutionary." Yes, because the whole point of philosophy, of dialectics—both its point of departure and point of return—is Freedom. The trouble with philosophers, whether they were only thinking of Utopia, the Future, or of Thought as their special province, was that they limited the concept of freedom. That is why Marx says (It is the very first quotation one meets even before turning to a single page of text in *Marxism and Freedom*) that "Freedom is so much the essence of man that even its opponents realize it...No man fights freedom; he fights at most the freedom of others."

Marx "took advantage" of this nature of man, and therefore his thought, the striving for freedom, and said of Hegel's dialectics—the greatest philosophy produced by bourgeois philosophy—that what we must do is "realize it" for by realizing this talk and thought of freedom we will have it, be whole man. But under no circumstances does "philosophy is itself revolutionary" mean it will realize itself. Only living men and women can do that. In a word, it is no substitute for "Subject" any more than history is a substitute, for history, too, means masses making it.

Now then, for us...the great breakthrough came back in 1953 when we discovered in [Hegel's] Absolute Idea, a movement from practice not only to revolution, but to theory, to philosophy of liberation. I find that the Existentialists, on their part, and the Maoists, on theirs, never stop talking about being, existence, doing, practice—but the very last word they understand is Practice, for they are under the delusion that when they practice theory, that is practice, that is activity. That is, when they "bring" it to the masses, and all the masses have to do is be smart enough to see it and accept it, then all will be heaven on earth. What I've been saying, at least since 1953, is the exact opposite, that practice is masses practicing and their practice is not only the doing of deeds but the thinking of thoughts.

THEREFORE, the two kinds of subjectivity (the note on which I ended the second edition of *Marxism and Freedom*, hoping thereby to indicate what I mean to do in *Philosophy and Revolution*)<sup>1</sup> was not only a stress on proletarian Subject vs. Maoist or petty-bourgeois subject but to show that in the proletarian Subject, in subjectivity, we include man as thought as well as man as being, AND THOUGHT, PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION, THE ABSOLUTE IDEA [BROKEN DOWN] FOR OUR AGE IS ITSELF A FORCE FOR REVOLUTION.

1. This is a reference to the section "In Place of a Conclusion: Two Kinds of Subjectivity," added to the 1964 edition of Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*. There she wrote: "Two kinds of subjectivity characterize our age of state-capitalism and workers' revolts. One is the subjectivism that we have been considering—Mao's—which has no regard for objective conditions, behaves as if state power is for herding 650 million human beings into so-called 'People's Communes,' as if a party of the elite that is armed can both harness the energies of men and 'remold' their minds....The second type of subjectivity, the one which rests on the transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality, is the subjectivity which has 'absorbed' objectivity, that is to say, through its struggle for freedom it gets to know and cope with the objectively real" (pp. 326-27).

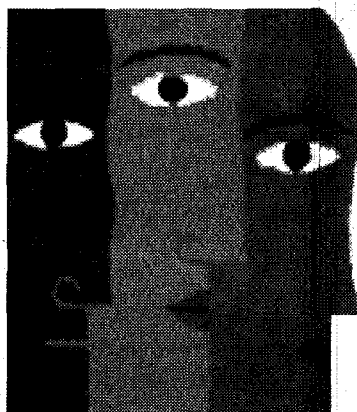
Marxist-Humanism's concept of 'Subject'

It is a development. A very critical and high stage of development, but a development rather than break, as was the case in 1953 from Johnsonism<sup>2</sup> or state-capitalism<sup>3</sup> sans philosophy.

Of course, Marxist-Humanism is itself "subjectivity"; this is what we learned ever since the trips to Africa [in 1962] and to Japan [in 1965] showed that even revolutionaries closest to us, and even masses, great masses in revolt, will not take from our shoulders, our task, working out this dialectic of liberation, both philosophically in the book [*Philosophy and Revolution*] and practically in our everyday activities.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, it is a task of very great historic dimensions. But do you know anyone else engaged in it? Of course, it is hard labor and blows the mind, especially of the youth, who are first getting used to the idea that they are revolutionaries, have broken with their past both as petty-bourgeois milieu and parents [and must now] begin measuring themselves against history's Gargantuan dimensions. I do not doubt, however, that we can become the catalyst for the revolutionaries who have had all the breaks from the past, but did not think that first then they must create new theoretical foundations as well instead of having found them ready-made, if not in the bite-size Maoist quotations, then at least as Marx did it. But he did it in 1843-1883, and we live in 1971, and while it remains our foundation, none can do for this age what only this age can do for itself....

Take Marx's period. Great as the First International was, it was "organized." Therefore for the new form of workers' rule—which no genius, not even Marx, no human being, nor God for that matter, can see before it actually occurs—Marx had to keep plodding along, theoretically in *Capital*, practically, in the First International, until the workers upsurged in the Paris Commune [in 1871]. Then he not only embraced it, as revolutionaries would, but made it the departure even of his theory. It



clarified the "fetishism of commodities" not just in the manner in which he had already worked it out theoretically—capitalist exploitation of labor and its reification into a thing—but its opposite, the new form, the universal form of how the workers mean to rid themselves of the fetishism by [the] creation of the Paris Commune.

The same came to be with Lenin—the Soviets were the new form for his age. He was well prepared to see it and create the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" because, theoretically, he had already worked out a new universal—"to a man." BUT IT WASN'T ONLY HIS UNDERSTANDING AND RETURN TO HEGEL THAT HELPED HIM: IT WAS THAT, TO BEGIN WITH, HE WAS ALWAYS A PRACTICING REVOLUTIONARY. So, insofar as the latter was concerned, were his Bolshevik colleagues. They all opposed the "April Thesis" and thought he had been too long an émigré to "understand Russian realities." BUT THE REVOLUTION SWEPT THEM ALONG. WHEN THE REVOLUTION IS AT A HALT AND YOU HAVE STATE POWER, you (that is the Stalinists) follow a very different path. But it isn't only because they didn't "understand" Hegel; it is because of the objective compulsion from the existing state surrounded by world capitalism, etc.

Now then [for] us, the practice of dialectics, both in theory and in fact, is something that no other "party" ever called upon its members to do, and it is hard as hell. But the very fact that we demand unity of theory and practice compels the two levels, of which the concrete, the daily practice, is of the essence.

One final point both on "troubles" with Part III [of *Philosophy and Revolution*]<sup>5</sup> and objective transcendence. Transcendence has, in academia, both a theological and philosophic meaning far removed from practice. But transcendence as [an] historic category means people abolishing the old, creating the new; indeed it is the only real transcendence; all else is hogwash. Because this is so, I try to practice it even in theory, which is why there is so much return to Black/Red conferences, etc.<sup>6</sup>...I would like the [chapter on] the "new passions and new forces" [in *Philosophy and Revolution*] to be written by Blacks, by women, even as [the chapter on Marx's] New Humanism [in *Marxism and Freedom*] was written by workers battling Automation...

5. Part III of *Philosophy and Revolution*, which concludes the book, is entitled "Economic Reality and the Dialectics of Liberation." It is the part which deals most extensively with the problems of the post-World War II world.  
6. A reference to "The Black/Red Conference" of Jan. 12, 1969, a gathering of Black workers and intellectuals as well as white activists, where Dunayevskaya presented an overview of *Philosophy and Revolution*. She similarly presented overviews of the book at other conferences such as a Feb. 21, 1971 women's liberation conference. See *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 4338-4364.

2. "Johnsonism" refers to the followers of C.L.R. James; Johnson was James' pen name in the 1940s and 1950s.  
3. In 1984, Dunayevskaya would write: "Heretofore we criticized the theory of state-capitalism by stressing that, without developing into the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, it was incomplete. While that is true, it would have been impossible to get to the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism without the theory of state-capitalism...We must not forget that those who could not break through to the Absolute Idea and thus the road to Marxist-Humanism—the Johnsonites—...kept using the word state-capitalism, as if that alone exhausted her for meeting the challenge of the new reality." *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism* (Chicago: News & Letters, 1992), p. 3-4.  
4. For material on how Dunayevskaya's tour of West Africa in 1962 and Japan in 1965 impelled her to undertake the work which eventually led to *Philosophy and Revolution*, see *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vols. 5, 6, and 12.

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# World crisis and the theoretic void: Taking responsibility for Marxist-Humanism

(Continued from page 1)

This disquiet is far more glaring when it comes to relations with Russia and China. Russia's quarrel with NATO over the stationing of its troops in Kosova was followed by such ominous signs as holding its largest military exercise since the end of the Cold War. Russia also announced in May that it is developing a new generation of low-yield, pinpoint nuclear weapons. This is part of Russia's adoption of a policy of first-use of nuclear weapons, as a way to offset its military weakness.

Russia may appear to be in no position to seriously threaten the U.S., given its weak economy. Indeed, at the very moment Russia was objecting to U.S. actions in the Balkans, Yeltsin came to Clinton hat in hand to ask for another round of IMF loans. Yet Yeltsin is trying to compensate for Russia's economic weakness by asserting himself on the political front. This was seen in July when he invited Syria's Assad to Moscow, as part of an effort to breathe new life into its relations with the Arab world, though Clinton has the upper hand there.

Most important of all is Russia's strengthening ties with China. The bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade infuriated China and led it to freeze U.S.-China relations. Faced with ever-present worker and peasant revolts—such as the massive peasant revolt in January in Dalin in Hunan Province—China's rulers are playing the nationalist card to divert attention from its internal crises. Though Clinton boasted last year about a new "strategic partnership" with China, that phrase is now used by China's rulers to refer to its ties with Russia, which it sees as a way to counterbalance U.S. power.

Clearly numerous flashpoints for future conflicts and wars abound in our nuclearly armed state-capitalist world, from relations between the major powers to those between regional ones like India and Pakistan over Kashmir where full-scale war can break out at any time. The notion that the war over Kosova forebodes some "new era" defined by "humanitarian interventions" is an empty illusion.

This is seen not only in the U.S.'s refusal to support independence for Kosova or the Kurds, but in its silence about crises in Africa. In Congo, the civil war this year displaced 500,000 from their homes, 200,000 of whom have fled the country. In Angola, 1.2 million of its 13 million people have been displaced since the renewal of its civil war. In Sudan, tens of thousands of the Massalit people have been killed this year in a genocidal campaign carried out by the government. Just as the West earlier stood by and did nothing while 800,000 were slaughtered in Rwanda, so none of these crises have the ear of our "humanitarian" interventionists.

When it comes to Kosova, however, the prize for short-mindedness belongs to the Left. Its disarray is seen in how its opposition to the war was virtually indistinguishable from that of some rightists who also opposed the bombing of Serbia.

The Left's response reveals all that is wrong with those who fail to see the importance of a philosophy of liberation. The Left focused so much attention on opposing the U.S. bombing of Serbia that it failed to take a firm stand in support of the Kosovars. This was true not just of small left groups, but of major intellectuals like

Noam Chomsky and organizations like the Black Radical Congress. Even those who paid lip service to the Kosovars as victims refused to support the right of the KLA to obtain arms—though this effectively meant allowing Milosevic to slaughter the Kosovars.

**When the Left cannot even extend support to those facing genocide, it has forsaken its ability to say anything meaningful about human liberation.**

What we are seeing today is that the economic, political, and military reach of the U.S. is so overwhelming that there is a tendency to accept anything as an alternative to it, no matter how narrow or reactionary it may be. Indeed, the U.S. drive for single world mastery is so overwhelming that it is viewed as "enemy number one."

In case the limitations of that are not evident, one need only recall Mao's notion of "Russia as enemy number one." He used it to justify allying with anyone, no matter how reactionary, so long as it suited his agenda of opposing Russia. A not dissimilar situation prevails today when it comes to the U.S. Some are willing to make apologies for any power which opposes it, even if it is a neo-fascist state like Serbia. Meanwhile, what drops from sight are the two worlds within each country, the forces of liberation which can uproot capitalism.

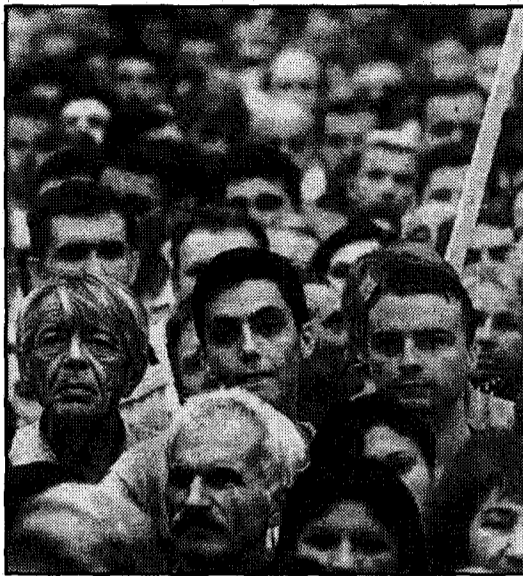
Perhaps no event since the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 has shown how total is the ideological pollution in the Left. Stalin's 1939 pact with Hitler gave the green light to

World War II. The Left which followed Stalin turned away from the anti-fascist struggle until Hitler invaded Russia in 1941. In contrast, Raya Dunayevskaya responded to the crisis in thought revealed by 1939 by embarking on the labor that led to the theory of state-capitalism and ultimately the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism.

**Theory becomes truly practical when objective crises show a philosophy of liberation to be a matter of concrete urgency. Such a situation faces us today.**

We have no illusions about the hypocrisy which guides U.S. actions in Kosova or anywhere. But we do not allow opposition to U.S. imperialism to stop us from recognizing that the way to oppose the forces of global counter-revolution is to solidarize with those struggling against genocide. What allowed us to project our distinctive position in support of Kosova was not just that we held to certain political conclusions, but that we approached the events from the standpoint of the Marxist-Humanist philosophy of liberation. This philosophy, developed over half a century, singled out the forces of revolution not just as force, but as Reason—that is, as subjects of liberation reaching for a philosophy of liberation.

The war in Kosova was not only about the force of arms, it was also part of a struggle for the minds of humanity. This was seen at a NATO summit held right before the war, which formalized the inclusion of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into NATO. Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek and others declared that NATO's expansion "validated the deeds of those who revolted against Soviet domination in the Budapest uprising of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968,



Serbs in Prokuplje protest war crimes, denounce Milosevic, July 8.

and the Solidarity movement that was born in Gdansk, Poland" in 1980.

This totally distorts history. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 which pried Marx's humanist essays of 1844 from the archives, the Prague Spring of 1968 with its slogan "Socialism with a human face," and the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980-81 which projected a concept of workers' control of production are reduced to a straight line of march to Western capitalism. The rulers are trying to erase from memory the Reason of the East European masses who aspired for a new humanism opposed to both private and state-capitalism, and so convince humanity that it has no choice but to place its destiny in the hands of state powers like the U.S.

What makes this such a serious problem today is that for so many the idea of socialism has been discredited. It means that emerging struggles do not speak in the language of revolution that we have been accustomed to hearing in earlier struggles. This does not mean the quest for a new way of life has been stilled. It means that this quest is not easily voiced and worked out in the absence of a clear anti-capitalist alternative.

It is imperative that revolutionaries face the reorganization demanded by this situation, otherwise they will be unable to impact ongoing events. To make explicit the striving for a different future which is implicit in today's struggles, it is necessary to meet them with a philosophy which itself embodies the Reason which has inhered in the freedom movements of our time. Such a philosophy is Marxist-Humanism.

It is not just that the retrogressive times in which we live show a "need" for philosophy. It is that without such a philosophy of liberation it is impossible to penetrate beneath the appearance of political crises and discern the aspirations of the actual human forces of opposition who are trying to be heard, but whose voice is being subsumed by reigning ideologies and crises. Marxist-Humanism is as integral to the historic development of the past half century as the revolutionary developments created by the masses. Bringing this body of ideas to bear upon reality is not a matter of applying certain concepts to reality, but rather of elucidating from reality the nodal points of forward movement embedded within it.

This is needed, not only for approaching events in the Balkans, but for each objective and subjective crisis which confronts us here at home.

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## II. New battles on the homefront

The oppression of the Kosovars is rooted in the racist attitudes that characterize not just the Balkans but this entire stage of globalized capitalism. Nowhere is that racism spelled out more sharply than in the conditions confronting Black America. Its lethal forms are measured in everything from the rates of young Black male homicides and Black infant mortality, to the level of Black unemployment in urban centers and the staggering percentage of Black and Brown youth in prison.

While most of this "everyday" racism rarely rates national headlines, except when it explodes into a 1992 Los Angeles rebellion, it cannot be separated from the acute form it has taken this year with the growth of deadly home-grown fascism—as seen in the shooting spree in the Chicago area by Benjamin Smith, who celebrated the Fourth of July by gunning down Jews, Blacks and Asians, killing two and wounding nine in the name of a "racial holy war" before he killed himself. Nothing more proves that the Littleton, Colorado massacre—carried out by two other well-off, alienated suburban teenagers to celebrate Hitler's birthday and that likewise ended in their suicide—was no aberration. The news that two brothers in California had been charged with a spate of synagogue burnings and the murder of two gay men there gives a sense both of how extensive is this home-grown fascism and how closely it identifies itself with what transpired in Kosova as seen in the fliers left after the synagogue burnings that blamed a "Jew world order" for the war in Kosova.

The proliferation of hate groups like the World

Church of the Creator, to which Smith belonged, is seen in over 250 media-savvy neo-Nazi groups now recruiting on the Internet. Many of these groups are aiming at well-to-do, upper-to-middle-class suburban youths. As one older Black worker told *N&L*, "Never before has the alienation been so extreme that young people like these killers, who seem to have everything, are willing to even give their own lives to preserve the status quo."

This is not the only sign of the decaying foundations upon which U.S. capitalism is driving for single world mastery. Clinton's much-touted "poverty tour" in July reveals the alienation that Marx showed defines relations in capitalism, which denies humanity its human-ness by perversely turning all relations into relations between things. The very language used on his trip shows how everything is being subjected to the logic of capital.

Those barely eking out an existence in Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation or an urban ghetto in California, were all defined as mere "human capital" while the excessively depressed sites were seen as "responsible markets" and sources of cheap wage labor. In Watts, where the unemployment rate is three times the national average, we were told that such pockets of poverty offer a great untapped market that will keep the economy growing without inflation if Clinton can just convince Congress to approve \$1 billion in Federal tax incentives to encourage \$5 billion in private investment.

As against such free market fantasies, the areas Clinton visited all have a rich revolutionary history. All

of them have been and remain integral to the development of Marxist-Humanism. The most powerful of these historic struggles was the coal miners' general strike that erupted 50 years ago. It was the first strike against automation, and broke out where it was first introduced into the labor process, in the coal fields of West Virginia and Kentucky—the very area Clinton just visited, evidently completely unaware of its revolutionary history. What brings this anniversary front and center is that in the 1949-50 strike workers raised a new and profound question that remains to be worked out today.

Whereas the question on workers' minds before the strike concerned the fruits of one's labor, which translated into wages and benefits in a union contract, in 1949-50 the workers opposed automation in the form of the continuous miner, which they called "a man killer." In going out on wildcat strike against the company and union, the strikers posed the question of "what kind of labor should man do?" The roots of Marxist-Humanism are found in the way in which Raya Dunayevskaya saw that question as making concrete for our age Marx's vision of ending the division between mental and manual labor, which he called the hallmark of capitalist alienation.<sup>2</sup>

(Continued on page 6)

2. For Dunayevskaya's participation in the 1949-50 strike and how it helped lead to Marxist-Humanism, see *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and The Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1984).

# Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspective, 1999-2000: World crisis

(Continued from page 5)

Such a search for a different future has characterized our era's struggles. In the 1970s, the Native American movement awakened the whole world. It has not ended, as seen in the protest that took place a week before Clinton's tour of Pine Ridge, when 2,000 Oglala Sioux marched from there to Whiteclay, Neb. to protest treaty violations and unsolved slayings. Clinton said nothing of this in his offer of tax credits and loans to address its 85% unemployment rate.

In the 1970s, Shaina Pe Shcapwe, an Oglala Sioux woman resident of Pine Ridge, wrote about the attempt of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to

develop small factories on the reservations and how workers organized a strike against conditions in them. The movement's most important accomplishment, she said, was "not that we found ways to make the white man listen to us, but that we created a new awareness of our own strength and ability." What the workers most needed to still work out, she said, was "Where do we go now?" In her effort to answer that, she opposed others in the Native American movement who rejected Marxism and argued that alienation was not within their culture. She pointed to the sexism within the movement and called it one of the deepest forms of alienation yet to be overcome.

Dunayevskaya's concept of "woman as force and Reason of revolution," she wrote, gave her a direction not only to dig into Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* to see the distinctiveness of Marx's Marxism, but also into Marxist-Humanism as a philosophy that "speaks to what we really want, especially what we want after the revolution."<sup>3</sup>

This reaching for the future is seen in a different way with young Black women workers in the Mississippi Delta who have been organizing unions in the catfish industry where they had been told none were possible. Yet they say the changes that are needed "go deeper" than unionism.

Describing a discussion held at a recent conference to plan for a workers' school, one Black woman activist said, "We made a lot of changes [since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s] but the chains aren't just around the ankles. There are mental chains, and that's what needs breaking...People want this society to change; they want the workplace to change, but they don't know how to go about it. Unionism is an important part of making changes and people see it needs to be improved and the political structure needs to be changed... But to change our society, not just as a Black race, but as a whole, we need to look more at changing the mind and not stop at changing the unions."

There is no question that the most abysmal form of the alienation characterizing capitalism today is found in the prison system. With the warehousing of a whole generation on lock-down, the new millennium will arrive with the prison walls cracking at maximum

capacity. The huge growth in the number of women prisoners and the degradation they are subjected to has led to a new movement of women in the "free world" demanding that these conditions be changed.

A whole new economy has grown out of the "celling" of America, a prison-industrial complex in which the

prison population, Black, Brown and white, grinds out production for multi-million dollar corporations looking for ever cheaper and cheaper labor. It is no accident that Huntsville Walls Unit in Texas, where labor is exploited with no pay to the convict, has been named by prisoners "the Lone Star State's Death Factory," where "state murders are

cranked out in assembly line fashion." It easily makes George Bush Jr., as governor of a state whose press releases proudly proclaim it to be "the largest prison system in the free world," the greatest serial killer in U.S. history. What is integral to such a vicious system is the attempt to dehumanize those whom this society puts in chains.

What is arising against this attempt to destroy the human spirit is a quest for a new humanism. It is proved by two events we have experienced over the past year. One is our pamphlet *Voices from within the Prison Walls*, written by a prisoner who elicited our help in achieving a back-and-forth with hundreds of prisoners. The other is the torrent of responses we have received to it, in which prisoners not only describe the oppressive conditions but raise profound questions of philosophy and politics, history and current events, of the human condition as a whole. Here are but two of the responses:

- One Black prisoner, commenting on our critique of the Left for its failure to respond to genocide in Kosovo, quotes one of Dunayevskaya's writings on the need "for the Left to face itself...None of the mass revolts have suffered either from lack of sacrifice by both masses and leaders. Nevertheless, what the past two decades have revealed is a failure to meet the challenge from the masses. What was demanded was a totally new relationship of theory to practice which was grounded in the new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory." He sees in this the need "to reach out to others not simply on prison issues but issues of concern to all, where prison becomes the U.S. (in)justice system's application of the 'Final Solution.' We have been involved in a Civil War for several decades. The parties of this class war are the poor, people of color, women, lesbian and gay rights activists, and humanists. Non-conformity results in imprisonment. It is important that prisoners, besides their own personal struggles inside the gulags, be involved with the struggle to make revolution, a truly universal concept which promulgates viable change."

- Another prisoner writes of the impact on him of the recent articles in *N&L* on Marx and Hegel: "What I am fascinated by—and terrified by—is Marx's connection between the bourgeois perception of a commodity and theology. The things we produce now appear to define who we are and how we relate to one another. The intel-

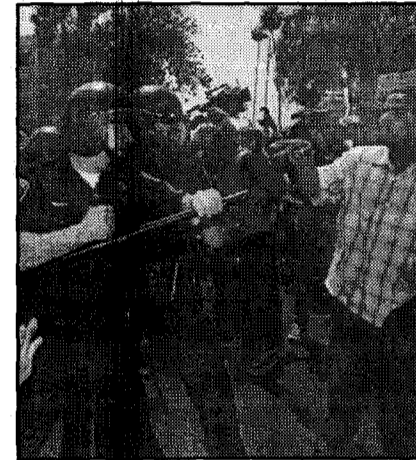
lectual may well be deceived in that s/he is conditioned to the theology of the commodity, but the worker is equally deceived in the belief that s/he is engaged in 'freely associated' labor...I agree with Dunayevskaya that the 'proletarian' does indeed 'grasp the truth of the present'—I just think we are afraid of it."

The outpouring we have experienced from the deepest of "the voices from below" shows that an ongoing relationship between a revolutionary body of ideas and the subjects of revolt can elicit and help develop the most revolutionary force of all—the mind of the oppressed. The challenge is to develop such an active relationship between philosophy and revolution in all emerging struggles.

One of the most vibrant of these is the movement against police abuse, which was galvanized by the murders of Amadou Diallo in New York, Tyisha Miller in Riverside, and LaTanya Haggerty and Robert Russ in Chicago. The movement is not only national but multi-ethnic and crisscrosses with solidarity with prisoners, the struggles against the death penalty, and the effort to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. The intermerging of these movements brings out the need to wage the struggle on

the level of changing the whole of society, and shows the todayness of the category of Black Masses as Vanguard of the American revolution.

To fully confront what is involved in working out the needed relationship between a revolutionary body of ideas and the subjects of revolt, we



Hundreds protest police killings of Tyisha Miller in Riverside, CA.

need to take a closer look at the nature of the present historic moment ten years after the collapse of the state-capitalist regimes which called themselves "Communist" in Eastern Europe.

3. *Black, Brown and Red* (Detroit: News and Letters, 1972); see also Shaina Pe Shcapwe column in the December 1985 *News & Letters*.

A window on  
Appalachia's  
history of struggles

The Miners'  
General Strike  
of 1949-50  
and the Birth of  
Marxist-Humanism  
in the U.S.

By Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya

To order, see page 4



Andy Phillips, 1964

## III. The untrodden path: Organizational responsibility for Marx's philosophy of revolution

### A. Ten years after the collapse of "Communism"

The tenth anniversary of the collapse of the state-capitalist regimes that called themselves "Communist" in East Europe is an important moment to reflect on the meaning of that event for today. The speed with which the "Communist" regimes collapsed in 1989 was surely unexpected. Yet it is not as if it came out of thin air. It was preceded by some 40 years of mass struggles. This included the East German revolt of 1953, the Vorkuta labor camp uprising in Russia in 1953, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the workers' revolts in Poland in 1970 and 1976.

1980 marked a new stage in this long history of revolt. That was when a new kind of trade union spontaneously arose in Poland—Solidarnosc. With over 10 million members, Solidarnosc brought together virtually all of Poland's production workers with farmers, intellectuals and women's and community groups in a new kind of workers' organization which directly chal-

lenged the power of the Communist Party.

Faced with this, the Polish government declared martial law in 1981 and drove Solidarnosc underground. But it failed to crush it. After Solidarnosc launched two major strike waves in 1988, Poland's rulers realized that they had little choice but to make a deal with it. In a series of roundtable talks that began in early 1989, the government and the leaders of Solidarnosc worked out an arrangement which led not to the revolutionary uprooting demanded by so many in 1980, but rather to the dismantling of the regime along the lines of "free market" capitalism and parliamentary bourgeois democracy. What brought about this remarkable transformation into opposite?

The question is not only important for understanding what happened in Poland, for the roundtable talks there set the stage for events that soon followed in the rest of East Europe. After a series of mass demonstrations swept through East Europe in the Fall of 1989, and Russia announced that it would not intervene militarily to support the regimes, the rulers realized that they had little choice but to allow the opposition to come to power. Unlike China's rulers, who crushed the Tiananmen revolt and relied on its army to strengthen single-party rule while pursuing economic "modernization," East Europe's rulers were forced to surrender their monopoly on political power. In turn, the opposi-

tion leaders there agreed to limit themselves to goals achievable within the framework of the existing class structures. Those who argued for a more radical transformation were quickly marginalized.

This had a global impact. It set the stage for events in South Africa where the apartheid rulers were forced to strike a deal with Mandela, in which they surrendered political power in exchange for the African National Congress' dismantling of the mass movement.

The surprise of 1989 was not how fast the regimes collapsed, but how quickly their collapse led to the ideological resurgence of Western capitalism. What predominated was a return of the old. Neoliberalism in economics and bourgeois democracy and narrow nationalism in politics predominated everywhere.

This was all the more striking given the decrepit state of Western capitalism which had become especially evident with the 1974-75 world recession. It disclosed a deep, structural crisis and proved that the post-World War II economic "boom" was over. But the 1974-75 global recession crisis did not affect only Western capital; it also impacted Russia and East Europe. Whereas Western capital embarked on a massive restructuring after 1974-75 which included everything from new attacks on labor to the use of new high-tech technologies

(Continued on page 7)

# the theoretic void: Taking responsibility for Marxist-Humanism

(Continued from page 6)

to promoting the "free" movement of capital across borders, the East European regimes found themselves falling further behind. By the late 1980s, the ruling cliques in Russia and East Europe realized their only hope for survival lay in some sort of accommodation with Western capitalism.

As the economic crisis in East Asia in 1997 showed, capitalism has yet to extract itself from the problems revealed by the 1974-75 recession. According to a recent UN report, vast income inequities and lack of medical facilities for billions around the world have become more acute over the past decade. It is surely not any ability to resolve its economic problems which explains the ideological resurgence of Western capitalism. Nor



Zapatista woman fighter.

can its resurgence be due to lack of creativity on the part of mass movements in East Europe and elsewhere. So what does explain it?

The fundamental reason is that the principles of Marx's humanism were not explicitly restated and projected through ongoing dialogue between revolutionaries and the movements from practice. Stalinism had clearly discredited the very idea of socialism by the 1980s. Yet the anti-Stalinist Left did not project an alternative concept of socialism that could be seized by the minds of the masses. This was already evident by 1981, when the intellectuals advising Poland's Solidarnosc promoted the notion of a "self-limiting revolution." Instead of fulfilling their historic responsibility of meeting the mass movement with a restatement of Marx's philosophy of revolution, they satisfied themselves with proposing partial reforms. By 1989, this abdication of responsibility for articulating any radical alternative enabled all the old ideas, like "free market capitalism," to rush in and fill the void.

The events of 1989 underlined the importance of what Dunayevskaya called several years earlier the "untrodden path" in the revolutionary movement—the unity of philosophy and organization. It is not that what was needed was "leadership" by some "vanguard." Rather, the problem, as she wrote in 1986, is that none "took organizational responsibility for Marx's philosophy, not just of revolution 'in general,' but specifically the question of what happens after the overthrow of capitalism."<sup>4</sup>

Since 1989, an array of new freedom movements have arisen. Abroad, we have seen the Zapatista revolt in Chiapas and the massive labor protests in West Europe in 1995-97. At home, we have seen the Los Angeles rebellion of 1992, a new generation of Black women worker-organizers in the Mississippi Delta, and a nationwide movement in defense of political prisoners. These struggles are in search of a concept of a new society which can help them realize the revolutionary strivings contained in the mind of the oppressed. The question is, will revolutionaries respond to this challenge, or will they continue to evade organizational responsibility for Marx's philosophy of "revolution in permanence"?

## B. The new moments of Marx and Marxist-Humanism

In the decade since the events of 1989, new developments have arisen not only from practice, but also from theory. This is seen in new discussions and debates on Marx's work, despite the prevailing ideological notion that Marxism is dead.<sup>5</sup>

As we noted last year about the conferences and discussions on the 150th anniversary of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, many are being hit with a shock of recognition concerning the relevance of Marx for understanding our globalized capitalist world. Yet while there is an emerging sense of the need to return to Marx to grasp globalized capitalism, few are projecting Marx's concept of the alternative to it. Even those who recognize the importance of restating Marx's concept of socialism act as if the task can be left to spontaneous action, as if theoreticians do not have a crucial role to play in speaking to what upsurges from below.

In response, this year we held a nationwide series of classes on "The Dialectic of Marx's *Capital* and Today's Global Crises." In them we explored *Capital* in light of its underlying Hegelian foundations by including as a core reading Dunayevskaya's "Rough Notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*," which will appear in a new forthcoming collection of her writings on dialectical philosophy,

*The Power of Negativity*. Studying *Capital* in light of Hegel's *Logic* is crucial not only for grasping the logic of capital. It is also crucial for projecting its alternative. The Hegelian dialectic of negativity signifies not just the destruction of the old, but the creation of the new through the "negation of the negation." Hegel's concept of "absolute negativity," Marxist-Humanism holds, contains the philosophic expression of the struggle for total freedom. Our study of Marx's *Capital* and the "Rough Notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*" was part of an effort to fill the void in the restatement of Marx's concept of a new society.

One part of *Capital* which we focused on, and which speaks directly to our age, is its concluding section on "the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation." As Dunayevskaya argued from as early as her 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," the "philosophic moment" for the entire development of Marxist-Humanism, Marx's chapter on "the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation" is based on Hegel's Absolute Idea. In a letter of May 12, 1953, she said that just as the Absolute Idea in Hegel's *Science of Logic* contains "the highest contradiction within itself," Marx showed that the logic of capitalist production contains an internal, irreconcilable, absolute contradiction—the accumulation of capital at one pole and the emergence of "new passions and new forces" striving to uproot it at the other.

Yet what is distinctive about Dunayevskaya is that she did not stop by pointing out the connection between Hegel's Absolute Idea and Marx's accumulation of capital. That became for her a new beginning as it signaled the need to go even deeper into the dialectic by venturing into the work intimated at the end of the *Logic*, the *Philosophy of Mind*. In that work Hegel projects his concept of full-blown liberty which he calls "individualism which lets nothing interfere with its universalism."

Marx had broken off his commentary on the *Philosophy of Mind* with ¶384 in his 1844 Manuscripts. Without being conscious of this at the time, Dunayevskaya began her commentary on the *Philosophy of Mind* with ¶385. This also led to her philosophic break from post-Marx Marxism, as no prior Marxist—whether Lenin, Lukacs or her then-colleague and co-founder of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, C.L.R. James—had recognized the importance of Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*. In exploring the *Philosophy of Mind* in a letter of May 20, 1953, Dunayevskaya achieved continuity with Marx's Marxism in light of the realities of our age.

**Marxist-Humanism's contribution centers on this movement from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Mind*. For it poses the challenge of meeting the forces of revolt arising against the accumulation of capital with a full-fledged notion of freedom. As Dunayevskaya said in a 1958 letter to Herbert Marcuse which will appear in *The Power of Negativity*, our task is to "make the abolition of the division of mental and manual labor as concrete for our day as Marx had made 'the absolute general law' of capitalism concrete for the movement of 'the new passions and new forces' for the establishment of the new society."**

To work this out for today, we need a closer look at what Marx meant by a new kind of freely associated labor. He addressed this in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*: "In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and manual labor, has vanished; after labor, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banner: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

This vision took on new concreteness in the post-World War II era, when workers battling automated production posed such questions as "what kind of labor should man perform?" As we noted earlier, this was central to the 1949-50 miners' general strike where workers focused not only on the distribution of the products of labor but on conditions of labor. Dunayevskaya drew from this that the question of



Iranian women students protesting in July. See article on Iranian protests on page 12.

"what kind of labor" had to be worked out in the very course of the freedom struggles in order to realize the "quest for universality."

Creating a new kind of non-alienating labor, however, is not only a class question. It is inseparable from the question raised by the women's liberation movement of how to uproot alienated man/woman relations. The women's movement's critique of the family and man/woman relations raises the issue of how to develop non-alienating forms of social relations that break down the division between thinking and doing. The same is true of the struggle of the Black masses against racism which has raised the question of consciousness of self, of gaining a mind of one's own, in the fight against the ultimate thingification of human relations—racism. The quest for new, non-alienating human relations is likewise central to youth's struggle against parental authority which Marx called a "cruel substitute for all the submissiveness and dependency people in bourgeois society acquiesce in, willingly or unwillingly."<sup>6</sup>

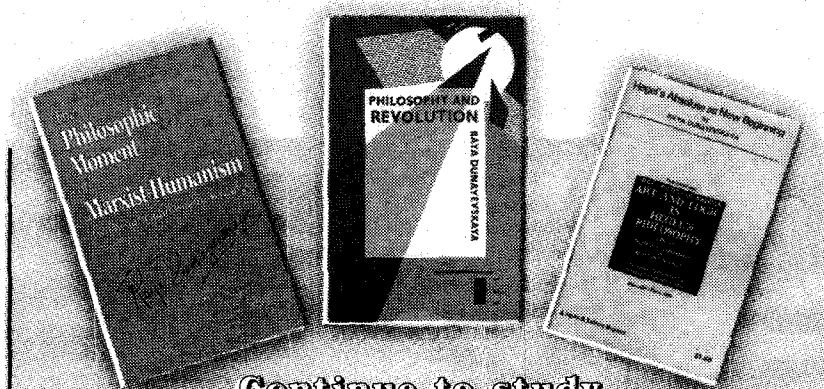
**Abolishing capitalism clearly involves far more than changing property relations, deeds of ownership, or eliminating the personifications of capital—the capitalists and bureaucrats. The abolition of capital requires the creation of new social relations which dispense with the division between mental and manual labor.**

The questions and demands posed by the multiple forces of revolt is where the work of projecting an alternative to capitalism begins. But it is not where it ends. For these forces are themselves in need of a philosophy of revolution rooted in the dialectic of negativity. Recognition of that is what drove Dunayevskaya to dig into the Hegelian dialectic as early as 1949, during the miners' general strike. Her studies on dialectics in that period, some of which will appear in *The Power of Negativity*, led her to explore Hegel's Absolute Idea and Absolute Mind in 1953. The philosophic breakthrough of 1953 led to the projection of a new concept of organization rooted in a unity between forces of liberation and a philosophy of liberation.

The tragedy of our times is that this new unity has yet to be realized. In the post-World War II era many revolutionaries tailended one or another form of state exploitation calling itself "socialist," cutting themselves off from the "new passions and new forces" as well as from recognition of the need to restate Marx's vision of a new society. Their limitations, however, are rather easy to see. No less important are those who did oppose the state-capitalist regimes on revolutionary grounds

and who did try to root themselves in the new passions and new forces—but who fell down by saddling the spontaneous struggles with the responsibility for spelling out Marx's vision of a new society. This was the case with tendencies ranging from the Council Communists to anarchists to followers of C.L.R. James. None took organizational responsibility for projecting philosophy as a force of revolution, specifically, one rooted in a restatement of the dialectic of absolute negativity for our life and times.

(Continued on page 8)



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4. "Marx's New Moments and Those of Our Age," reprinted in *News & Letters*, October 1998.

5. For these discussions, see our bulletin, *On the 150th Anniversary of the 'Communist Manifesto'* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1998).

6. This comment is from Marx's 1845 essay "Peuchet on Suicide," which has recently been published along with an Introduction by Kevin Anderson in *Marx on Suicide* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

# World crisis and the theoretic void: Taking responsibility for Marxist-Humanism

(Continued from page 7)

## C. From Logic to Mind: Concretizing absolute negativity as new beginning

We do not view ourselves as outside this problem. For we were so excited by the mass subjectivities that arose in the post-World War II era that we were hardly as concrete about taking organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism's philosophic contributions. Dunayevskaya spoke to this in a speech given to News and Letters Committees in 1976, entitled "Our Original Contribution to the Dialectic of the Absolute Idea as New Beginning: In Theory, and Leadership, and Practice":

Whether we take our very founders, Marx and Lenin, or any of the Hegelian Marxists: Lukacs when he was at his best, Marcuse when he was at his best, Adorno when he was at his best, the East Europeans when they were at their best—in an actual revolution—no one, no one, had formulated or even given us any indication that if you are going to break your head over [Hegel's] Absolute Idea, it would be as a new beginning. That's our original contribution. It isn't only that we did this great thing by saying Absolute isn't absolute in the ordinary sense of the word—it's the unity of theory and practice; Absolute isn't absolute in the bourgeois sense of the word—it's the question of the unity of the material and the ideal. But who ever said Absolute was a new beginning? None but us. And if we don't understand that original contribution—that we have to begin with the

totality—then we won't know what a new beginning is. A new beginning could just be that we discovered the four forces of revolution. We're certainly very proud of that—but that isn't all we're saying. In fact, I would say that if there's anything we do understand, it's the movement from practice. We certainly have that embedded in our being. We do understand that part of the Absolute. We do not understand the other part, Absolute Idea as second negativity. And until we do understand it, we will not be able to project.

This stress on working out Absolute Negativity as New Beginning, which is central to Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*, was at the heart of all she developed from then to the end of her life. It remains our fundamental challenge. New forces of revolt clearly will arise. But what is not clear is whether the idea of second negativity—which signifies not just the negation of the old but the creation of the new—will be projected anew. For this reason, this year we took the step of publishing in four issues of our newspaper the "Rough Notes on Hegel's Science of Logic." It is also why we put together *The Power of Negativity*. We aim to assume responsibility not just for the forms of struggle and consciousness which comes from below, but for the projection of the idea of absolute negativity itself.

As Dunayevskaya put it in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Liberation*, "Absolute negativity manifests its pivotal role in the Idea precisely because it is both totality (summation) and new beginning, which each generation must first work out for itself....It is not a question only of meeting the challenge from practice, but of being able to meet the challenge from the self-determination of the Idea, and of deepening theory to the point where it reaches Marx's concept of 'revolution in permanence.'" (p. 194-5)

This was the point of departure for her work on "The Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy" in 1986-87. Though her work on this was left unfinished at the time of her death in 1987, she left important indications of

where she was headed in a series of writings in which she returned with new eyes to her 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes. What became newly concrete was the way the 1953 Letters moved from the Absolute Idea in Hegel's Logic to Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*. She now viewed this movement in terms of the challenges facing revolutionary organization itself.

Working out the organizational ramifications of the 1953 Letters for today requires recognizing that the mind of the oppressed which arises from spontaneous mass struggles is not the same as the full-fledged vision of liberation which flows from a revolutionary body of ideas. This does not mean that working out the dialectics of organization frees one from responsibility for working out new relations between philosophy and the movements from practice that are themselves a form of theory. Quite the contrary. As Dunayevskaya put it in 1986, "Let us not forget that a form of theory is not yet philosophy. Rather, it is the challenge to the theoretician to end the one-sidedness of theory, as practice is challenged to end its one-sidedness so that theory and practice can create a new unity, the new relationship of practice to theory in order finally to reach the realization of philosophy."

"In a word we must face what we consider the burning question of today—ORGANIZATION AS INSEPARABLE FROM THE IDEA, i.e., Marx's philosophy of revolution vs. the visage of Hitler and the ongoing reality of Reaganism."<sup>8</sup>

7. Dunayevskaya's work in progress on "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy" can be found in Vol. 13 of *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. For her return to Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* in 1987, see "Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1989).

8. "Marx's New Moments and Those of Our Age," reprinted in *News & Letters*, October 1998.

## IV. Philosophic-Political-Organizational Tasks

Taken together with Marxist-Humanism's major works, the projection of the new collection *The Power of Negativity*, for which we are now seeking a publisher, creates an opening for making the dialectic of negativity central in all our work. Part I of *The Power of Negativity* contains the 1953 Letters as well as an important commentary on it. Part II contains summaries of Hegel's major works as well as letters to Herbert Marcuse who asked "why do you need the Absolute Idea to express the subjectivity of self-liberation." Part III contains lectures and essays on dialectical philosophy and forces of revolt, especially the Black dimension. Part IV contains studies of the Hegel-Marx relation, a critique of Lukacs, and a speech to the Hegel Society of America on "Hegel's Absolutes as New Beginning." Part V contains essays on the relation of dialectics to women's liberation and youth as well as on dialectics of organization.

In focusing on *The Power of Negativity*, this Plenum needs to demonstrate that the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism can become the energizing principle of outreach, action and elicitation. As part of our follow-through from our *Capital* classes, we propose issuing a pamphlet on Marx's value theory, to explore today's economic reality and ongoing debates on the relevance of Marx. We also plan to issue a pamphlet on Queer Theory, as part of our work on the subjectivity of sexuality. We also aim to complete the work on the Marxist-Humanist Statement on the Black Dimension, "Reason, Rebellion, and Revolution." These new publications are part of our effort to deepen our dialogue and activity with forces of revolt.

This year we also made important steps in participating in the battle of ideas, as seen in Marxist-Humanists contributing to a new book on Frantz Fanon, a book of Marx's writings on suicide, and to ongoing debates on dialectics of organization and value theory in Left journals. Furthering such battle of ideas in *News & Letters* newspaper, in which ideas are developed inseparable from voices from below and analyses of ongoing world events, remains an ongoing challenge. As part of furthering our organizational growth and outreach, we wish to undertake a major subscription drive this year as follow-through from the modest beginnings we made this year in tying such a drive to projection of *Voices from Within the Prison Walls*. This will be the core of our work around meeting our financial responsibilities, for

which we will need an additional \$45,000 sustaining fund for the continuance of *N&L*.

We will also have to ensure that the major philosophic works of Marxist-Humanism remain in print. We have obtained a new edition of *Marxism and Freedom*, and we will now have to obtain one of *Philosophy and Revolution*. We have also achieved a new step in the internationalization of Marxist-Humanism this year with the Chinese edition of *Marxism and Freedom* and German edition of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, as well as with the new Marxist-Humanist organization and journal in England, *Hobgoblin*.

Of foremost importance is our responsibility for the Archives of Marxist-Humanism. At a moment when the rulers are trying to erase the very memory of humanity's effort to transcend the horizons of capitalism, projecting the Idea of freedom embodied in the historic-philosophic development of Marxist-Humanism becomes the way to develop the revolutionary potential of the mind of the oppressed. Nothing short of that will put us on the path of dialectics of organization.

—The Resident Editorial Board



"Marx's text helps us to grasp more clearly his emerging views on gender and the family in modern society, during the same period in which he was developing his concepts of alienated labor and historical materialism and the beginnings of his critique of political economy and the state."

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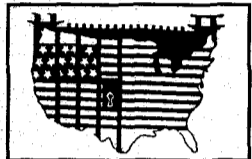
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**MUMIA ALERT!**

The *Philadelphia Daily News* has reported a real possibility that Pennsylvania governor Ridge may sign a new death warrant for Mumia Abu-Jamal as early as August. This would be when schools are out, many organizations are not functioning, and activists are dispersed. Mumia's petition to the U.S. Supreme Court for a writ of certiorari does not give him any kind of stay. The Supreme Court would grant a stay only if they grant the writ, and action on the petition is not expected until the next court term begins in October. The aim of signing the death warrant in August would be to seize the initiative by forcing Mumia's legal team to file for a writ of habeas corpus well before the October deadline. In response to such an action by Ridge, emergency local demonstrations would be called the next day and 10,000 people would be needed to come to Philadelphia on five weeks' notice to exert organized mass pressure to save Mumia's life.

**Mumia supporter  
Philadelphia**

**AMERICA'S  
(IN)JUSTICE  
SYSTEM**

The state of Alabama and other Southern states have resumed the horrendous practice of chain gangs as a way to "control" prisoners. Alabama Governor Don Siegleman introduced the standing shackle, a long bar in which prisoners who refuse to work are shackled by the arms and legs and forced to stand in the hot sun, without even being able to use the bathroom. It was ruled unconstitutional but the governor was able to reverse the ruling by agreeing to let the prisoners have a drink and use the bathroom every hour and a half. That cannot change the fact that this is a form of cruel and unusual punishment that must be stopped.

**Dan P.  
Detroit**

As a victim of a police beating about a year ago, I think I speak for all victims when I say: "Enough! This has to stop." But so long as the economic system is unjust, I don't see how we can make the criminal justice system just. The injustice of the economic order and of its police apparatus go hand in hand.

**Kelly  
Louisiana**

Current events have me thinking about PCs. I don't mean computers. Instead, I mean: people and crimes; prisons and casinos; politicians and citizens; polarization and communities; and, especially, police and controlling. (My contribution to help keep *N&L* going is enclosed.)

**Supporter since the '60s  
Detroit**

Thank you for your enlightening paper. The format is very well organized. The struggles within the prison walls is better understood with Marxist literature and philosophy.

**Prisoner  
Soledad**

I'd like to have more information about your organization. I am a Marxist but I don't understand the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism as I see it discussed in *N&L*. Could you send me more information about it? (P.S. We will win the revolution some day.)

**Prisoner  
California**

**CONFRONTING RACISM**

A letter from Detroit in your July issue says the writer is concerned that all white Americans might be considered racists. He needs to get over it. Everywhere white people have gone they've oppressed the people they've encountered. I'm an Indian and I can't even speak my own language in this country. In the same issue, in the "Black World" column, Felix Martin talks about white workers being poisoned so their militancy can be used against them. It's hard for white people to see what we see. They are a mighty people who had the technology to sail the seven seas and come in contact with every culture. They come at you with B52s and the most powerful technology ever seen. In Guatemala they didn't even need to be there for their influence to be felt so that some Indians felt they had to turn against other native Guatemalans in their own communities.

**Readers' Views****KOSOVA, THE LEFT, AND THE KLA**

The genocide of the ethnic Albanians has been completely glossed over by the Left while reacting to the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia. Intellectuals like Noam Chomsky saw it from the point of view of a bourgeois liberal. The choice of supporting the right of self-determination for the victims of genocide simply eludes him. Thus the position of the Left and the liberals becomes indistinguishable from the position of a section of the extreme Right.

This has been true also in India. The entire organized Left has lined up behind the Indian ruling classes in extending patriotic support to the undeclared war with Pakistan over Kashmir, forgetting the issue of the right of self-determination of Kashmiri people which has been trampled underfoot for the past 50 years by both the Indian as well as Pakistani state. The Indian Left has failed to see that the mass base and the dogged determination of the Freedom Movement in Kashmir today is due to one factor above all: the Indian state's consistent policy of denying democracy even in its minimal bourgeois sense to its citizens there.

**Arvind Ghosh  
India**

I am amazed that no one realizes what caused the sudden move of the Russian army into Kosova. Pure and simple it was the desire of the soldiers and officers to place themselves on the payroll of NATO. Russia can no longer pay its military, let alone its miners. Stalinism has put communism-socialism back many years. I appreciate your position on Kosova and agree that most of the Left lacks guts and brains to confront the problem of ethnic-cleansing.

**Longtime subscriber  
Philadelphia**

Please cancel my subscription to *N&L*. While it was not clear whether or not you supported the bombing of Yugoslavia, it is clear that you support the KLA, which is

Everyone is scared of the white man, even the white woman. There's good reason to be scared. What I'm saying is that if we don't respect each other, there will be no end to the fighting.

**Southwest Native American  
Anaheim, Cal.**

My job is really rough. About 95% of the people I represent in Court are non-whites, Black, Hispanic, Latino, etc. During my college days, the white students were into the dope and drugs that are landing these people in Court today, but nobody paid any attention then. The racism is obvious.

**Public Defender  
New York City**

**STAMP CLUB APPEAL**

I'm involved in a Community Service project here to design stamp starter and educational kits for a local Middle School. We also write and include the history of the stamp and beyond the stamp as an aid to advance the education of the children who get interested. Currently we get nearly all our stamps from fellow prisoners who donate them from what they get in their mail. This is very limited in scope. We are now seeking donations from organizations who would be willing to help us. The stamps can be off their mail; we'll soak them off the envelopes. Foreign stamps are also OK. Please ask your readers to send any donations of stamps they can to: NCCI Stamp Club, c/o School Project, PO Box 1812, 670 Williamsport Rd. E., Marion, Ohio 43301-1812. It would help to mark it: Attention School Project.

**Prisoner  
Marion, Ohio**

**LABOR STRUGGLES TODAY**

Not much has changed since we lost the vote for the UFW at Coastal Berry in June. The UFW is contesting all the violations, like people voting twice, and we don't expect the bogus Workers' Committee to be certified. All this takes time and makes us reflect on what has happened over the past few years. The growers have opposed us every step of the way. It's a struggle for power. They want to treat us like slaves and we want

nothing but a drug-pushing gang, just like the Contras in Nicaragua. The U.S. is not interested in humanitarian goals, but imperial conquest. This is World War I all over again. The U.S. capitalist class plays one gang of crooks, thugs and murderers against another, for their benefit. Obviously, you have not learned the basics.

**Ex-subscriber  
San Francisco**

John Marcotte's letter in the July issue deserves an answer: why is it that *N&L* supports the KLA? Is it "wrong to narrow such support to one military-political organization"? My ground for supporting the KLA was that they had the overwhelming support of the Kosovars, and transformed a people from victimhood to world-historical subjects for change. One of the more ridiculous slanders against the KLA was that they force-recruited, when in fact Serbia was the force that suffered from desertion while the KLA had to turn some away due to lack of arms. I see the KLA as anti-NATO in that they consistently called for independence for Kosova, which the U.S. consistently rejected.

**John  
Bay Area**

I am 95% in agreement with you on Kosova. My one reservation is some ambivalence towards the KLA. In the context of retrogression, it can easily become one more oppressive, narrow-nationalist, anti-worker, anti-woman, petty tyranny. Yet I agree that in the context of the general struggle for humanism vs. Communism and capitalism, the Kosovar resistance could open doors to revolutionary creativity. In any case, I'm 100% with you on our duty to defend the rights of Kosovans to create their own destiny. Here's my contribution to help keep *News & Letters* going. There truly is nothing like it in the world.

**Richard Greeman  
France**

something to say about that. The hardest thing to face up to is the fact that those who carry out the boss's will, the foremen, are all from the same place we are. They are immigrant labor just like us. That is what we cannot understand.

**Strawberry picker  
Watsonville, Cal.**

I was sorry to learn about the death of *News & Letters'* labor editor, Felix Martin. In your In Memoriam to him what moved me a lot was the fact that finding Marxist-Humanism and turning his life toward uprooting capitalism kept him from killing his foreman and spending his life in prison. The way the U.S. Postal Service drives its mail handlers to the edge and sometimes over it made me identify with what he was saying.

**Former postal worker  
Michigan**

**CHALLENGING BARAK IN  
ISRAEL**

No Israeli government has ever had more than one woman cabinet minister, and Barak promised significant improvement on this issue but appointed only Dalia Itzik to the post of Environment Minister. This is considered a minor position in Israel, in comparison to the big guns (sic) of Treasury, Defense, and Foreign Relations. A series of demonstrations ensued, with the biggest bringing several hundred women to protest outside the Prime Minister's office. I wish I could have been in two places at once, since across the street a handful of men staged their own protest against Barak's complete ostracizing of Arabs from his cabinet. Never, even once, has Israel had an Arab minister, although Arab citizens comprise 20% of the Israeli population.

**Gila Svirsky  
Jerusalem**

**EXTRADITING TERRORISTS**

The people arrested for bombing those embassies in Africa are being held for extradition to the U.S. for trial. The U.S. has decided to be the police force of the world but is setting a dangerous precedent for itself. What would happen if China decided to ask for extradition of

Clinton and some of his staff for the "terrorist" bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade? Or if Panama decided to ask for the extradition of Bush for kidnapping Noriega, even though he was a brutal dictator? What if several African countries asked for the collective extradition of certain presidents and intelligence operatives for crimes committed in Africa for the last 50 years? Of course, the U.S. would refuse to extradite, but it's an interesting concept.

**Incarcerated brother  
South USA**

**MARKING STONEWALL'S  
STRUGGLE**

The weekend of July 23-25 marked the 25th anniversary of the San Diego Les/Bi/Gay/Trans Pride March. With over 110,000 people in attendance, the march and rally seemed to have taken on a more political tone without losing the celebratory feel that the pride parades were meant to represent. "Stonewall Means Struggle" was the banner of one left group and a number of original organizers from the late 1970s were present. Despite a ten minute delay caused by a tear gas explosion near the announcer's booth, the parade truly illustrated the tenacity of the people in this community.

**Sharon  
San Diego**

**DEFENDING  
TABITHA  
WALROND**

Feminists have rallied to the defense of Tabitha Walrond who was convicted in May for the death of her infant son. Her "crime" was being poor and ignorant. She was unaware he was not getting sufficient breast milk and unable to navigate the public health care system. A hospital turned her away because the baby had not yet received his Medicaid card. The Committee in Defense of Women and Children is publicizing the case and demanding that Walrond be given probation instead of jail time. Her sentencing will take place Sept. 8 when a demonstration will be held at 9:30 a.m. at the courthouse. Supporters are asked to write letters to the judge supporting this demand. Letters should be addressed to Hon. Robert H. Straus, Bronx County Courthouse, 851 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY. 10451.

**Anne Jaclard  
New York City**

**WHY READ N&L?**

I'm very enthusiastic about the first copy of *N&L* I've received, especially because it talks about Marx, a subject we need to know more about here. My discussion group consists of students from different universities in Central Java. We are interested in knowing as much as we can about Marx because right now Indonesia is building a new government, and we want to give our government a new idea.

**Student  
Indonesia**

When a friend turned me on to *N&L*, I thought I was doing her a favor. Now I rely on it for information that just isn't available anywhere else.

My only quibble is that you are so immersed in your own studies and vocabulary that you may not realize some of your readers can't translate the ideas into conceptual material they can absorb. In the important four part series on Hegel you published I had to go to other sources to understand what was being expressed. If I remember correctly, Hegel himself is quoted in one of the articles as specifically warning about the petrification or crystallization of language and concept. Please consider that a valid criticism to think about. Meanwhile, I'm enclosing an extra five dollars to cover a sub for any prisoner who may request one.

**Radio interviewer  
Santa Cruz**

**TO OUR READERS**

Our thanks to all those who have responded to our Appeal for help to keep *N&L* going.

It was never more needed! Has your donation been sent in?

# Health care reality contradicts country's claims

Chicago—The word "reform" used in connection with the health care system in this country suggests that the system is undergoing important changes to better serve and assist the poor, sick and elderly. However, my own recent experience with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Medicaid program reveal another reality.

My mother is 84 years old. She lives alone in a senior citizens' building, and she pays \$611 per month. She pays \$85 per month in food and utilities. She must also pay \$400 per month for prescription medicine to treat brain seizures, Parkinson's disease, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes. She has no savings and no assets. Her only source of income is \$567 per month from social security.

Our family helps my mother meet her rent, food and utilities, but we cannot afford to pay for her medication. She does not qualify for Medicaid, because DHS ignores my mother's living expenses and requires her to use social security payments, her only source of income, to pay for her medications. She can submit the receipt to DHS. If her bills equal or exceed some magical number called a "spend down," she can receive a Medicaid card for a limited time, and then the process begins again. The issue is that, if my mother were able to pay for her medications before submitting her receipts to DHS, she would not need to come to DHS.

## SOMETHING HORRIBLY WRONG

Now, I may not understand how the Medicaid system works. But I am a social ethicist, and I can tell you that there is something inherently and morally wrong in a country that claims to open its arms to the tired, the poor and the huddled masses yearning to be free. Because this country's health care system contradicts that very statement, and I don't know which tired, which poor and which huddled masses we are talking about.

My mother is tired, my mother is poor, and she is a Black woman who has given her time and service to the government and still yearns to be free from the racism, sexism and classism that is woven into the very fabric of American society. But this country has a system in place that provides her with only \$500 per month to care for her living and medical expenses.

DHS, I have seen that your policies and procedures are not based on any genuine concern for the poor; the sick and the elderly. For you perceive that they are useless to American society. You perceive that they lack intelligence, moral strength and courage. You perceive



that they have no purpose in life because of their skin color, gender and cultural background, and are, therefore, undeserving of living a healthy and productive life.

## RESULTS OF NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS

I see the results of your negative perceptions in the tired eyes of caseworkers overburdened with heavy caseloads and a desire to know and be of real service to their clients. I also see it in the attitudes of other caseworkers and supervisors who began their careers years ago caring for others, but have remained in your system much too long and have become as cynical as you, DHS.

I felt your negative perceptions when I was forced to take my mother to the Fantus Clinic of Cook County Hospital because she couldn't get a Medicaid card. I saw it in the face of the woman taking my mother's blood pressure who had a chain around her neck saying, "I love Jesus," but couldn't offer a smile or any measure of kindness to my mother. And I certainly felt your negative perceptions as I waited in line at the Fantus Clinic pharmacy.

I heard one male pharmacy clerk make very disparaging remarks to another clerk about the poor and sick who sat directly in front of his window while he dispensed medication. With just one wide brush stroke he assumed that everyone in that clinic on the other side of his window were nothing more than a bunch of illiterate people. When I got to his window and saw that I had been incorrectly directed to him by another clerk, this man's attitude and comments suggested once again that I was nothing more than just another stupid, poor Black woman.

But they were not just his remarks, DHS. They are your remarks, your attitude, your negative perceptions, which breed contempt everywhere within the health care system in this country.

Suffering is universal, joy is universal, and the desire for a meaningful life is universal. My mother wants happiness. She is a human being, and she wants to live a life of health and well-being. You need to change your negative perceptions, DHS, so that your policies, procedures and programs will be positive and will demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of the people who need your services.

DHS, your negative perceptions hurt my mother, who must fight to stay alive each month without any assistance from you. As far as I am concerned, there is absolutely no truth in the words of the Statue of Liberty, who stands in New York Harbor saying give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free. For your DHS health care policies and procedures, your total immoral, paternalistic and dehumanizing health care system, make that lady a liar.

—Dr. Amenti Sujai

## Black World

(Continued from page 1)

One way or another, being "down in the Delta" means all of these things to Clinton. What's new, nonetheless, is that the economic recession that called for the 1990 Lower Mississippi Delta Development Initiative has become a so-called "boom," and little has changed in the lot of the working poor, especially African Americans, and women who are single heads of households. Of course, there's a new cabal of fetching Wall Street wannabes like Jesse Jackson for Clinton to entice with dreams of cockroach capitalism. Indeed, with Jackson on the platform with him, Clinton told his Clarksdale audience that his initiative to create a permissive environment for capitalist investment in poverty areas, complete with tax incentives and credits, is what transnational corporations already enjoy in Third World developing countries.

## CLOSING THE GAP

"That is what we're trying to do here," Clinton told the Delta's power elite. "We're trying to close what Reverend Jackson calls the resource gap." Reverend Jackson's own self-help initiative has been to open his Rainbow PUSH offices on New York City's Wall Street and Chicago's LaSalle Street. Clinton's "New Markets" initiative in the "Other America" sounds just like his Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa and its congressional clone, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, that was showcased during his African tour last year.

This is what Black lumpen-bourgeois entrepreneurs call "from the homeland to the homeland," a euphemism for their roles as stalking horses for major capitalist players out to further underdevelop Black Africa and Black America.

However, there is something else to Clinton's poverty tour that may have had the unintended consequence of shining a light on the logic of today's global capitalist economy and the dialectic of Karl Marx's *Capital*. In Clarksdale, Clinton made the following point: "Everybody

## Clinton 'down in the Delta'

in America has a selfish interest now in developing the Delta. Why? Because most economists believe that if we're going to keep our economic recovery going without inflation, the only way we can possibly do it is to find more customers for our products and then add more workers at home. If you come here [to the Delta], you get both in the same place. You get more workers and more customers. So it's good for the rest of America as well."

## THE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM

In this, Clinton, his policy makers and Jesse Jackson follow as well as express the logic of capitalism, that is, they at one and the same time follow and express what is objective in the present moment with regard to the laws of motion of capitalist accumulation as Marx analyzed them in *Capital*.

While "officially" inflation and unemployment are today at historic lows, in no other period has Marx's notion of the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation" come more to life as in this so-called "booming" economy that has produced one of the widest ever gaps between unprecedented wealth and unconscionable poverty. The objectivity of what Clinton follows as well as expresses of capitalism's logic also makes Marx's abstract assumption of a single capitalist society, in the often neglected volume two of *Capital*, quite concrete for our times.

The purpose of so seemingly extreme an assumption, which appears to remove the internal circulation of a capitalist society from its global environment, is to show that every attempt to attenuate the socioeconomic gap expressed by the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation" that Marx theorized in volume one of *Capital*, that is, providing unemployed workers with low-wage jobs in order to "get more workers and more consumers," will not resolve the absolute contradiction at the core of capitalist society. It is this dialectic which at every turn threatens to explode into social upheavals like the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion. By now it's obvious then why Clinton's poverty tour took him from down in the Delta to South Central L.A.

## Labor snapshots

Madison, Wisc.—An exhibit of Edmund Eisenschner's photography is front and center at the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison. Eisenschner was the official photographer for the Milwaukee UAW-CIO from the mid-1940s through the mid-1950s, and he was a superb craftsman.

*News & Letters* devotees will appreciate his sense of the centrality of Black labor. My favorite photograph features a Black laborer in the foreground as he and a white laborer chip imperfections from a rough casting, Crucible Steel Co., 1946.

In fact, much of the exhibit can be viewed from the perspective of race relations in labor during the period following World War II. One shot of a strike soup kitchen shows almost all Black participants. Picket lines include both Black and white. Group shots give the viewer a flavor of the racial mix among union members. Another entry portrays union solidarity with the Lincoln Brigades.

However, integration breaks down in the section portraying union social and sporting events. From dozens of shots of bowling teams, three were chosen for the exhibit: an all-Black male team and two all-white teams, one female, the other male. Union dances show no Black participation.

The exhibit includes some of the well-known labor leaders of the day, including a young Walter Reuther. Esther Prinz, sister of the photographer, donated the photographs to the Wisconsin State Historical Society at Eisenschner's death.

The Milwaukee County Historical Society will host the exhibit after mid-October. In late January it will return to the State Historical Society. Photographs can be seen on the web site at [www.shsw.wisc.edu](http://www.shsw.wisc.edu). —January

## Black/Red View

### War on poverty?

by John Alan

President Clinton's highly publicized tour of poor areas of the nation was designed to have him visit places where poverty has been a way of life for many generations and has become so entrenched that even economic booms cannot uproot it. He began his tour in Appalachia, an area of white poverty so old that it has become a part of the culture of the nation.

Clinton went on to look at Black poverty in rural and urban areas in the South. Next he focused his attention on Native American poverty on a reservation in South Dakota and Latino poverty in Phoenix, Ariz. He ended his tour in Watts, Cal., where more than 40% live below the poverty line, and the jobless rate is two to three times the regional and national averages.

The announced reason for Clinton's grand tour, to use his own words, was to "shine a spotlight on places still unlit by the sunshine of the nation's prosperity." Clinton's "sunshine" doesn't shine for the poor, but rather for a section of corporate America which, if given tax breaks and other incentives, desires to exploit some of the unused labor power in poverty areas.

Clinton has conceptualized this exploitation in terms of "harnessing the entrepreneurial spirit and enlightened self-interest of the private sector to bring new capital and jobs to communities that the prosperity of the past seven years has passed by." The concept is an absurdity, since the very process of accumulating capital is the reason why these areas are so poor. Poverty in Black communities, in barrios and in Appalachia was worsened 40 years ago when American capitalism began to automate and robotize production and created permanent unemployment in the working class of those areas.

When those conditions of poverty were made an issue by the Civil Rights Movement, President Lyndon B. Johnson was compelled to call in 1964 for an "unconditional war on poverty." His administration created programs and a bureaucracy, but a government created in the interest of capital accumulation is incapable of uprooting the source of poverty. Johnson's programs did make poverty a potent political issue, which sharply divided the country regarding class and race.

Clinton, a consummate politician, became a "new Democrat" by depicting Black teenagers as amoral and criminal, by ramming through Congress punitive anti-crime laws and by "reforming" welfare. Now he is conducting his war on poverty.

Clinton spoke in Watts in terms of private industry and government investing money in high-tech training of minority youth so that they can be employed by this "technology driven market." According to Clinton, everyone will benefit from this initiative. "Every time we hire a young person off the streets in Watts and give him or her a better future, we are helping people who live in the ritziest suburb in America to continue to enjoy a rising stock market."

Clinton has a concept about a mutual interest between labor and capital, but many people in Watts don't agree there is such mutuality. There were signs held high reading "President Clinton, it all sounds good. But where are the living wage jobs?" There was much resentment because Clinton's meeting was not open to the people. As one man put it: "If the community is not here, it's not serving any purpose. They could have held it downtown." The African-American masses know, not from history books but from struggles, that the war against poverty gains concrete results only when masses are in motion.

# Youth Alienation breathes life into ideas of unfreedom

by Kevin Michaels

Benjamin Smith's horrifying journey of murder jolts the mind back to last year's brutal slaying of James Byrd in Texas. It shows us that dire violence motivated by racism or reactionary prejudice is not simply a phenomenon of the Old South, but can today appear in any place and at any time.

The sudden and horrific outbreaks of reactionary violence that have been with us throughout the nineties, from the fatal shooting by racist thugs of Mauritanian immigrant Oumar Dia in Denver in November 1997, to last year's anti-gay killings of Matthew Shepard and Billy Gaither, taken together with the misogynist motivation of the 1998 Jonesboro, Ark. school shooting and the racist undercurrent of this April's Columbine school massacre make it clear that the changed and changing world that youth are developing in is one fraught with profound alienation and the powerful impact of ideas of unfreedom.

This latest outrage seems so disturbing because its

perpetrator was a young man from an affluent Chicago suburb, a graduate of a prestigious high school and a college student at a Big Ten university. Smith had even briefly participated in an anti-racist discussion group during his time at the University of Illinois. Yet something drove him to begin expressing racist opinions and ideas. He began publicizing his beliefs and exhibiting increasingly violent behavior, including a vicious attack on a former girlfriend.

## RACIST MURDERS

Smith's new path led him to leave the University of Illinois and enroll at Indiana University, where he made contact with and joined the World Church of the Creator, a dangerously up-and-coming white supremacist organization headquartered in Peoria, Ill. and led by Matthew Hale. Not long after, he embarked on the horrific undertaking which ended in the deaths of Ricky Byrdson in Skokie, Ill. and Won Joon Yoon in Bloomington, Ind. Nine other people were injured.

Smith's calculated journey of murder, which took

place within an organizational framework, exhibits a fanatic intolerance for the way the U.S. is becoming a minority-majority country: more immigrant, more Latino, more Black, more Asian. Smith's upper-middle-class, suburban background points to an appeal on the part of the ideas espoused by the deadly Matthew Hale and his ilk to the alienated youth of suburbia, youth like the two perpetrators of massacre in Columbine, Colo. or the 20-year-old Glencoe, Ill. woman profiled in the July 11 *Chicago Tribune* who identifies herself as a "racially aware racist."

## ANTI-HUMAN SOCIETY

The suburban and small town youth behind these killings have grown up in a society which can be described as a deeply alienated one, characterized by an anti-human tendency which manifests itself in the widespread tolerance for the death penalty, the indifference to the wasting of human lives behind prison walls and the racism which has been so prevalent a feature of American history.

The ideas propagated by the World Church of the Creator, which had success in motivating Benjamin Smith, did not simply descend out of the air. They have an objective basis in the historic racism, nativism and anti-Semitism of the U.S. and the way those things have been used to divide the diverse working class of this country and detour its efforts to struggle on its own behalf. The World Church's Matthew Hale represents a continuity with the manifestations of the extreme elements of this history and also signifies a development into the era of the internet, racist music and its dangerous subculture.

The alienation that provides such a fertile ground for these ideas is not exactly the alienation which Marx critiques as being at the heart of capitalist society. It is not the alienation of the worker exploited and underdeveloped by the process of capitalist production. It is, however, one which has developed in a society shaped by the exploitative relationship at the point of production of its material basis. All human relations are touched by the pervasiveness of the commodification of the human ability to labor and the fetishism of commodities which results from it. In this world, in which, as Marx described, relations between human beings take on the form of relations between objects, the white supremacist ideas of Matthew Hale and those like him find means to flourish.

The much-needed absolute opposite to the ideas propagated by Hale is Marx's Marxism, which lets us not only understand the alienation at the heart of capitalist society, but lets us see the way to overcome that alienation through the liberation of human creativity by means of overcoming the alienation of capitalism and the racism upon which it thrives. The projection of Marx's vision of a new society is what we all need to take responsibility for, as part of the effort to ensure that the ideas which drove Benjamin Smith to murder will have no more space to exist.

## Srebrenica commemoration

*New York* — "Remember Srebrenica! Arrest the war criminals now!" So cried a small gathering of Bosnians and human rights activists in Central Park July 11, commemorating the fourth anniversary of the massacre of over 8,000 unarmed men and boys in Srebrenica and Zepa by Serbian forces while UN peacekeepers stood by. Our event coincided with an international demonstration in Sarajevo in solidarity with the women of Srebrenica.

We shared their demands: "for the arrest and trial of all war criminals and all those complicit in genocide; for the return of displaced people to their homes; for the exhumation, identification and proper burial of the disappeared, and for the truth about Srebrenica."

To date, 8,000 people are still missing, and of the 1,000 bodies recovered, only 58 have been identified. The widows and children of the disappeared are refugees in their own country, living in conditions of extreme hardship and isolation, many holding out hope that their husbands are alive and prisoners in Serbia. The destruction and continued threat of ethnic violence prevents their return to their homes.

There has never been a full investigation of the role of the UN in the massacre. The U.S. pleads ignorance but apparently knew all about it from aerial surveillance photos. Robert H. Silk told us about his freedom of information law suit to force the government to disclose what it knew. He is in need of funds to continue the case.

The architect of ethnic cleansing, Slobodan Milosevic, continues to rule in Belgrade, having repeated in Kosova the crimes he got away with in Bosnia. No one is likely to arrest him while he is head of state, nor has NATO attempted to arrest other indicted war criminals such as Radovan Karadzic, who still controls politics in the Serb-dominated portion of Bosnia.

A Bosnian woman at the New York event said, "I didn't lose my husband, brother or son in Srebrenica—I lost my whole people. Milosevic will not stop his ethnic cleansing; Montenegro will be next. We need to energize people to stand up to the war criminals."

Marla Stone of Jews Against Genocide spoke about the killing as "a triumph of hypernationalism and opposition to a multiethnic society." The whole world permitted genocide, she said, in spite of claims of "never again."

— Anne Jaclard

## Voices From Within The Prison Walls

In Administrative Segregation in prisons run by Corrections Corporation of America, they allow televisions, and so on, as it is supposed to be a "non-punitive" segregation. However, one can't work, and the prisoner still spends 23 to 24 hours a day in a cell. They allow one hour of recreation—standing in a cage outside. But this can change if there is an "incident." Prisoners do get showers for about 15 to 20 minutes three times a week. That's the only time some get out of their cells.

Recently CCA doubled up a lot of prisoners—a first for segregated prisoners. They have access to library books, two a week from a cart, and limited legal resources. I have been in some segregated cells where you are there by yourself, in a concrete cell, with nothing.

Once, when I received a year in segregation, the cell was such that you had no reference for time—no watches allowed. In the winter it was ice cold; in the summer it was so hot and humid that the walls would sweat and at times we'd have 1/4 to 1/2 inch of water on the floor. You get butt-naked to keep cool and maintain.

Some guys broke. One started spreading toothpaste and feces on his face like a mask. Another decided his feces was a toy, and he threw it on the ceilings. In that place, a "punitive" segregation, we had nothing. We

## The hole is torture

could talk through the vents and, being the "old con" on the block, I taught the guys how to make toilet paper chess pieces and a chess board, so we had chess tournaments by yelling out the moves. Compared to that, Administrative Segregation isn't bad. But it's still segregation, regardless of what they call it.

Even as soft as Administrative Segregation is compared to other places, people still snap. Most people do not have tolerance for solitude or sensory deprivation, and I've been in holes where I have had to talk out loud to keep my voice working and, I suppose, to hear a sound.

In one place, to break the monotony, we would do things like flood the unit or stage "events."

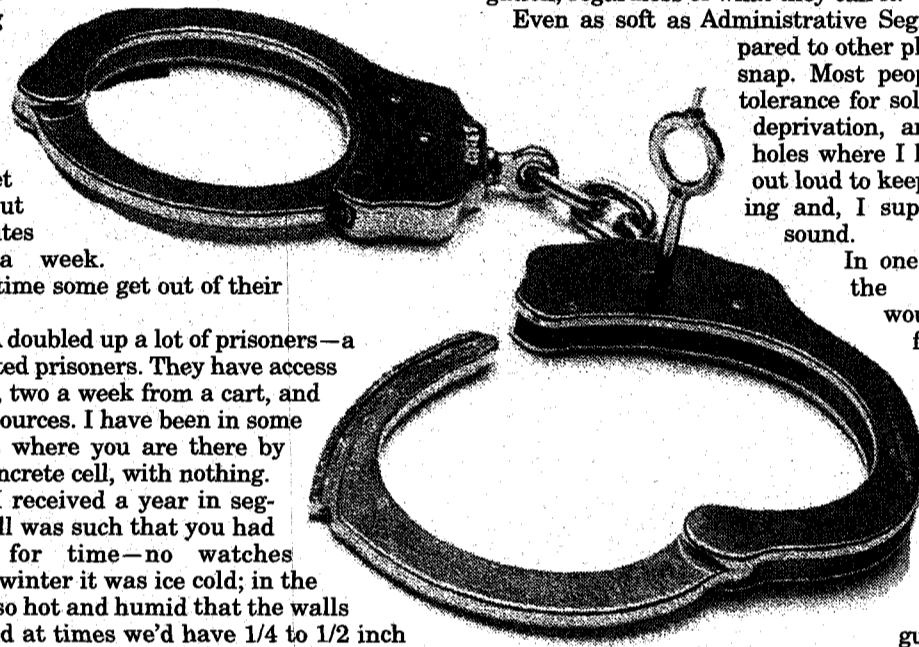
One event was a contest to see how many shots of the chemical restraint measures one could take before he gave up and guards were able

to subdue him. The record in one

Wisconsin facility stands at five, I believe.

Being in the hole is not for the weak of heart or mind, or weak of spirit. Supermax is the ultimate in human psychological torture that no one should have to suffer

—Veteran of the criminal injustice system



## Three days of misogyny at Woodstock

*Rome, N.Y.* — You may have seen the media reports of arson, looting, and damage to property at the 30th anniversary Woodstock music festival held July 22-25 in Rome, N.Y.

What wasn't reported was the most serious crime of the weekend: the open harassment of and violence against women and the complicity of the Woodstock promoters, who created a hostile environment by projecting women as objects to a predominately male audience.

As I drove into the festival site, I saw a crowd of male teens yelling at women who passed by to take off their clothes. This demand replaced "Three days of peace, love and music" as the popular slogan of Woodstock '99. I saw this repeated so many times that I suspect it was not simply spontaneous, but had been encouraged by MTV, Howard Stern, or some other media outlet.

## Free speech battle at KPFA

*Berkeley, Cal.* — For more than two weeks KPFA, the country's oldest listener sponsored radio station, was shut down and put on autopilot by its parent organization, the Pacifica Foundation. Labor activists and listener-supporters have maintained a continuous presence in front of the boarded up, padlocked station to denounce Pacifica board chair Mary Frances Berry's campaign to broaden and diversify KPFA's appeal at the expense of free speech and local control over community radio.

The standoff was precipitated by management's on-air removal of a programmer who aired a fifteen minute excerpt of a news conference during which a speaker presented e-mail evidence that selling KPFA's frequency, 94.1 MHz, had been discussed by board members.

Station management broadcasted recorded music and archival audio tapes of popular leftist lecturers during its lockout of staff.

The conflict came to a head on August 1 when 10,000 supporters of KPFA startled Pacifica by attending a

march and rally. Organizing this demonstration around the idea of free speech struck a deep cord in the local community. So much so that there is no compromise: KPFA staff won complete autonomy for at least six months and the removal of armed guards as well as assurances that the station's frequency will not be sold.

A confrontation with a protester helped me see more clearly the importance of free speech. She was so appalled by News & Letters' position, supporting the Kosovar's struggle for self determination, that she doubted we could really be interested in supporting local control of KPFA. Maybe that it so because the station largely ignored the issue of the Kosovar's struggle against ethnic cleansing in their opposition to NATO bombing. She argued that Kosova is merely a province of Serbia and therefore you can't support self determination for its population. She left before I could ask her if she would then support Berry's clampdown on this "province" of Pacifica Foundation.

—David M.

## Our Life and Times **Rwanda and Congo: five years after genocide**

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

It is five years since the Rwanda genocide. In the spring and summer of 1994, that country's military regime targeted the Tutsi ethnic minority, long despised by many in the Hutu majority, as well as any Hutu who refused to join in. It did so after having pretended to negotiate with the liberationist and Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF).

Using the *interahamwe*, a militia it had set up, as well as state structures, the regime massacred up to 800,000 people, raping and maiming thousands more. While the weapons used were often primitive—axes and machetes—the ideology and organization were those of an utterly modern state-capitalism. An up-to-date system of national identity cards pointed out the victims. In addition, the regime's ideologues made incendiary radio broadcasts, giving allegedly historical reasons why every Tutsi, including infants, should be killed.

These horrific deeds set in motion a series of events that changed the face of Central Africa, opening some possibilities of liberation from both local despots and global imperialism. As with the Bosnia genocide taking place during the same period, the UN and the Western powers wrung their hands but did nothing to save the Rwandans. Only a military victory by the RPF finally did so, also setting up a new multiethnic regime.

Across the border from tiny Rwanda lay Zaire, a vast mineral-rich country ruled since the mid-1960s by Mobutu Sese Seko, a CIA-installed dictator. It was here that the *interahamwe* and their leaders fled following their defeat. After they began organizing attacks into Rwanda, that country's new regime linked up with long-standing opponents of Mobutu, some of them members of Zaire's own Tutsi minority. They also worked with left oppositionists such as Laurent Kabila, who became the anti-Mobutu rebels' leader.

During the 1996-97 liberation war, the *interahamwe*, sometimes aided by Serbs sent by Milosevic, did most of the fighting for Mobutu. The rebels, with additional aid from Angola, took over the whole of Zaire, which they promptly renamed Congo. They claimed to be carrying out the program of Patrice Lumumba, the immensely popular leftist leader killed by the CIA in 1960.

While the overthrow of Mobutu unleashed new hopes of liberation for the entire region, Kabila soon exhibited a disappointing mix of cronyism and authoritarianism. He ruled by decree, pushing aside not only compromised U.S.-backed leaders like Etienne Tshisekedi, but also leftist and Lumumbist tendencies. He was most concerned with lucrative mineral export contracts.

While substantially weakened, the *interahamwe* regrouped and began to attack Rwanda. By the summer of 1998, this led Rwanda to intervene again. Soon Rwanda-backed rebels controlled large parts of eastern Congo. In a disastrous ultra-vanguardist move, the

rebels sent a small force to try to capture Kinshasa, the capital, a thousand miles to the west. Even in their stronghold of eastern Congo, however, these rebels did not enjoy anywhere near the level of support as had those of 1996.

Kabila responded by arranging massive military intervention from Angola and Zimbabwe, also allowing cronies of Zimbabwe strongman Robert Mugabe to obtain lucrative contracts. Then Kabila took a more ominous step. As the Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole

Soyinka wrote, Kabila had first attacked the rebels as Rwanda-backed, but then, "in a deceptively innocuous shift of language, he blamed a bunch of Tutsis for his woes and spoke of a 'Tutsi menace.'" "Isn't that how it all began?"—asked Soyinka.

Today, the rebels, divided into three factions, control about a third of Congo. In some cases, they have been guilty of opportunistic alliances with former Mobutu supporters. However, Kabila has sunk the lowest, today aligning himself openly with the *interahamwe*.

## Iran: At the brink of civil war?

Chanting "Commander in chief, Resign," "Down with the dictator," and "O great leader, shame on you," tens of thousands of student youth took to the streets in Teheran in early July, opening up a whole new and exciting chapter in the struggle for freedom in Iran. Twenty years after Ayatollah Khomeini used the taking of low-level U.S. embassy staff as hostages to impose his own "satanic verses" on the Iranian Revolution, including in the constitution the totalitarian office of the "Supreme Religious Leader" (Fa'iqh), new calls are being heard throughout Iran to curtail its powers.

After months of openly debating the anti-democratic nature of the role of the Fa'iqh and calling for its removal from the Constitution, demonstrators denounced the current Supreme Religious Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, Khomeini's successor. July 1999 will be remembered as a historic turning point in Iran, a new chapter for the struggle for freedom that was for too long driven underground under the whip of a counter-revolutionary regime and ideology.

In less than a week, a series of protests and clashes cracked the totalitarian shell, revealing a dramatic new view of the depth of opposition and militancy of Iranian youth. At the same time, however, the quick about-face by the reformist President Khatami in condemning the protesters and the show of support by hundreds of thousands of the faithful for Khamenei have exposed major fault lines between the ruling reformers such as President Khatami and his numerous supporters, as well as the continuing strength of the conservatives who command some mass support.

On July 8 nearly 200 students rallied against concerted attempts by conservative judges and legislators to crack down on increasingly outspoken Iranian journalists and papers. The demonstration was called to protest a special clerical court order to close down a reformist daily newspaper, *Salam*, for publishing a damning document revealing high-level official support for the assassinations of three opposition writers and journalists last fall.

The author of the published document, Said Emami, was a major figure in political police and very likely involved in the assassinations. Emami himself may have been done away with to cover things up. On the same day the Majlis (the house of representatives) gave preliminary approval to a bill that muzzles the press.

The bill was authored by the same Emami before his death. The student protesters denounced both moves and took to the streets. That evening government thugs backed by police attacked a Teheran University student dormitory, traditionally a hot bed of radical youth activism. This time, however, the students fought and beat back the attackers. But hundreds of students were injured, many were thrown out of windows, and at least one person was killed.

By the next day nearly 25,000 students staged a sit-in at the university, demanding the punishment of the attackers and the resignation of Teheran's police chief, General Lotfian. Within 48 hours they were joined by thousands of others. Other protests erupted in at least 18 major cities, from Gilan, Mashhad, and Tabriz in the north to Yazd, Esfahan, and Shiraz in the south. They demanded the protection of press freedoms and personal freedoms, and an end to the dominance of conservative-backed vigilantes backed by police.

Ayatollah Khamenei, in a gathering of his backers, proclaimed that the protests were instigated by U.S. imperialism. He shed crocodile tears about the vigilante attacks on the students while calling on the same vigilantes to be ready for confronting this new movement. On Monday evening the student sit-ins were attacked by these same vigilantes, and tens of thousands were beaten and forced out of the university campus where they had taken sanctuary.

On Tuesday July 13, Teheran became the scene of

widespread street battles spreading several miles to the north and south of the university campus. Police cars were set on fire, businesses were closed down, stores were emptied, banks were attacked, and even the sprawling bazaar was shut down. The protesters were no longer only university students. Helicopters and army units were brought in to surround the streets while plain clothes security was sent in to smash what looked like a mass uprising.

Some reformers and student leaders have issued statements warning that these street battles were fomented by right-wing fundamentalists to discredit the reform movement. It is possible that there has been infiltration of the movement by provocateurs and a movement like the fundamentalists is easily able to operate at the level of provocation since it has a genuine but

shrinking base of people who are not obviously part of the elite. Also, one cannot underestimate the efficacy of such tactics, since they could split Khatami's base of support, driving away the middle classes who are always cautious and wary of any kind of social violence. Indeed, many of the leading reformers immediately distanced themselves from these protests. Yet there are many other sources of discontent as have been shown in earlier street protest.

But as Elaine Sciolino of *The New York Times*, has correctly pointed out, there is such high unemployment, so much alienation and pain in the life of Iran's majority impoverished and 30-50% unemployed that the riots were to be expected. She pointed out the rebellion in Islamshahr, a working class suburb of Teheran, where in 1995 gasoline price hikes led to several days of intense riots against the government. More recently in several Kurdish cities in western Iran protests against the arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan had also turned into mass rebellions against the Islamic Republic. Most of these cities are still under martial law conditions as one reporter for the KDP newspaper recently pointed out.

By Wednesday, July 14, however, "law and order" was once again restored while a government-staged march bused in hundreds of thousands of supporters in a show of support for the bruised feelings and aching heart of their "great spiritual leader," Khamenei. But will they be able to erase the memory of the heady days that preceded it?

—Cyrus Noveen



Students break through gates of Interior Ministry.

## U.S. out of Vieques!

Over 50,000 demonstrators, waving U.S. flags imprinted with skulls instead of stars, marched on the U.S. Navy base in Puerto Rico on the Fourth of July. They are demanding the Navy cease operations at its training base on the island of Vieques, clean up the area, and leave.

The current protests began after April 19 when a civilian, David Sanes, was killed by a Navy fighter which dropped two 500-pound bombs off-target. Then in May, reports revealed that the Navy had dropped over 250 rounds of shells tipped with toxic depleted uranium three months earlier. Anti-Navy protesters have also set up encampments on the bombing and artillery range.

The protest continued July 18, when demonstrators painted anti-Navy slogans on a U.S. warship visiting the port in San Juan. Even the pro-statehood governor, Pedro Rossello, has been forced to confront the U.S. government over the latest outrage on Vieques.

Studies have documented the environmental damage the Navy is inflicting on the island and surrounding waters. Residents have also demanded answers to the much higher than average cancer rates on the island. Protests against the Navy have also erupted in the past.

## Mexican strike continues

Thousands of students and their supporters—families, professors, high school and younger students, non-student youth, workers and "veterans" of the 1968 student movement—marched through Mexico City on July 27 to mark the 100th day of their strike. The strike at the National Autonomous University (UNAM) in Mexico began April 19 after UNAM President Francisco Barnes and his governing council had earlier approved a measure requiring students in higher income brackets to pay \$145 annually in tuition.

The students have rejected any increase, insisting that public education be free and open to all students, poor as well as rich. They have also rejected other measures revising examination and graduation requirements, expressing concern that Barnes is attempting to "privatize" UNAM and turn it into an elitist middle-class institution focused on white collar job training.

On June 3, Barnes proposed the tuition raise become "voluntary." Students rejected this proposal as an attempt to divide their movement and voted to continue the strike until their other demands are met.

## French Left and gay rights

Some of the new elements released during the 1995-'96 French strike wave persist, but not in so dramatic a form. One indication of this came during the June European Parliament elections where, unlike in many other countries, the Left won decisively.

However, the realignments among the three Left parties that form the present government were even more interesting. While the Socialists won a fairly substantial 22% of the vote, the Greens, with 10%, outpolled for the first time the Communist Party, which received only 7%. Green leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit immediately asked the government to reconsider its refusal to legalize thousands of immigrants. The Socialists immediately rebuffed him.

Outside the government and further to the Left, a joint Trotskyist slate that ran in the name of revolutionary Marxism won over 5%, nearly a million votes. In Paris and several other cities, this anti-Stalinist alliance outpolled the better-organized Communists. For the first time, Trotskyists will sit in the European Parliament.

In other developments, the Gay Pride march in Paris in June drew over 100,000 people. However, conservatives, aided by a few on the Left, have managed to block in the Senate a law first introduced last fall that would grant legal status to lesbian and gay couples.