

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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## Accuride struggle tests UAW



by Htun Lin

Billy Robinson, president of UAW Local 2036, came to Oakland, Cal. on Nov. 5 to appeal for help for unionists in the ongoing struggle in Henderson, Ky. Local 2036 represents 400 Accuride workers who make 80% of the wheels on American trucks, such as Ford, GM, Navistar and Mack.

In February 1998 Accuride Wheel Corporation demanded draconian take-aways. No union rights in the shop. No way to file a grievance except on your own time. No stewards in the plant. The right to reclassify any job. The right to contract out any work. They refused to include any language prohibiting discrimination. In effect, Accuride demanded that workers destroy their own union.

Not surprisingly the workers voted to strike 370 to 9 and struck, authorized by the regional director of the UAW, on Feb. 20, 1998. The company then locked these workers out after they voted to return to work without approving the company proposal.

Robinson said, "The proposal they gave us in September 1998 contained the same language on their right to subcontract any work and all the other offensive language that was in their first offer. No union rights in the plant. No set classification. Except this time they threw in another kicker: the unilateral, unrestricted right to change, modify, alter or delete the pension plan at any time. They also demanded the same unilateral, unrestricted rights to change our insurance co-payments. We presented this to the membership who rejected it overwhelmingly."

On Aug. 14, 1999 the UAW International called Robinson at home and told him to have his executive

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## Election turmoil exposes fault lines in U.S. society

by Olga Domanski

It appears we are now confronting a White House inhabited by the Christian Coalition escorted by George W. Bush. How far from a mandate Bush will have, however, is clear from the turmoil that has engulfed the nation ever since the Nov. 7 presidential election revealed the enormous instability underlying the most powerful nation on earth. It has torn away the facade of American "democracy" and revealed the determination of the forces of revolt to demand real democracy by making their voices heard.

The spontaneous way African Americans, Jews and Haitians took to the streets in Florida within hours to protest the thwarting of their votes on Nov. 7 puts fear in the hearts of all rulers. Their determination not to let any such activity get out of hand is what defined the response of both George W. Bush and Al Gore and tells the tale of the fate of bourgeois democracy.

Far from reaching out to all those demanding to be heard in Florida and throughout the land, Gore made it clear that he would fight on strictly constitutional lines and reached out only to the courts to insist on a manual recount of the contested votes.

Bush, on the other hand, was not restrained by any illusions about bourgeois democracy. The minute the

Florida Supreme Court ruled that the manual recounts had to be included in the vote, he took two actions. One was to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court to overrule the Florida court's decision. The other was to unleash a mob of seasoned Republican goons to rampage in storm-trooper fashion where ballots were being counted in Miami-Dade County. It stopped the counting dead.

The figures that the Republican pit-bull Secretary of State Katherine Harris announced as "certified," which Bush used to declare himself president-elect on Nov. 26, were efficiently "cleansed," not only of the Miami-Dade figures but of hundreds of other Florida votes that had been expected to go to Gore.

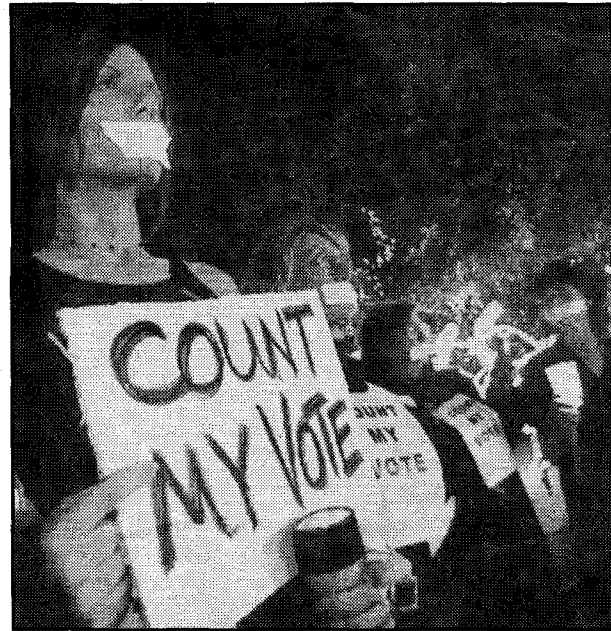
### DEEP DIVISIONS

The Nov. 7 elections made clear deep divisions of class, race, gender, age, and geography. None can deny the way in which women came out in disproportionately high numbers to vote against Bush because of his

chilling threat to women's rights, particularly if he should be the one to choose the next three seats on the Supreme Court.

Most of all, none can deny the huge Black vote that took one battleground state after another from Bush. Gore won Michigan thanks to getting 90% of the Black

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## BLACK/RED VIEW

### Specter of Tilden-Hayes

by John Alan

The cantankerous political struggle for the White House by the Republican and the Democratic parties isn't a new phenomenon. It had historic precedent in 1876 when the Democratic Governor Samuel J. Tilden of New York and the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, a former Union officer and a three-time governor of Ohio, ran for president.

At the time the Republican Party was the party of labor and African Americans. It was as a result of this election and the maneuverings around gaining the political office that Republicans became the party of emerging American corporate capitalism.

Tilden won the popular vote. The winner in that election needed only the majority of the electoral votes from Oregon, South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana, which were the decisive states at that time. According to historians, in those three southern States the election was fraudulent. Both parties were engaged in election malpractice. The Republican-controlled election board invalidated enough of the Democratic votes to give Hayes 185 electoral votes, a majority of one.

To determine whether the election of Hayes was legal Congress set up an electoral commission composed of Republicans and Democrats from the Senate and the House plus two Republicans and two Democrats from the Supreme Court to examine the charges of voting fraud. By a majority of one, the commission gave the election to Hayes.

Hayes' narrow congressional victory was only the tip of a political iceberg. The source of his victory was a secret bargain he had made with southern Congressmen, industrialists and railroad corporations, who wanted to exploit southern labor and natural resources. Hayes promised that he would adopt a southern policy which would open the South for their exploitation.

Thus, when Hayes became president, he ordered the withdrawal of Federal troops from the southern states; the stopped Reconstruction and gave "home rule" to the former slave masters and their henchmen, the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan spread beast-like terror among African Americans and their supporters and re-established a racially segregated society.

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## The new freedom movement in Iran

*Editor's note: Gholamreza Mohajerinejad is a leader of the July 1999 student protests in Iran. He left Iran after his release from prison to speak out and mobilize support for his imprisoned comrades, and mobilize Manuchehr Mohammadi, an Iranian dissident whose life remains in grave jeopardy. The following is a translation of a talk by Mohajerinejad to the Chicago local of News and Letters Committees on Oct. 22.*

In July of 1999 Iranian students rose up for the first time since the university purges began in 1981-83. This was a most remarkable achievement given the long history of the war, murder, and violence that form the basis of the present regime.

The U.S. embassy hostage taking in 1979 destroyed international solidarity with Iranians and projected a violent image of us. The war with Iraq allowed two dictators to send hundreds of thousands to their deaths and provided a perfect pretext for sending opposition members into prisons or death camps.

During the 1980s students and faculty whose only crime was thinking differently and demanding freedom were purged. Only those with Islamic tendencies backed by the regime were allowed open activities on the university campus.

This was similar to what happened under totalitarian Communist regimes. In Iran, instead of the official state ideology of "dialectical materialism" theological studies were forced on students. University admittance was often based on rigid selection standards where Islam was the cover over human creativity.

### BIRTH OF NEW STUDENT MOVEMENT

After the Iran-Iraq war, new opportunities arose for students to make demands. These were very oppressive times, but there was also finally some room for expression. In 1994 a group of students began a secular student movement. One of its founders, Manuchehr Mohammadi, is now in prison. I was honored to help in the formation of this movement.

What we did was considered insanity at the time. We were viciously attacked. Vigilantes attacked Mohammadi, and only the university president was able to pull him out and save him. We were also attacked in the dormitories and had to go into hiding for a year and a half.

Our crime was refusing to pledge allegiance and demanding a non-religious regime. After a period of

underground work, such as distribution of our demands in flyers, we decided to begin openly mobilizing the student movement again in 1997.

Our open protests began with syndicalist and ended with political demands. For the first time students came out 10,000-strong and confronted security forces on the streets with the slogan, "Long live freedom!" and "Down with dictatorship!"

### NEW KIND OF OPPOSITION

Having lived under conditions of war and murder for over 15 years, we decided to move in a non-violent and lawful direction. Although some of the pre-1979 generation of freedom fighters did not agree with this approach, we considered it to be the best way to achieve our goal. Because we live in an information age, we chose to let the battle of ideas and confrontation of rational thoughts be the way of reaching success. Besides, faced with a regime that was so armed to the teeth, we had no choice. Armed struggle was tried for many years, and it had only proven to give more time and power to the regime.

It was during this time that Khatami was elected as president. Our student organization voted for him, but we made clear that we didn't consider him our savior, and we didn't have faith in him. We declared even then that those who participated in elections did it to say "no" to the Islamic regime.

The struggle took a serious turn when even many of those in the regime began repeating our slogans. But I believe just as the sun must eventually break through the clouds, so too their true colors must also begin to show themselves.

Mohammadi and I were invited to speak outside the country two years ago. Because we promoted non-violence, many considered us to be opportunists. I was sad to see such factionalism. When Mohammadi and I

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# New highpoint in women's movement?

by Anne Jaclard

The Oct. 17 World March of Women (WMW), which I wrote about in the November issue of *News & Letters*, was a highpoint in condemning the world capitalist system as the antithesis of women's desires. At a moment when capitalism is supposed to be triumphant, the thousands of women's organizations and labor unions represented situated feminist demands within the burgeoning anti-global capital movements. As such the WMW brought front and center some of the challenges of today's Women's Liberation Movement.

The WMW was free of the Left's knee-jerk anti-U.S. imperialism that prevents it from criticizing horrible governments. Kurdish An Sharrif, an Iraqi woman living in NY, marched in protest against the U.S.'s devastating economic sanctions against Iraq, but she also marched against the lack of human rights in Iraq, where "no one can say anything." In fact, the governments of every country represented, including the poorest, got blamed for women's oppression along with global capitalism and imperialism. This shows women to be clearer thinkers than much of the anti-globalization movement, which tends to blame "greedy rich people" and the U.S. government for all the crimes of the capitalist system.

Another highpoint of the demonstration was its lack of illusions that U.S.-style "democracy" brings freedom, or even good jobs. Jacqueline Ki-Zerbo of Burkina Faso said, "[The U.N.] thinks that when you have an election, you have democracy. That is not true. They should support people's and grass roots groups that work within communities." How true this sounds for the U.S. today, since our presidential election was exposed as fraudulent!

If this or any movement is to go forward and not stop at what it is against, it needs to articulate what it is for. I loved the statement by the Tunisian Women's Organization, an association of mothers working for peace, against hunger, and for equality with men, on a flyer that singled out the humanism of the international women's movement: "Given the humanist dimension of this march and its noble meanings, we affirm that women's dignity is indivisible and part and parcel of men's dignity."

## Fighting toxic racism

*Editors note: The City of Chicago has offered MRC/Prima Plastics factory 11 acres of public land for 50¢ a square foot in Little Village, the second largest Mexican-American community in the U.S. The land is across the street from hundreds of homes and apartments. Little Village ranks third worst in the Chicago metropolitan area in air pollution and total toxins. Below we print excerpts of an interview with Alma-Iris Montes, a 22-year-old organizer with the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO).*

**Chicago**—On Oct. 31, LVEJO brought 40 people to the zoning hearing to speak out against the factory deal and to offer alternative sites away from our homes. The politicians didn't want to listen to us and the public land was rezoned for industry. On Nov. 5, LVEJO gathered about 300 people for a demonstration. We had a permit and were accompanied by the police.

We headed towards Alderman Munoz's office. His assistant tried to kick us out, telling us, "This is private property." We laughed because this is the public space we elected Munoz to. We marched to his house next and he came outside. I had the megaphone and asked him, "Is it true that you sold the land for 50 cents a square foot?" He wouldn't answer. I walked towards him and offered him the megaphone to talk to the people. He refused and all of a sudden Sgt. Garcia hit me in the face. I didn't see it coming. I was knocked down. Then he threw me up against the gate of the Alderman's house.

Sgt. Garcia was yelling, "You're going to jail because you have a big mouth and don't know when to keep it shut." I was yelling that I was going to jail for democracy, for our health and our children. I have a four-month-old son. I was harassed and threatened in jail by the police and charged with disorderly conduct.

Twenty people came to bail me out with donation money they collected. The support and unity the people in Little Village have is really strong. The people feel really passionate about this issue because it affects their lives and children. They are outraged the city would consider putting a factory near our houses. We consider it environmental racism.

We have one library in our community of 91,000. It looks like a rundown apartment building. It's always packed and the books are outdated. I've worked in really nice communities before. I've seen the books and videos those parents can check out for their children. We don't even have books in our own language, or any books about our culture.

Time and time again I hear Gore's campaign manager, Mayor Daley's brother, say, "Let the will of the people decide who will be president." But the people of Little Village have been shut off from any decision making about our lives and health. We want democracy in our neighborhood. We want to decide where things get built and what should get built. This struggle will stay alive.

## Woman as Reason

However, because there was no conference where women could talk seriously as a whole group, instead of while they demonstrated, we did not have the opportunity to discuss both theory and practice. This is a problem common to most radical movements today—they see activism as the solution, as if we could transform the world simply by getting all the women together. If the task were that easy, we would be well on the way.

Condemnation of the personifications of capital, whether "greedy" people, governments or world financial institutions, without understanding and making explicit what capitalism itself is, cripples movements for change. It means that we do not know what must be uprooted in order to win our demands. In fact, WMW evinced a misunderstanding of capitalism by its demand for "equality of wealth between rich and poor." Women need to understand that there is not a pool of wealth to be divided up; our enemy is not the people in the ruling class, but rather a system of creating wealth that by its own necessity must impoverish the majority and subjugate women.

If we already know what we need to do, and that is just to inspire more women to join us, then we only need to energize each other, and we don't need serious discussions of theory and practice. Some call this attitude disdain for theory, but more correctly, it is the unexamined adoption of one theory—that change is created by activity alone—a theory that proved disastrous over and over to 20th century social movements. When the modern Women's Liberation Movement arose over 30 years ago and its radical vision spread like wildfire around the world, it compelled a recognition of the power of ideas. Marxist-Humanists thought its emphasis on human relations would lead women to want to grasp and re-create Marx's humanism, a task the philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya called "the challenge to our age." But many women succumbed to the pull of the ideas of pragmatism, private enclaves for feminism and other theories that eschew Marx's concept of a thorough-going social revolution. Many assumed they knew what Marxism is—Russia, China, and others—accepting as true the horrible distortions of Marx put forth by the same male theoreticians they condemned for failing to address women's concerns. Marxist-feminism fell out of favor as capitalism was declared triumphant and politics moved to the Right all over the world. The women's movement was not immune from these pulls.

If the WMW is to mark a new beginning, it must be a new beginning in theoretical explorations as well as anti-capitalist actions, or it too can end up being one more high point that perishes.

A historic decision in Hawaii gives two lesbian couples joint, co-parent adoption of their children in state family court. Until this decision, lesbian/gay/transgender couples in Hawaii did not have access to any marriage related rights relating to adoption, divorce, alimony, child custody or child support.

"Human Rights Concerning Gay Men and Lesbians: The Experience of Work and Establishing of Cooperation Among Lesbian and Gay Organizations in the Post-Soviet States" is the title of an international conference that was held Oct. 19-21 in Kiev, Ukraine. The Russian-language conference was organized by the Ukrainian Section of the International Society for Human Rights and the Nash Mir (Our World) gay and lesbian center in Lugansk, Ukraine, which began to organize in 1996.

Indonesian student groups are leading the way demanding justice after 150 masked people assaulted gays and transgenders at an AIDS awareness event.

## Queer Notes

by Suzanne Rose

Aaron McKinney, the man convicted of killing gay college student Matthew Shepard, was sentenced to two consecutive life terms on Nov. 2. He was convicted of felony murder, which carries a possible death sentence. He avoided the death penalty in a deal with the prosecutors that was put forth by Shepard's parents, Dennis and Judy.

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# Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

A Women's World Forum against Violence held this month in Valencia, Spain saw 1,300 women from 110 countries discuss domestic violence; armed conflict; women's genital mutilation, and sexual exploitation. Earlier this year, more than 90 women's groups filed a lawsuit in Barcelona demanding the withdrawal of a recently published book, *Women in Islam*, by a Muslim leader from Malaga. It includes "advice on wife-beating" which graphically describes exactly how a husband should beat his wife.

Close to 2,000 women of all ages marched in the streets of Beirut, Lebanon recently in support of women's rights and a halt to sexual discrimination and violence. "Our rights will not wait until political and sectarian problems are solved," read one banner.

Charging that welfare reform is a human rights violation, the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign is seeking people to join a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights accusing the U.S. government of violating economic human rights by enacting and implementing welfare "reform" laws. Women who would like to tell their stories of violations suffered under welfare cutbacks can call 215/203-1945 or email kwru@libertynet.org.

## 30 year abortion fight

**New York**—A meeting on the history of the movement for abortion rights, called "No Restrictions: History in Action," was held Oct. 26 at Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. Thirty years ago, the church was home to an underground abortion service and an early speak-out on abortion. In 1969-70, the Women's Liberation Movement galvanized the fight for legalization through speak-outs at which women publicly declared they had had illegal abortions and described the horrors of their clandestine experiences.

"No Restrictions" refers to the fact that the Women's Liberation Movement fought for abortion "on demand," a concept that has all but disappeared with all the restrictions on abortion rights since Roe v. Wade. Yet little was said about the threat of the Radical Right, or why we fell so short of our original vision.

Over 200 in attendance—more young feminists than ones from the early struggle—heard several women reproduce their speeches from the 1969-70 speak-outs.

Ellen Willis and Rosalyn Baxandall, now academics, told how the Women's Liberation Movement pushed New York into becoming the first state to legalize abortion in 1970, three years before Roe v. Wade. They and others formed History in Action and put on this meeting in response to a *New York Times* story last spring that made it appear as if the state legislature acted out of the goodness of their hearts. In fact the Women's Liberation Movement had changed the terms of the debate by sitting-in at legislative hearings. For a bibliography and other information about the early abortion rights movement, contact History in Action by e-mail at sjr5@nyu.edu (Sonia Jaffe Robbins).

Unfortunately, the many speakers expressed not one word of critique about the movement's failure to secure safe, accessible reproductive rights. I was astounded, considering how our rights have been whittled away.

Have these older feminists given up hope of accomplishing more than preserving our history? Have they become willing to leave "action" to any group who promises to organize without any discussion of the process and content needed for a renewed Women's Liberation Movement to succeed?

—A.J

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## Overnite: one year and counting

**Memphis, Tenn.**—The Overnite strike has been going on a little bit more than a year, since Oct. 24, 1999. It's been rough on a lot of people and a lot of the guys have gone back in even though they had gotten jobs other places and were making as good money as they were making at Overnite. We knew we were taking on a giant, we knew it would be a hard fight when we came out.

This strike has really given you a chance to get to know people. Those you thought were weak you find out were really strong, and others were not as strong as you thought.

Our picket line is still going. They closed the gates on Brooks Road to cut down the visibility of the strikers. Now the picket line is down Cazassa, a little street, so the strike is not as visible and people say: "We thought the strike was over. We didn't see anybody up on Brooks Road anymore." But we got the picket line up and we're trying to hang onto what we got.

Overnite had been handling Viking Freight which American Freight owned. So when Federal Express bought American Freight, that means they will handle all that Viking business themselves and cut a lot of Overnite's revenue. The less revenue they have coming in, the less money they have to fight us.

We're picketing companies that use Overnite. We've got them kicked out from companies all across the country, like Mack Truck. The program starts here in Memphis. We're going to go to some of the biggest companies that they have contracts with to get them to throw Overnite out until we get a deal with them.

It's surprising the strike has gone on for so long because Overnite is losing money, money, money. But they've had their way for so long that they would

rather bankrupt the company than agree to a contract. The value of the company is dropping because the only thing they have to sell is service and image. When people are throwing them out, and they have companies that will not cross our picket line, then that makes their service bad. We're just fighting them with whatever we have to fight them with.

—Black Overnite worker

## Boycott fails strikers

**Detroit**—It looks like the bitter five-and-a-half-year Detroit newspaper strike is coming to an end, leaving the union in a greatly weakened position and the publishers with circulation figures that are 35-40% lower than before the strike began.

When the three judge circuit court panel of conservative judges appointed by Reagan overturned the unanimous ruling by the NLRB that the publishers committed unfair practices that caused the strike, it opened the door for the company to take away hard-fought gains and force the unions to accept terrible agreements that would have been unthinkable several



years ago. The ruling allowed the company to declare an impasse in negotiations and impose whatever conditions it wants upon its workers.

The thugs that run Gannett and Knight-Ridder, publishers of the two Detroit papers, told the unions to either accept their last contract offers or face having management force the terms on the workers. The contracts give the company an open shop and allow them to implement merit raises for some Guild members instead of across the board raises, one of the main issues that caused the strike.

As it stands now, four of the six unions have settled and two are still negotiating. The members have ratified these agreements only to preserve their union at these two scab papers. If they rejected these contracts, as many wanted to do, there would be no union presence in the shop.

We had about 110 members at the Detroit Typographical union before the strike. Under the impact of the company's delaying tactics to break the union, ten were fired, 64 had taken a retirement option, and about half of those remaining are expected to take the same option now, which will leave about 15-20 members in the union.

This is a sad day for labor in Detroit. I think this strike could have been won if production of these scab papers had been stopped. Instead, we relied on a subscription and advertising boycott that, while very effective, was not enough to bring the anti-union, anti-worker publishers to their senses. Production had to be stopped, by any means necessary, to defeat these greedy, unscrupulous publishers.

We all have to come together to stop this from happening again. The bosses have the money, but we have an even greater resource—ourselves. There are a lot more of us and we can change things by acting on the premise that "An injury to one is an injury to all."

—Armand Nevers

Detroit Typographical Union #181, retired

## Day laborers fight

**Chicago**—On Tuesday, Nov. 21, the Day Labor Organizing Project, initiated by Jobs with Justice and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and operating mainly in the Humboldt Park neighborhood in Chicago, dedicated a new Workers' Center at San Lucas Church in the area with the highest concentration of day labor in the region. The most important element were the people who attended from the Day Labor Organizing Committee and other working-class people who had come to the church for Thanksgiving dinner.

Before many of them ate, however, they went to Elite Temporary Service, the largest day labor agency in the area, to confront the owner. Clergy, neighborhood activists, and workers surprised the owner, Harvey Cole, who was hoping to quell any disturbance with his police "bodyguards," and forced him to commit to a meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 28.

On the next Tuesday they met with Cole. After hemming and hawing about how to interpret the Illinois law which limits transportation costs for day laborers to 3% of a day's pay (about \$1.25 for the minimum wage), Cole stuck to the idea of charging 3% each way. But he was forced by the alliance to join them in a meeting with the police commander of the 14th District to discuss what the uniformed off-duty Chicago police he hires to control workers' resistance are and are not allowed to do.

The coalition is demanding that, at the very least, superexploited workers not be subjected to harassment and arrest for defending their basic rights as human beings and be paid for their work in a reasonable amount of time. If this demand is met, the Day Labor Project will have removed one small part of the dictatorship of capital and its use as a social weapon to extract wealth from others.

—Dennis Dixon

## Teachers vs. Giuliani

**New York**—At a boisterous rally on Oct. 16, 10,000 teachers and other professional workers in the public school system converged on City Hall to demand a new contract. It was a day after their contract expired, and Mayor Giuliani had refused to negotiate before the expiration. The morning of the demonstration, he agreed to begin negotiations two weeks later. He also called the city's 78,000 teachers lazy and said their job was easy.

The teachers cheered as speakers at the rally condemned the mayor's anti-teacher, anti-public services positions. New York City faces a crisis of a shortage of teachers, at the same time that many teachers are leaving the system to go to the suburbs. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) has demanded a 20% pay increase to match salaries in the suburbs. Salaries in this very expensive city now start at \$31,900 a year. The mayor wants a longer school day and a merit increase system that would tie raises to how the students fare on standardized tests. The prospect of a quick settlement is dim.

A dissident group within the UFT criticized the union for waiting until the contract expired to demonstrate, and called for a sick-out Dec. 8 if no contract is reached by Dec. 7.

—Supporter

## Few jobs on outside

I remember very clearly that day when they called me and two other prisoners to the shift captain's office to sign our release papers. Though we were happy to sign anything to get out of this place we all called "Hell away from home," there was still hesitation, since we all were taking the bus to work-release centers throughout the state.

Some documents clearly stated that if any one of us took off, we would be charged with "escape." We were then each given a five-dollar bill for spending money, which was the first culture shock for the simple reason that we all had done some major time—up to ten years in my case—and money is not allowed in most of the state's prison system.

It was then that the joyride really began. We got our first feel of semi-freedom when we three walked out the gate without any form of stainless-steel manacles bonding our feet or hands. **All night long I had been pacing the eight by twelve foot cell waiting for this single moment that for the longest time I thought would never come!**

Getting on the bus was an even stranger feeling, since this was the first time I did not have a guard or some type of other "correctional" personnel anywhere in my vicinity. This felt extremely good, just the thought of not having someone with authority telling or better yet commanding you how to live your life. The constant changing "new" environment, the smells I recognized after ten years, the patterns of colors and just the actions of the people on the bus around me.

The work release facility, or halfway house as some of us residents call it, gave me a rule handbook and a laundry bag containing a covered cup, two sheets, a pillow case, two bath towels (though they looked more like hand towels) and two washcloths, all for \$20! In fact this place is well known for charging you for everything, plus \$84 a week for rent.

A week later after orientation I began the job search. Job Service was not really much help. Back in 1990 before I went to prison, I had gone to the local job service office and I had bugged the employment counselors on a daily basis to help me find a job that paid a decent wage.

Although I had stayed on them all the time, all I found were minimum wage jobs, including working as a nurse's assistant at three different nursing homes and a stockboy at a grocery store. I ended up going to prison just because I could not make enough money to support my daily basic needs.

Anyway, I next attempted to try out the four temp agencies here. I got the runaround. They say things like they provide computer training and there are no fees to their services. Only one kept their word and even it was not totally honest in stating that it would not pay me a lower wage or take a part of my hourly wage. It charges the employer a few dollars more than what the employee is getting paid so that the employee makes less than co-workers.

I have noticed that in many of the places I applied for employment, once they saw my address, which they know is the halfway house, they were apt to reject me on the spot, especially at higher paying industrial jobs.

About a decade ago, most of the corporations threatened to leave, taking jobs elsewhere if their employees did not vote out the unions. The working class got the raw end of the deal when high wages and good benefit packages went by the wayside. Some industries left anyway; a decent paying job has become nonexistent.

The most I could do for myself in getting work has been in the "spot" job arena, where I work for someone or some company for a day and then find myself back unemployed.

This town is anti-working class and discrimination is rampant. A new working class revolt is needed here badly. In addition, those coming out of the prison system have that much more trouble with seeking employment, since the competition is so intense and the market for jobs so little. This exposes the lies the big business media propagandizes about how the job market is expanding.

—D. A. Sheldon

## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

committee meet them that afternoon: "I've been in the UAW for 23 years. My granddaddy sat on the front porch sipping moonshine with John L. Lewis. All of my family is union. What that UAW officer told me that day was that after August the UAW would no longer provide economic support for this strike.

"At a meeting the following Saturday, I got up and said this is the saddest thing in my life to have to tell you. Everybody in that part of the country had heard me tell them how democratic the process was in the UAW. But what Accuride couldn't accomplish the union has done to you in one fell swoop. They deserted you.

**"In the parking lot in August of 1999 I found out exactly what a union was. The members said to hell with the UAW. We're not going back till we get what we came out for. They can take their strike benefits and shove 'em. We'll stay on this picket line till hell freezes over."**

They showed solidarity and determination, even when the International president came down to their picket line (the only time he came) to tell the workers that he had crushed pickets of other locals much bigger than these Accuride workers. In effect he said he was backing management's take-away demands.

The UAW started a smear campaign against Local 2036. "They put it out all over the UAW that it wasn't an authorized strike. Anytime you take a view that does not endorse the view of the International officers, you're anti-union. Other workers were told we all belong to a communist group or that we are a bunch of KKK-ers. Three of our trustees are Black. A homosexual is the head of the women's division. You have to communicate the truth, not hearsay."

**Rank and filers have responded when hearing his story. \$7,100 was raised at the gate of a UAW shop in Pontiac, Mich. Retirees and other rank-and-file groups have come to their aid, including picketing the UAW's Solidarity House in Detroit. The rank-and-file pressure eventually forced the International to restore their strike benefits in October of this year.**

Still, the toll on strikers was heavy: "We didn't have strike pay or insurance for 14 months. A 62-year-old member had his house paid off and \$40,000 in the bank. He had a heart attack and bypass surgery. He had to refinance his house and is now \$87,000 in debt. Another lady on the verge of dying Right didn't have the money to buy her medicine for 14 months. We've had two suicides and I don't know how many broken marriages. Right now we have over 300 people on the picket line and they say they aren't going back to work."

There is a universal lesson to be learned in the struggle at Accuride, especially the meaning of a union. The internationals may have all our money, may control our bank accounts and union halls, and may have the legal right to issue decrees to us at the local level. But the real power resides in the average workers who are willing to walk the picket line and stand in solidarity.

They recognize that workers' most basic struggle is to regain control of our own labor on the shop floor, and help each other when a worker anywhere is in need. Only that will resist the ongoing top-down domination and repression of what Marx called the "despotic plan of capital," and the structure set up to carry out that plan, including the labor bureaucracy.

You can send contributions to **Henderson Workers Solidarity Fund, c/o Billy Robinson, PO Box 248, Sebree, KY 42455.**

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya  
MARXIST-HUMANIST  
ARCHIVES

### Editor's note

Israel's brutal attack against "the second Palestinian intifada," which started after Ariel Sharon made his provocative trip to Harim al-Sharif two months ago as part of claiming Israel's jurisdiction over Arab East Jerusalem "in perpetuity," makes this an important moment to revisit the historic roots of the conflict. We here reproduce two writings by Raya Dunayevskaya from the 1980s which speak to this. The first is excerpts of Part 3 of the Perspectives Thesis delivered to the 1980 convention of News and Letters Committees, entitled "Today and Tomorrow"; the second is excerpts from the Introduction and Part I of the Perspectives Thesis delivered to the 1982 convention of News and Letters Committees, entitled "What to Do: Facing the Depth of Recession and the Myriad Global Political Crisis as the Philosophic Void." The latter was written after Sharon engineered Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The originals can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 6245 and 7515.

## Religion in general and Jerusalem in particular in this state-capitalist age

(September 1980)

Israel has been moving so steadily to the Right that no reactionary action should surprise anyone. Nevertheless, the world—and this includes President Carter who is still pretending that the so-called Peace Treaty he engineered between Egypt and Israel will bring real peace to the whole of the Middle East—was shocked by the timing, if nothing else, of the "sudden" fiat from the Knesset that Jerusalem, East and West, that is, Arab as well as Jewish, was "one," was "indivisible," indeed, was the "eternal" capital of Israel, as if really its order extended into the eons of time.

If, however, we take a second, objective look at that phrase, "if nothing else," we will see that it is, precisely, the timing, the provocative timing, which is the logical conclusion to the extremist imperialist moves ever since Menachem Begin came to power, and that very week visited and approved a controversial new Jewish settlement in Arab land. It has gone on and expanded ever since. It is necessary, however, to limit ourselves to this year.

In March 1980 the government of Israel announced it would be taking 1,000 acres of mostly Arab-owned land. It was the first such major expropriation in a decade, and the second largest ever since the victorious 1967 war. Indeed, by the mid-1970s, Israel pried 30% of East Jerusalem from Arab ownership. Could anyone doubt when the biggest war hawk of them all, Geula Cohen, was chosen to bring in a draft for the new status of Jerusalem that it would be anything but what it was?....

What is new—and it is by no means limited to Zionism—is the new politicized form of religion. Nor is it a question of whether you listen to the money-wise electronic "evangelists," or you follow the Old or New Testament—or the Koran, and quote Mohammed, who is supposed to have said: "Whoever goes on a pilgrimage to the Jerusalem sanctuary shall be forgiven all his sins."

The point, rather, is why this rush to power. One need not go abroad to see it is so. All one has to do is look right here at the New Right, the Christian Religious Right....

The real point is this: the totality of the crises, especially since 1973-74—and by no means only the Arab-Israeli war, but the economic crisis that resulted from the oil embargo—has shown that the undercurrent of revolt may—and in some cases, did—lead to revolution. It is this, especially as it is evolving in the last year, which has led the capitalist rulers to flirt with Nazism and occultism all over again.

Occultism has ever been the escape from reality, and since it doesn't have quite as obnoxious an odor as Nazism, non-taxable dollars are spent on that electronic miracle to bring the message to the public. In any case, the New Religious Right, as in Begin's Israel or in Khomeini's Iran, or the Christian Right here, even when they get masses to follow them, by no means signifies that what the masses want, and what the leaders are striving for—power—has the same motivation.



Which is why Karl Marx made so sharp a distinction between the religion of the oppressed and that of the oppressor. The whole theory of alienation started there....

## Israel's genocidal invasion of Lebanon: Opposition needed against building any half-way houses

(September 1982)

Nothing but horror and utter disgust characterizes the world's reaction to Israel's gruesome invasion of Lebanon. Each day of the endless string of Israel's lying excuses for the destruction of that land—from the claim of securing a "25-mile security zone" for Israel and empty talk of the PLO as "terrorists" at a moment when, not the PLO, but Begin-Sharon's Israel was the one committing the atrocities; to the claim of being for Lebanon's "integrity" as a nation, freed of Syria's and the PLO's invasions—only heightened and widened the world's opposition to Israel's ghoulsh attack. History will not forget such barbarism. Opposition, and even putting an end to these uncivilized acts, cannot, however, be sufficient unto the day without, at one and the same time, showing how it had resulted from a transformation into opposite of what Israel was at birth in 1947-48, and what it is today, 1982-83....

How quickly forgotten (if, indeed, Begin or the Irgun ever knew them) are the true origins of the idea of an "Israeli nationality." The Nazi holocaust, which they invoke today for reactionary purposes, is the fact of history that changed the position of Marxists who had always been for cultural assimilation to the point where nothing deviated from straight socialist goals.

(See Leon Trotsky's articles on why, though still fully opposed to Zionism, he now—1937—had to be for a "homeland for the Jews." That was the Marxist position on Israel, on the question of national self-determination.) The same was true for those who weren't Marxists. A good essay by a liberal, Alfred

Friendly, describes the shock of today, even of those who still favored Israel in the war of 1967.

In "Israel: Paradise Lost" (*Manchester Guardian*, July 11, 1982), Alfred Friendly recalls the 1967 war, when he was for Israel and when the attitude was how temporary the occupation was: 1) As one Colonel put it, "There won't be any struggle getting Sinai back to Nasser quickly"; 2) A short while later, Israel enthusiastically accepted UN Resolution 242; 3) Israel categorically denied the Arab accusation that the Zionist objective was a so-called "Eretz Israel," as the Bible expressed it ("a realm extending from the Nile to the Euphrates"), insisting instead that only the "crazies" talked about "Eretz Israel" in that Biblical manner. But, in fact, says Friendly, we were soon to see the "Dayan Plan" which proposed "garrison settlements," which was followed by the "Allon Plan" which talked of Biblical Judea and Samaria, and now we have the "Likud-Sharon Plan" or "the triumph of the Eretz Israel boys." The result is the genocidal invasion of Lebanon.

This transformation of Israel into an imperialist state is a very different point of departure from what we have always used as proof of the transformation into opposite when we pointed to the first workers' state into a state-capitalist society. It is true that this, too, is a state-capitalist society. It is true, also, that at its birth it certainly wasn't anywhere as clear a social revolution as was 1917.

Methodologically as well as practically, the point here is that we could—and did—express the contradictions at its birth. We refused to be silent even when we most enthusiastically supported the establishment of "a homeland for the Jews," by pointing sharply to the fact that the land contained the presence—as a minority, it is true, but a presence nevertheless—of the reactionary Irgun, whose leader was the terrorist, Begin. What a transformation into opposite of the Israel of "Exodus," 1947-48, into the imperialistic state-capitalist Israel of 1982-83!....

It is good that a peace movement has arisen in Israel demanding an end to Israel's invasion of Lebanon at once. It is even better that some of that Left has raised the question of self-determination for Palestinians in Israel—or, rather, the part Israel occupies illegally. (Indeed, what Israel is now trying to annex is Palestine.) But that, too, will hardly solve much if, at the

same time, a new banner of genuine liberation is not unfolded.

The immediate, urgent question now is: What kind of regime in Lebanon? Does anyone doubt that Begin-Sharon wanted that small-time neo-fascist Bashir Gemayel to become its President? What is needed is to see to it that genuine national liberation is the predominant demand and that none will stand for any colonization anywhere....

Here, too, philosophy is no abstraction. Its concretization, as politicization, warns the whole New Left not to stop at half-way houses, not even when that manifests deep sensitivity to Third World desires for freedom unless they are willing to transform that desire into an outright revolution....

### WHY BEING AGAINST 'WHAT IS' IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THE COROLLARY, WHAT ONE IS FOR

Because the economic and political crises wracking the capitalist-imperialist world are so horrendous...it is all too tempting to express oneself solely in opposition to what is, without ever specifying what one is for, so weighted down does one become by all these crises crying out for an end.

History, however, warns us of other critical periods which give us historic proof that mere opposition to such monstrous degeneration does not lead to new societies. On the contrary. It only assures the transformation of that type of bare opposition into one form or another of a half-way house. That is true both when we look at the failure of bourgeois democracy and when we look at fascism. Both brought on World War II. Such a victory over fascism only laid the ground for the restoration of state-capitalism—Gaullism as well as Stalinism. Indeed, state-capitalism became a universal.

As we know from World War I, even the magnificent opposition that was successful—the Russian Revolution—once it didn't spread beyond national borders, ended in the transformation of the first workers' state into its opposite, state-capitalism.

Today, we cannot evade asking: What Now? Is the PLO the absolute opposite of Israel or just one more narrow nationalism? In our age, when a nuclear war threatens civilization as we have known it, we cannot, must not, accept half-way houses as the answer....

Nor should our support of the Palestinians for self-determination and the PLO as a bargaining agent lead us away from reexamining what happens to aborted revolutions—in this case, specifically Lebanon and specifically as aided by the PLO in the 1975-76 Civil War there. Which is why we correctly entitled our Philosophic-Political Letter (August 6, 1976): "The Test Not Only of the PLO but of the Whole Left."

Because the Left did not meet that challenge but followed the PLO is one substantial reason for the totality of the crisis today. Just at the point when there was a near-success by the indigenous Lebanese Left, and the outcome of the 1975-76 Civil War hung in the balance, the PLO insisted that the concentration must be, not on the native ruler-oppressors represented by the so-called Christian, i.e. neo-fascist, Phalangists, but on Israel alone, though at the moment Israel was nowhere present in Lebanon and Syria was all ready to invade. It is Syria the PLO had dubbed "liberators" instead of a new imperialistic force. The great tragedy was that the whole Left—indigenous Lebanese under Jumblatt, Stalinists, Trotskyists—followed the PLO lead. Here is what we wrote in that Political-Philosophic Letter:

"The New Left, born in the 1960s, so disdainful of theory (which it forever thinks it can pick up 'en route'), has a strange attitude toward imperialism. It is as if imperialism were not the natural outgrowth of monopoly capitalism, but was a conspiracy, organized by a single imaginary center, rather as the Nazis used to refer to the Judeo-Catholic-Masonic Alliance, or Communists under Stalin to the conspiracy of the Trotskyists and Rightists in league with the imperialist secret service....

"Evidently nationalism of the so-called Third World is of itself revolutionary even when it is under the banner of a king, a shah, or the emirates, or the Syrian Army. Thereby they canonize nationalism, even when it is void of working class character, as national liberation.

"It isn't that class is the sole characteristic of national liberation movements that revolution can support. It is that the working class nature is its essence and it is that the revolutionary and international impact emerges from masses in motion.

"This does not mean that we give up the struggle for self-determination, Palestinian especially. It is that we do not narrow our vision of the revolutionary struggle for a totally different world, on truly new Humanist foundations, the first necessity of which is the unity of philosophy and revolution."

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**News & Letters**

## ESSAY

## Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program, 125 years later

by Mitch Weerth

Karl Marx penned his *Critique of the Gotha Program* 125 years ago. This anniversary, however, is not the main reason to study it today. Rather, the need to seriously grapple with it today is occasioned by our desire to work out an alternative to capital.

In previous issues of *News & Letters* we have shown the error of those in the protests against the new stage of globalization (who believe in humanity's ability to control capital (see especially "Can Capital be Controlled?" April 2000 *N&L*). The question to be posed here is: how can we be convinced, and in turn convince others, that a new society based on a conscious collective effort to reevaluate and satisfy human needs can prevail over the current trampling of humanity and the environment at the service of the self-expansion of value?

Marx's *Critique* speaks directly to this in three principal ways: 1) In its historical context it reveals the kinds of difficulties Marx's contemporaries had in basing an organization on his theories. 2) Its theoretical content is a profound critique of "socialist ideas that are not even skin-deep," in other words, that which to this day usually pass for "Marxism." 3) Its strictly philosophical content reveals unresolved problems that today's generation is faced with working out.

## THE 'UNITY' AT GOTHA

The recipients of what Marx called his "critical marginal notes" on the Gotha Program were the leaders of Germany's Social-Democratic Workers Party (SDAP, known as the "Eisenachers").

This party, with a little over 9,000 members in 1875, was formed in 1869 in the city of Eisenach. Its program declared itself to be a branch of Marx's International Workingman's Association (IWA), "adhering to its aspirations." It formed in opposition to the General Association of German Workers (ADAV, "Lassalleans" with about 15,000 members in 1875), founded by Ferdinand Lassalle 15 months before his death in 1864.

While Marx acknowledged Lassalle's contribution in organizing the first independent mass political organization of workers in Germany, he also criticized his attitude as being that of a future "workers' dictator." This was due to Lassalle's fruitless reliance on the Prussian state to bring about socialism "from above."

Marx's *Critique* is largely a critique of Lassalle's doctrines as expressed in the program that was drawn up to unite the two parties at a congress in the city of Gotha in 1875. The tragedy is that the program was authored not by the Lassalleans but by an Eisenacher, Wilhelm Liebknecht. (Eisenachers were considered Marxists due to their opposition to "state-sponsored socialism," familiarity with Marx's ideas and closer relationship to the IWA.)

Liebknecht was not prodded by his enemies to write a program that mirrored their ideas. He was so eager to unite the factions at any cost that after sealing the deal in a small meeting with ADAV leaders in December 1874 (this was prior to the congress in Eisenach and excluded the SDAP's firmest critics of Lassallean doctrine), he wrote to Engels that his program meant "the complete victory of 'Marxian' communism over Lassallean sectarianism. And to achieve this victory, I would have been prepared for still further concessions."

The "victory" he refers to is the fact that the new party that emerged from the unity, the German Social Democracy, adopted the more democratic organizational structure of the SDAP in place of the dictatorial form Lassalle gave the ADAV. Liebknecht was absolutely certain that "free debate in such an organization would eventually eradicate the Lassallean misconceptions."

From the perspective of Marx's *Critique* it's hard to imagine what "further concessions" he could have made. But despite them, the unity was indeed seen as a victory by nearly all. August Bebel, an SDAP leader who tried and failed to correct some

of the program's errors at the congress itself, expressed in his memoirs (written in 1910) a sentiment still heard today: "It was no easy task to agree with the two old men in London [Marx and Engels]. What we saw as clever calculation, adept tactics, they saw as weakness and irresponsible complaisance; ultimately, the fact of the unification was the main point."

It was not "the main point" for Marx, and on this he stood alone. Even Engels, who dutifully attacked the Gotha Program, was ambiguous about the merger itself. He was certain that it would lead to a new split (which it didn't) and wrote that it "may be considered a great success if it holds out for two years" as an "educational experiment" for both parties.

## ORGANIZATION AND PHILOSOPHY

István Mészáros, author of *Beyond Capital*, is one of the few who have looked at Marx's *Critique* as an organizational document. He seems to side with Marx when he writes: "...if the socialist revolution is seen as primarily **political** in character, rather than as a multidimensional, and therefore necessarily 'permanent' **social** revolution, as Marx defined it, in that case...unity overrides everything in importance." To counter such "mania for unity" Mészáros proposes "socialist pluralism."

This approach, while "agreeing" with Marx, seems to repeat the error of Liebknecht, and on a less vulgar level, Engels: that of assuming ideological differences will resolve themselves when placed in the right organizational framework. Marx, however, did not think there could be a strictly **organizational** answer to a **conceptual** problem. If he did, he would simply have confined his criticism by pointing out, as he does in his cover letter, that his followers "surrender unconditionally to those who are in need of help."

The *Critique*, on the other hand, is a critique of an **organizational** document. The meaning of this simple fact seems to have been lost on Marxists for generations. For while history has shown that any organization, no matter how large, will lose course without a philosophical rudder directed to the spirit of the times, "history" has failed to give us an example of the integrity of the two worked out as a living "revolution in permanence."

## MARX'S 'MARGINAL NOTES'

To begin to get a handle on the problem requires, first, a thorough study of the *Critique* itself. Here we will have to limit ourselves to a few of its main points.

To the very first words of the program: "Labor is the source of all wealth..." Marx responds: "Labor is **not** the source of all wealth. **Nature** is just as much the source of use values...as is labor..." Leaving nature out of the equation to Marx meant "abstracting **supernatural creative power** to labor," a typical ploy of the ruling class in whose interest it is to maintain their hold on the means of production.

As with most of the content of the *Critique*, this first paragraph is little appreciated by Marxists, and non-Marxists to this day. Environmentalists will shun Marx because his supposed sole focus on labor automatically results in the wasting of nature, while Marxists eager to set the record straight likewise abstract from the total environment Marx situated the human subject in. As far back as 1844 he had written: "Just as completed humanism is naturalism, so this communism, as completed naturalism, is humanism." The affirmation of the one is likewise an affirmation of the other.

Related to this is Marx's objection to using other vague economic categories in an attempt to anticipate precise social relations that emerge with the overthrow of capitalism. This is the case with the Gotha Program's call for the "undiminished proceeds of labor" to be distributed with "equal right" to all members of society.

In total contradiction to all those who attempt to pin the label of "socialism" on one or another state-capitalist society, from Stalin's Russia to Castro's Cuba, stands Marx's insistence here that the law of value ceases right from the start of the new society. He writes: "Within the co-operative society...the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labor employed on the products appear here as the **value** of these products, as a material quality possessed by them..."

In no uncertain terms Marx is telling us here that from day one after the revolution labor-power will no longer appear in the shape of a commodity, bought and sold at value. There is nothing "undeveloped" about this aspect of socialism. What is undeveloped at the early stage is the fact that what the worker receives back from society, after necessary deductions for

administration, health services, etc., is exactly what he gives to it: "The same amount of labor which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another."

"Equal right," in this sense is to Marx still "a right of inequality in its content, like every right," since all are seen only as workers, and we abstract from their real needs (one has more children than another, etc.) From this insight he projects the goal not of "equal right" but a society that would leave behind this "narrow horizon" and inscribe on its banner: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

What is so remarkable is that nearly every "Marxist" bows down to this concept as the "ultimate" that we all strive for yet disregards the fact that it flows from the sharpest critique of their own most dearly held "socialist" theory (whether admitted or not): that of the law of value operates within socialism.

## NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

The concepts in the *Critique* are so *au courant* and interrelated that they speak in a most direct way to another burning issue of today that radicals are far from having in the marrow of their bones: internationalism.

Lassalle had written: "I allow the right of being a nation only to the great civilized peoples; to be assimilated by these is the only right I allow to the others." The Gotha Program follows him by claiming that workers struggle "first of all within the framework of the present-day national state." Marx attacks this formulation by pointing out that the framework of the world market, politically 'within the framework' of the system of states."

The "international functions" of the working class, according to the *Critique*, is precisely what breaks from this bourgeois "framework." Yet how many "Marxists" today refuse to support the right of Kosova to break from Serbia, some on the basis of Serbia being "socialist," some on the basis of the Kosovars themselves not decidedly enough aiming for "socialism"?

It should not surprise us that this document points up the many glaring limitations of what passes for "Marxism" today. What still needs to be answered, however, is the question we began with: can it help to work out an alternative to capital?

## ALTERNATIVES TO CAPITAL

Based on the content discussed above, the answer should be an emphatic "yes." This was the first time anywhere that Marx had ventured to give an idea of what the new society would look like, from its initial stages to a time when labor would develop from being a "mere means of life" to the prime necessity of life. Isn't this the very unifying element the different social movements of today are so in need of?

On the other hand, what seems to have been skipped over even by those who haven't made the obvious blunders already mentioned, is the significance of a clear philosophic articulation of a "higher phase" of communism appearing only in 1875, and **only in an organizational document**. Spontaneous, "pluralist" forms are always getting counterposed to the vanguardist, centralized forms while in the heat of the moment Marx's philosophy drops out of sight.

Raya Dunayevskaya was the first to analyze Marx's *Critique* as an organizational document. What is compelling about her view is that she didn't see the *Critique* as being the last word on the subject. In two of her last writings on what she called "dialectics of organization and philosophy," written shortly before her death in 1987, she took up none other than Hegel, supposedly the most "idealist" of philosophers, to look deeper into the problem (these were included in the 1989 edition of her *Philosophy and Revolution*). Before we reject this as "abstract" in the manner Eisenachers rejected Marx, consider the following:

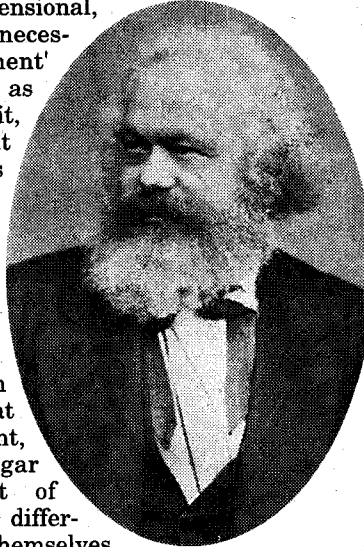
First, her original 1953 analysis of Hegel's *Absolutes*, which enabled her to present Marxism once again in its original form (see her 1958 *Marxism and Freedom* in a new 2000 edition) was occasioned precisely by her attempt to work out what she then called "the dialectic of the party." This problem, the relationship of revolutionary theory to mass movements, was seen as most thoroughly illuminated by, of all things, Hegel's "Absolutes."

Second, the content of the *Critique* itself points us, if only implicitly, to what Marx elsewhere called "the source of all dialectic," Hegel. We have seen that Marx so furiously about the Gotha Program: that revolutionaries should take a "retrograde step" in inscribing Lassallean ideas on their banner. Over and over again in the *Critique* he hammers this point home. In his covering letter he called it the "sanctification of the Lassallean articles of faith." Was it not precisely Hegel who, after completing his major works, referred to the reappearance of Jacobi's intuitionist philosophy of faith as a "reactionary" phenomenon?

It could be that none of the Marxists saw the need to build on Marx's concept of organization and organization because they had no idea how deeply rooted the problem is philosophically and historically. Today we can't make that excuse.



F. LASSALLE



KARL MARX



W. LIEBKNECHT

for more on the relation of philosophy and organization...read Raya Dunayevskaya's

**Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution**

and  
**The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two historic-philosophic writings**

"Why is the actual concretization of a new unity so sharply critiqued as in [Marx's] Critique of the Gotha Program? That becomes the whole rub and urgent problematic of our day which must be worked out!"—

Raya Dunayevskaya, 1987

To order, see lit ad, p. 7

## ELECTION 2000

On Nov. 16, the British daily, the *Mirror*, carried a large photo of George W. Bush on its front page with the caption, "Lethal." It introduced a seven page feature on "The Texas Massacre" detailing the 150 executions carried out in that state since Bush became governor in 1995. It denounced Bush as "a thoroughly dangerous, unpleasant piece of work who should not be let anywhere near the White House." Although the *Mirror*, a capitalist paper with a mainly working class readership, was unusual in taking so strong a stand, there is a real difference between the U.S. and Britain and other European countries, which have abolished the death penalty themselves and whose stated policy is seeking its worldwide abolition.

**Richard Bunting**  
England

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While reading the Lead article in the November *N&L* on post-Milosevic Serbia, I kept hoping the current feud between Gore and Bush would unleash new revolts here in the U.S. Obviously, there are the beginnings of a split in capitalist class rule. The legitimacy of the non-democratic, bourgeois-established republic is being called into question daily as both claim to be the people's choice. What becomes increasingly clear is how closely the American system still resembles a monarchy. The "founding fathers" intended to keep Blacks, women, American Indians, and working-class whites disenfranchised while creating the illusion of democracy with the Electoral College. Ironically, the capitalist-owned media, in their pursuit of ratings and profit, have been providing a nationwide "civics lesson" which highlights the hypocrisy of "democratically" electing a king. How far will the feud go and will we respond as the workers did in Serbia?

**Feeling disenfranchised**  
Kansas

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All the whole ruling class cares about is not democracy but stability and orderly transition. They're terrified of opening up a can of worms, or starting down a slippery slope. And they say so.

**Economics professor**  
New York

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What I was most shocked by was the results in Mississippi on an initiative to abolish the law which prohibits racial intermarriage. The good news is that the initiative passed and the law is now officially abolished. The shocker is that it passed 60 to 40% — that means 40% of the people who voted in Mississippi thought the law was OK!

**Black woman voter**  
Oakland, Cal.

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In the wake of the national election, Christian Right newspaper columnist Cal Thomas discovered the sacredness of the Electoral College which prevents direct election of the president. But Lani Guinier made the important point that the Electoral College was designed to give southern slavemasters disproportionate representation by letting them control the "three fifth of a man" votes apportioned to slaves. As with so many of our "honored American traditions," it is the heritage of slavery and oppression that continues to disfigure this country.

**Revolutionary environmentalist**  
Tennessee

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I voted for Nader because I saw him as a man with strong, radical convictions who won't back down. The fact that Al Gore voted against access to legal abortion while he was in Tennessee is relevant to this election. He backed down from positions he had before—who's to say he won't do it again? Before I knew Nader was running for president, I had made up my mind not to vote in this election because both Bush and Gore support the death penalty.

**Robin**  
Memphis

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One of the columnists of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, describing that rabid mob which staged the anti-recount near-riot in Miami-Dade County, put it well when he ended the column: "Angry white guys

in khakis and button-down shirts — the real face of the GOP?" A moderate Congressman put it even more bluntly when he came right out saying there was a "whiff of fascism" in the air.

**Reader**  
Chicago

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The Electoral College was invented in order to prevent anyone (read: the people) from "taking over" the government. In plainer language, it was to prevent revolution.

**Journalist**  
Florida

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In Ecuador, perhaps the original "banana republic," folks are getting a kick out of watching the gringos squirm over their beloved "peaceful transition of power." I spoke to a friend who just got back from Cuba, and he tells me that in Havana they are having a good laugh as well. A columnist in today's *El Universo* writes about the failure to reform the antiquated Electoral College system under the title: "En la Casa del Herrero, Cuchillo de Palo," a traditional Ecuadorian saying that translates, "In the iron-maker's house, wooden spoons."

**Correspondent**  
Ecuador

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We need to start discussing an alternative to either voting or not voting. I see a lot of young people who seem opposed to capitalism, but it stays abstract. It's easy to be abstract about it if you don't face the alienation every day. Posing a real alternative would attract more people than Nader did. He is only trying to revive populism, but never went deeper than that to any real opposition to capitalism.

**Radical youth**  
Chicago

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When you look at the way the Republicans were winning in the big states until the urban votes started to come in, it made me wonder if the Republicans might next time try to develop a far-right version of Mao's policy of the country surrounding the cities.

**Just wondering**  
Chicago

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There is no way to tell where those who felt cheated and came into the streets might go. It could move toward more revolutionary thinking and activity, or it could go the opposite way. Watergate, after all, wound up becoming a legitimization of the process.

**Waiting to see**  
Illinois

## DUNAYEVSKAYA VS. THE SECTARIAN 'LEFT'

Reading Raya Dunayevskaya is like going back to a school where a whole new perspective, refreshing and enlightening, opens up. So much of the Left seems superficial and sectarian. It keeps us from going under the surface to get to the revolutionary root. An incomplete human being is incapable of being human. The distortions protect privilege and power over people.

**Supporter**  
Wisconsin

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After a detailed study of your positions we completely agree with you on the following points:

1. The system of the Soviet Ukraine is a specific state capitalist system. The task of the world Marxist movement is to spread Dunayevskaya's ideas among workers, prisoners, students, national minorities, gays, lesbians, as well as left activists.

2. All the existing parties are elitist, vanguardist and far from the masses. It is necessary to find new forms of organization to build strong links with all oppressed people.

3. Hegel's works are extremely important to develop a world workers movement for without his dialectical method it is impossible to understand Marx. Yet neither Marx's 1844 Manuscripts nor Raya Dunayevskaya's works exist in the Ukrainian language.

**Revolutionary**  
Ukraine

## READERS' VIEWS

## REMEMBERING HARRY

The "In Memoriam" to Harry Else truly showed the uniqueness of Marxist-Humanism. Reading it just as the 2000 election was taking place gave special meaning to the wonderful quote from Harry about how elections illuminate what the "Boss-Black" relationship is all about. The way he never separated that kind of question from the philosophic question of "negation of negation" was an example of the uniqueness both of Marxist-Humanism and of Harry.

**Cyrus Noveen**  
Illinois

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Harry Else will be sorely missed. Harry gave the presentation at the very first *N&L* meeting I ever attended. It meant so much to me that it kept me coming back. I'd like to thank him for the fact that I'm still here 20 years later.

**Franklin Dmitryev**  
Memphis

## THE MIDDLE EAST IN CRISIS



Today is Nov. 29, the 52nd anniversary of the UN's decision to partition mandatory Palestine into two states, a date that has been a focus point for those who advocate the two-state solution. This year Arab and Jewish students and faculty are holding simultaneous demonstrations at several universities to stop the occupation, the killings and destruction, the closure and the hunger and are calling for dismantling the settlements and for a just peace among equals.

**Gush Shalom**  
Jerusalem

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Sharon's "prayer" visit to Haram al-Sharif accompanied by a thousand policemen was the equivalent of pulling a hair from the mustache of a sleeping lion. The lion woke up and started the new edition of the intifada. If the Palestinians did to the Israelis what the Israelis do to the Palestinians, the Israelis would have revolted not after 52 or 33 years but after 33 hours. A commentator in the *New York Times* recently wrote that Israel wants to be David

## 'WE REFUSE TO BE ENEMIES'

The predominant voice heard in Israel these days is that of the extreme right wing, but there are other voices trying to be heard, especially that of the women's peace camp. Women in Black are now standing in vigil at Haifa, Nazareth and Acre in addition to the vigils that never stopped in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Nachshon. More are in formation in the Beersheba and Kfar Saba-Ra'arnana regions.

On Nov. 21, in an astounding show of unity, Jewish and Palestinian women — all Israeli citizens—held a joint peace action in the Arab heart of Israel, Wadi Ara. This was the location of demonstrations that became bloodbaths in early October when Israeli police shot at Arab demonstrators to stop the stone-throwing and killed 13.

The demonstration on Nov. 21 was a brilliant show of the unity of women for peace with over 500 Jewish and Arab women coming from all parts of Israel. Signs ranged from the demand for equality for Israel's Arab citizens, to ending police brutality, to stopping the Israeli occupation across the "Green Line" (1948 border). My favorite banner was, "We refuse to be enemies." Many Arabs from the surrounding towns and villages joined us as the afternoon progressed. We are determined to nurture this moment into a fully blossomed peace.

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Here are the principles which we, Israeli and Palestinian women, citizens

and Goliath in one person. I tend to agree. When will the racial, religious, skin color superiority complex end?

**Giorgio**  
British Columbia

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Barak wanted to play the part of the hero, and Israeli Jews the part of the martyrs. Somehow, in counting the casualties, the Jewish inhabitants forget the mathematical ratio between Israeli Jews on one side and Israeli Arabs plus Palestinians on the other. People have eyes but won't see, ears but won't hear, brains but won't think.

**Naomi Eden**  
Ramat-Gan, Israel

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The state of Israel is based on violence and war. It originated in a bloody war and grew geographically and militarily, by successive wars. The production and possession of a nuclear bomb is nothing but a supreme expression of the violent spirit of the Israeli society. However, just because of its violent character it could be isolated and defeated politically. The defeat would be of its own making.

**S.S.**  
Czech Republic

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I appreciated the Reader's View in the November issue that reminded us of the importance of Raya Dunayevskaya's analyses of the Arab-Israeli conflict. No one else considered it important to show it took a "transformation into opposite" to change the revolutionary Israel that won freedom from Britain into the horrors of the imperialist state-capitalist Israel we know today. I hope you follow that reader's advice and print some of Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East for those who don't know them.

**Supporter**  
Illinois

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I thought the two lead articles of the November issue—one on the workers' revolt in Serbia and the other on the Arab-Israeli explosion in the Middle East—were connected. The photo that accompanied them, showing a man carrying a placard calling for the end to all ethnic cleansing, in Bosnia and in Palestine, made me realize how important *N&L* is. It is the only paper that gives a sense of how deep this crisis is.

**Marxist-Humanist**  
California

of Israel, activists for peace and representatives of a large number of women's organizations in Israel, have agreed upon at a meeting of the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, in Nazareth on Nov. 29, 2000:

1. An end to the occupation. 2. Establishment of the state of Palestine side by side with the state of Israel based on the 1967 borders. 3. Recognition of Jerusalem as the shared capital of two states. 4. Israel must recognize its responsibility for the results of the 1948 war, and find a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. 5. Opposition to the militarism that permeates Israeli society. 6. Equality, inclusion and justice for Palestinian citizens of Israel. 7. Equal rights for women and for all residents of Israel. 8. The full involvement of women in negotiations for peace. 9. Social and economic justice for Israel's citizens, and integration in the region.

We call upon all women who affirm these principles—Jews, Palestinians, and others—to join us in a mass rally, vigil, and march through the streets of Jerusalem on Friday, Dec. 29. Mark this date in your calendars. This rally is critical in our campaign to promote these views and influence the positions of candidates for election in Israel. If you cannot come, but want to support this event materially and otherwise, please contact Gila Svirsky (gsvirsky@netvision.net.il) or Hannah Safran (wom.stu@research.haifa.ac.il).

**Gila Svirsky**  
Jerusalem

**FIGHTING FOR A UNION**



I was happy to read reports about janitors in the suburban Detroit area winning union contracts from employers following a great show of solidarity from unionized janitors from Detroit who went out into high-publicity areas to demonstrate in support of their suburban brothers and sisters. For the first time, these janitors will have health care coverage and pension benefits, along with an increase in wages. This was long overdue and makes an important addition to the growing string of union victories achieved by janitors in many urban and suburban areas throughout the country that you have reported in your pages.

**Long-time Subscriber  
Detroit**

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We are asking for your solidarity with the workers of Leymex, a maquiladora in Tijuana, which is the property of the Korean corporation Hyundai that controls the Han-Young factory. A few years back the Han-Young workers fought one of the most important struggles in Tijuana sweat shops which culminated in the formation of an independent union. But a year ago, the factory changed its name to Tra-Hoo and got rid of the union.

Now the Leymex company has decided to change its name. When 200 workers protested and refused to sign the contract, the boss suspended the salary of anyone who refused to sign. Even with this pressure, at least 13 workers continued to refuse and are now demanding that Mexican labor laws be respected. They are asking for help. It can be sent as a contribution to the Committee for Solidarity in the Americas or as a donation of basic goods such as rice, beans, oil, sugar, canned food, and soap. Readers can write to the following address and let us know where we can pick up their contributions.

**Enrique Davalos  
1535 Apache Road #A,  
Chula Vista, Cal. 91910**

**POST-MILOSEVIC SERBIA**

A speaking tour for the Serbian trade unionist, Dragomir Olujic, is underway and we will be distributing a flier with the *N&L* November lead on the revolt that ousted Milosevic, at the public meeting in London. That lead was one of the best pieces I have read. I especially liked the final section on the two souls of Serbia. I must confess I was disappointed Milosevic didn't get what Ceausescu did. Hopefully, his day will come nevertheless.

**British Marxist-Humanist  
London**

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Peter Hudis' article on how the workers took action in the aftermath of Serbia's military defeat, and the question of "which Kolubara will define the new Serbia"—nationalist mythology or workers' revolt—both underline that *N&L*'s political analysis of events in Bosnia, Kosova, Serbia and Croatia have been right on the mark over the past eight years. What is the most striking is the way a category was drawn out of these struggles to pinpoint a new kind of national liberation movement as what is "new" and make that a test of world politics.

**Computer analyst  
Tennessee**

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*N&L*'s November lead has scooped every other publication on the factory and mine takeovers in Serbia.

**Paul Buhle  
Rhode Island**

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The lead on Serbia showed how a principled position helps you no matter what the new objective development is. I might, however, have phrased the comparison between today and the fall of other East Europe regimes in 1989 a bit differently. I think what was critical in East Europe in 1989 was not so much that the world was in retrogression as that the transition was engineered by intellectuals in a way to keep the workers off the historic stage. "Self-limiting revolution," that was thoroughly discredited in practice in 1980, ruled in 1989. The same happened in South Africa where the ANC engineered a transition that clung to capitalism. The lesson to learn is that we see workers going

beyond the theories in their practice, but when their practice is not met with a new articulation of freedom, the old gets re-created in a new form.

**Urszula Wislanka  
California**

**FIGHTING FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION**



The November editorial on Bush, Gore and abortion was right on when it said that we have to look to our own self-activity and reason to really make Mifepristone available to all women who want it. Since it became legal we have already found many doctors fear to use it. New technology can't solve our need for full autonomy and freedom so long as it can be negated by a fanatical right wing.

**Women's Liberationist  
Tennessee**

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I think our movement is in real trouble because I see an unholy alliance forming, consciously or not, between feminism and "left politics." I see the demands of the Global Women's March as good but limited to economic planning, the marketplace, redistributing wealth, and how much this or that country should pay in taxes. What was good about the march was that it showed women are searching for a total answer. That's what's involved in the fight against both violence against women and the ways capitalism is hurting us. I think we have to project a real alternative to capitalism. That's why I felt the *News and Letters* Committees classes on *Marxism and Freedom* really spoke to the needs of our movement right now.

**Women's Liberationist  
Chicago**

**THE SCENE IN ECUADOR**

In Ecuador things are as bad as ever. Even though the president insists that "dollarization" is working and claims that inflation has been checked, prices continue to rise. Perhaps President Noboa has discovered a miraculous new economic device that allows prices to rise while keeping inflation down! Of course, all eyes in the region for the moment are on Peru and Colombia. Today it was reported that a Colombian military helicopter violated Ecuadorian air space. With the help of the U.S.-sponsored "Plan Colombia," it appears more and more certain that the Colombian civil war will spill over onto its neighbors, just as the Vietnam conflict eventually spread to Cambodia and Laos.

**Observer  
Ecuador**

**BUY NOTHING DAY IN JAPAN**

On the day after the U.S. Thanksgiving Day, various cities across Japan celebrated Buy Nothing Day. In Kofu two wacky gaijin (foreigners) dressed in shopping bags passed out vouchers exclaiming, "You are more than what you buy." In Osaka, 30 people dressed in Santa Claus costumes practiced "zenta claus meditation" to help stop the flow of the shopping feast. In Hamamatsu, eight people—Japanese, Indian and American—painted a floor mural at a busy train station. While Buy Nothing Day has been traditionally celebrated on the busiest shopping day of the year, every day seems the busiest in Japan. Environmental and human rights activists in Japan realize the need to give the earth a little rest. While this alone would never be enough to save the earth, it did make consumers stop and think about what and why they are buying. For more information email [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org).

**Kind Lady  
Japan**



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## Behind Prison Walls If prisoners had vote

by Robert Taliaferro

Though the issue of prisoners voting has been discussed for some time, the closeness of election 2000 in state, local and especially national elections, defines the need to revisit disenfranchisement policies for prisoners, parolees, probationers and, in some cases, ex-felons.

In the 1960s young men and women rode through the South to register Black citizens for the vote. In a little reported event, the NAACP sponsored a similar event inside the county jails of 18 states, registering 15,000 people—who were awaiting trial—as voters for the national election.

Today there are 32 states in the U.S. which bar prisoners from voting while they are in prison or on parole. Additionally, in 10 states ex-convicts are barred from voting for life.

According to a recent report by The Sentencing Project, 13% of African-American men—1.4 million—are disenfranchised, a number which represents over one-third of the total disenfranchised population. To gain a perspective on this number, one only needs to compare that to 4.6 million African Americans who voted in 1996. The Sentencing Project report also states: "If current trends continue, the rate of disenfranchisement for black men could reach 40% in the states that disenfranchise ex-offenders."

Disenfranchisement for ex-offenders brings back memories of the post-Civil War era after the Fifteenth Amendment gave Black citizens the right to vote. The South, in particular, immediately placed as many barriers as it could to discourage as many Blacks as possible from voting: "...between 1890 and 1910," The Sentencing Project Report noted, "many Southern states tailored their criminal disenfranchisement laws, along with other voting qualifications, to increase the effect of those laws on black citizens."

Currently 3.9 million adults are disenfranchised, which equates to 2% of the eligible voting population. Ironically, in Florida and Texas, a cumulative total of 600,000 to 1.2 million people are disenfranchised. In states like Alabama, California, and Virginia, a cumulative total of approximately 750,000 people are disenfranchised.

If one compares those numbers to the relatively small margins of victory—or defeat—of the national elections in particular, one would find that empirically just one-tenth of those disenfranchised votes could have changed the balance of political power in this country at both state and national levels. In fact, Florida—with 647,100 disenfranchised people (31.2% of them Black)—would have been decided on election night, especially since over 436,000 of those disenfranchised people are ex-felons.

The U.S. is the only country which supports disenfranchising people for life. In fact, in countries such as Japan, France, Israel (to name a few) prisoners do not

lose those fundamental rights even when still confined, which calls into question this country's "reasons" for such an unenlightened stand.

Perhaps the reason lies in the fears of a County Clerk in Oregon who stated that, because prisoners in a small town could make up over half of that town's population, they could have an impact on bond issues or school board elections. Perhaps that new prison would not be funded so that a school could be built. And perhaps the sheriff who does not discipline his deputies for harassing Black citizens would find himself out of a job; the judge who sentences Black defendants to harsher sentences than he does white defendants (for the same crime), would be replaced on the bench. It is a fear that is based on a voting bloc which is not easily fooled by the rhetoric of the traditional body politic.

In the 1960s, the right to vote was to empower. Any thoughts opposed to that concept, were simply culturalized, state-defined racism. Continued disenfranchisement, of ex-felons especially, simply continues a trend which has changed little since the Civil War.

**With this issue we are proud to begin a new column on prisons, the criminal injustice system, and all topics prisoners discuss. Robert Taliaferro is a Black prisoner who has written extensively on prison issues, and we invite other prisoners to contribute material to this column as well.**

## Ivory Coast crisis

by Ba Karang

The October elections in the Ivory Coast spelled out a crucial moment in the political life of the country. The Democratic Party of Ivory Coast (PDCI), which ruled the country for decades under the authoritarian and corrupt leadership of Felix Houphet-Boigny's one-party dictatorship, was forced to hold elections by the pro-democracy movement. One of the leaders of the radical pro-democracy movement has now been declared the winner.

The defeat of General Guei by radical leader Laurent Gbagbo came as a surprise to many and to the general himself. So Guei declared himself the winner and fired the leader of the election commission. The masses were certain that the general was out to rob them of their victory, and they took to the streets. Last month the general fled and Gbagbo was declared the winner.

This victory sent the supporters of Alassane Ouattara into the streets demanding new elections on the grounds that their candidate was excluded from taking part in them on false grounds.

In December 1999 the PDCI was forced from power by a military coup under the leadership of Guei. He then formed a national unity government, but excluded the main opposition party (the RDR) led by Ouattara, a former Prime Minister in dictator Boigny's government. Ouattara had left the PDCI to join the IMF as a deputy managing director.

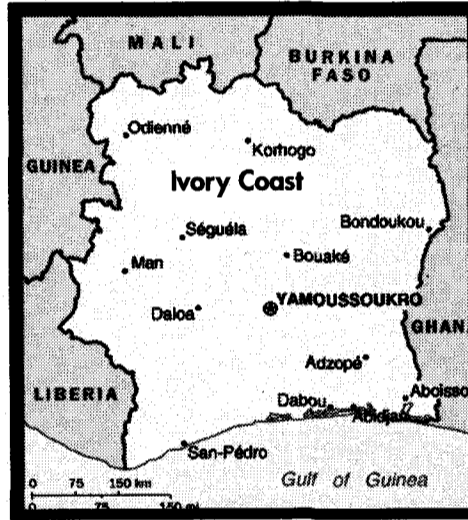
After the coup Guei's government passed laws which disqualified Ouattara and Henri Konan Bedie (a former head of parliament) from running for president on the grounds of doubts about their citizenship. Guei was looking for an easy path to victory by excluding potential rivals and playing on nationalistic sentiments. The RDR and PDCI urged their members to boycott the elections.

Gbagbo and Ouattara are old rivals, going back to the time when Ouattara was Prime Minister under Boigny. During this time Gbagbo was sentenced to prison for leading the pro-democracy movement.

The Western powers and international finance capital tried to freeze out Ivory Coast and called for new elections. It was clear to them that their interests could best be served by Ouattara, and not Gbagbo—who is known to have spoken loud and long against the marginalization of his people and the continent in general by international capital and neo-colonial African leaders.

When Ouattara discovered that he could not win by pressing for new elections with the help of the West, he went to the negotiating table. He declared, however, that his party will not take part in the national reconciliation government.

The electoral committee declared in November that Ouattara is eligible to contest the national assembly elections in December, but there is a case in court contesting this. It is very likely that Gbagbo will use every possible means to contest any decision from the court that does not rule in favor of allowing Ouattara to contend in the general elections, even though they are still bitter rivals.



## Detroit police abuse

**Detroit**—Charges of police brutality and widespread cover-up of wrongdoing by the Detroit police department and mayor's office have reached an explosive mixture following recent hearings and escalating demonstrations protesting a rash of killings by police officers in Detroit.

Outrage over the police killing of a deaf Black man erupted in many demonstrations throughout the city, and especially around police headquarters downtown. Hundreds of demonstrators circled the building demanding an end to the killings and brutality.

Both Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and Police Chief Benny Napoleon, facing the white-hot anger of citizens, launched investigations into the killings. A particular focus of the investigations was police officer Eugene Brown who had shot nine people in the past seven years, killing three of them. The first internal police investigation into Brown's conduct reportedly found that none of the killings were justified. However this was never made public since it was an "internal" affair, and the report was sent to the District Attorney's office for further action.

At a November Police Commissioner's meeting, observers were shocked to learn that the District Attorney's office found "insufficient evidence" to charge Brown with any crime. Moreover, Brown was promoted to sergeant, given a raise and returned to duty. Facing the wrath of the public at this flagrant coverup, Mayor Archer and Police Chief Napoleon weakly responded that investigations are still underway and will be diligently carried out. Few believed that anything would be done to bring those officers guilty of murder to justice, and many were drawing comparisons of the Detroit police department to the corrupt Rampart division police officers in Los Angeles.

## Toxic Georgia

**Fort Valley, Ga.**—The number one Superfund site in Georgia is the Woolfolk Chemical Works. A former pesticide manufacturer spread 47 or 48 different chemicals on the site and in off-site neighborhoods. It just shut down. We didn't know about the extent of the contamination until 1993. There's a high rate of kidney disease, various cancers, some immune system deficiencies—just about everything that's identified in the toxic profiles of these chemicals exists here. The EPA found high levels of contamination in the groundwater on and off-site. That probably affects the drinking water of anyone in the region.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) came to town in 1993 with maps suggesting that this site was exclusive to the Black neighborhood and pockets in the white community still think it's a Black problem. It's just south of the railroad tracks that traditionally separated the two communities.

We try to inform folk that we're not talking about skin color. Whites have not come on board as members of our group, but they have in terms of understanding the information that we have generated.

There was an open ditch that ran through our neighborhood. As children we used to play along the ditch. It had the biggest, prettiest blackberries and plums. We thought it was natural to see different colors of water. What we did not know was the extent to which the chemicals had been released in our neighborhood in levels that possibly caused some deaths. When the EPA tested the ditch at our request, they found high levels of arsenic and other dangerous compounds.

We filed a lawsuit. A local dermatologist was recruited to do skin examinations for arsenic exposure, and 85% of the 600 or 700 people over the age of 35 showed signs of exposure to arsenic. If we showed signs of arsenic, a heavy metal, our concern was that the lighter contaminants, including dioxin, were in us too. The real extent of our exposure has never been delineated.

The "potentially responsible party" (PRP), which was Reichhold Chemicals out of North Carolina, hired a company that did a serious public relations job here. Key to that was exploiting the differences that Black and white folk have in the South. They frightened the business community, which is already struggling, by saying that if this gets out it's going to ruin your business. We formed the Woolfolk Citizens Response Group in late 1993 to make sure that whatever the cleanup does creates a situation where it's safe to live in this town. That entails a lot of stuff they don't want to do. There are about nine items that are required of EPA in relation to site remediation: the reduction of toxicity, relocation assessments, etc. We don't know that the arsenic was removed. The only thing the EPA and the PRP have concentrated on is what is the cheapest that they can get away with.

We think that it might be more than environmental racism. All of our efforts have been spit upon because there is an unknown agenda between the EPA and the PRP. We are constantly demanding that our voices be heard in the decision-making processes around what is happening in our community.

Everybody in my community has come through some sort of struggle. You have a lot of people who grew out of the old civil rights movement and who are bringing those experiences to what we are doing now with one twist: you can't do this kind of work without realizing that it's not exclusive to Black folk.

—Black environmental activist

## Black/Red View

(Continued from page 1)

This historic counter-revolution against African-American freedom, 126 years ago, isn't just past history buried away in a textbook. African Americans are still fighting against the results of the so-called "compromise of 1876." It created the legal basis for ongoing segregation and open racism. It abandoned the spirit of the Civil War, which not only abolished slavery, but opened the way for Black self-determination during the reconstruction era.

Whatever the era, there is always a sharp contrast between the way the Black masses express their subjectivity and drive for self-determination and what becomes of it in the narrow legal arena. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s took up the struggle against the counter-revolution of 1876 and it won many legal victories that stopped and moderated many of the glaring features of racism, but it failed to uproot racism and transform America's racially segregated society.

We can't just mourn the incompleteness of past history. Instead there is a need to understand the dialectic of African-American history as it emerges in the self-consciousness of African-American masses in motion who do not fear facing the objectivity of today's reality because of the collective memory of their struggles.

That lack of fear, expressed in the outpouring of Black voters in this election, comes from Black masses wanting to overcome being just an Other in American society. As long as they remain an Other, the continuing drive for freedom results in a false opposite, a fixed determinateness of a narrow legal or political remedy.

Black masses are reaching for a self-determination that is universal, that as Hegel said in the "master/slave" section of his *Phenomenology of Mind*, recognizes its Other as its own Other through mutual recognition. Anything short of new human relations in everyday life creates a dual world of the subjective reach for freedom as the opposite of the determinateness in which social life becomes fixed.

The hope for the future is not in the decisions made in this election, but in the search for new forms for self-determination against this racist inhuman capitalism.

## Editorial

The world has looked on with horror as Israel has killed over 250 people since September in its attempt to suppress a new Palestinian uprising. Day-after day, Israeli soldiers have shot down Palestinians, many of them children. Sometimes they have done so with rubber or plastic-covered bullets, other times with helicopter gunships and rockets. Occasionally, the more lightly armed Palestinians have succeeded in killing a few Israelis.

There have been atrocities on both sides. On the Israeli side, we have seen a pogrom against Arab villagers inside Israel and deadly rocket attacks on entire civilian neighborhoods, and on the Arab side, a lynching and the terrorist bombing of schoolchildren.

But it is the daily Israeli army killings that truly define this conflict, not the occasional atrocities. The government believes that every last Jewish settlement, no matter how isolated or how fanatical, must be defended at the cost of Palestinian lives, rather than even the smallest withdrawal being allowed. And it is U.S. arms and money that allows Israel to continue its massacres in the Palestinian territories and to attack and threaten its Arab neighbors with near impunity.

Physicians for Human Rights has condemned the Israeli army's frequent use of live bullets against civilians. Their report notes that the firing of rubber-coated bullets at close range, something they were supposedly not intended for, is often lethal, and is prohibited even by Israeli army regulations. In addition, Israel's policy of assassinating Palestinian activists via helicopter attacks is greatly escalating the conflict. A columnist in the Israeli paper *Yedioth Ahronoth* wrote: "The use of helicopter missiles as a tool of assassination is a step toward the 'Lebanonization' of the territories."

### CONTRADICTIONS SINCE OSLO

Since coming to power last year, the Labor-led government of Ehud Barak has zigzagged between accommodation and intransigence toward the Palestinians. This reflects real contradictions inside the Israeli rul-

# Israel escalates Middle East crisis

ing class as well as the masses. Israelis have failed to come to grips with the reality of what the 1993 Oslo Accords implied: a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza and the evacuation of the Jewish settlements that honeycomb those territories, plus a compromise over Jerusalem. In return, the Palestinians were to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel within its 1967 borders.

Barak snubbed the Palestinians during his first year in power, concentrating instead on futile negotiations with Syria and later, on a unilateral pullout from south Lebanon. Finally, under Clinton's prodding, he turned to serious negotiations with Arafat at Camp David last July. Barak seemed to agree in principle to turn over most of the West Bank and Gaza and, more surprisingly, broke with years of Israeli stonewalling over Jerusalem to offer at least some limited Palestinian control over parts of East Jerusalem. Arafat found this proposal insufficient, especially on Jerusalem, and the negotiations collapsed.

Two months later, Israeli war criminal Ariel Sharon, the butcher of Lebanon during the 1982 war, made an armed visit to the most important Muslim sites in Jerusalem, asserting control over them by Israel. Palestinian youths began to throw rocks, the army opened fire, and the conflict has not abated since.

### ISRAELI TONE-DEAFNESS

At one level, the spark was religious, but at a deeper level, the fire had been stoked by seven years of missed opportunities, as Israel refused to evacuate the settlements and to return even the whole of the Gaza Strip, let alone the West Bank. The rulers have convinced most Israeli citizens that it is they who have been "generous" since 1993, willfully ignoring the fact that the U.S. is the only country that shares such a view. Such views, articulated by Barak's government as well as the Right, all but assure the victory of Sharon's party in the next election (which will be held next spring), especially since Barak has by now com-

pletely alienated Israel's Arab minority, whose votes were crucial to his election.

This tone-deafness to Palestinian and world opinion is also linked to the small turnout at Israeli peace rallies, even as the slaughter of Palestinians has mounted. Initially, only a few principled voices such as those of Women in Black were heard in protest. However, the potential for broader protests was shown at a rally in Haifa on Oct. 21, which drew 4,000 people, Arabs as well as Jews.

Although one speaker refused to criticize Barak, others such as Shulamit Aloni of the leftist Meretz party accused the government of "acting like nineteenth century colonialists," referring also to state-sanctioned "racism." Signs carried included slogans such as "Israel-Palestine, Two Peoples, Two States, Two Capitals in Jerusalem," "Evacuate the Settlements," and "Barak, How Many Children Did You Kill Today?" (*Le Monde*, Oct. 24, 2000).

### CRITIQUE OF LEFTIST ABSTRACTIONS

The failure to follow through on Oslo has created fertile ground for the growth of religious fundamentalism. Jewish fanatics increasingly hold the balance of power in the Israeli parliament. On the Arab side, Muslim fundamentalism has grown even faster. Groups like Hamas state openly: "We are coming to Tel Aviv. We are coming to every place in Palestine to purify it from Jews" (*New York Times*, Oct. 28, 2000).

In correctly attacking Israeli colonialist policies and U.S. military aid to Israel, much of the world Left nonetheless remains silent about what the growth of Hamas, Hezbollah and similar groups means for the prospects of an independent Palestinian state, let alone the region. A Holocaust denier like former Stalinist Roger Garaudy, convicted in French courts for "provoking racial discrimination, hatred, and violence," has received favorable coverage from leading Arab publications such as the London-based paper *Al Hayat*. (It should be noted that others writing for *Al Hayat* condemned Garaudy's fantasies.) Even fewer have discussed the fact that, on Oct. 13, Hamas burned down the Hotel Windmill and several shops in Gaza City because they sold alcohol. What will such a culture war mean for women, or for non-Muslim Palestinians?

In their one-sided critiques of the Oslo Accords, some on the Left have returned to the pre-Oslo PLO demand of a "unified secular state for the whole of Palestine" rather than the two-state solution that has been the agreed goal since Oslo. In doing so, they are also helping to undermine the struggle of many Palestinians who want a foundation for peace and not a war to the end.

Such abstractions ignore the concrete historical and social fact that two nations, each with legitimate claims, have vied for the same territory. As Lenin once stated in a different context, that of supporting the right of secession of oppressed nations: "We do so not because we favor secession but only because we stand for free, voluntary association and merging as distinct from forcible association" (*Collected Works* 23, p. 67).

No nation can itself be free if it oppresses another nation. This, however, does not negate Israel's right to exist as a nation. That is why we continue to support a two-state solution as an immediate goal, with Israel withdrawing completely from the West Bank and Gaza as well as East Jerusalem, and with some type of shared control of the Jerusalem religious sites. From a more long-term perspective, we also raise the banner of a free association among all the peoples of the Middle East and the world, on a socialist humanist basis.

## Acehnese risk death to demand independence

Hundreds of thousands of people in Aceh, a province in northwest Indonesia, staged a mass protest for self-determination in the capital city, Banda Aceh, Nov. 10-14. Originally called for the anniversary of last year's Nov. 8 rally in support of a referendum on their status, which brought out two million people, this year's Rally for Peace was postponed and eventually officially cancelled, due to severe government repression against people travelling to participate. People kept coming anyway, so determined were they to show their desire for independence—risking death, bringing food and bedrolls and camping out at mosques. Finally, due to the hardships in getting there, they held protests day after day instead of just one.

The police and military closed the bus stations, destroyed some 2,000 vehicles, and shot out the tires of other vehicles travelling to Banda Aceh. People responded by walking or taking small boats instead. Security forces shot them as they walked, and shot into their boats. Estimates of the number killed range from 40 to 200, and those missing up to 300. Hundreds more were wounded.

A woman, two young children clinging to her, told a reporter at the rally: "The military shot my husband in a rice field. Our convoy refused to go back and the Brimob [special police] started to shoot in the air. We all ran. Then they began to shoot at us. Several were injured and my husband died. We have no weapons, we are only farmers. They have the guns. I came with the convoy because my husband is already dead, what could I do? He would have wished me to come."

On Nov. 10, the first day of the rally, a police spokesman put at 388,000 the number of people who had braved barbed wire, gunfire and police and army roadblocks to reach the city from outlying areas. On Nov. 11, an estimated 400,000 gathered around the Darussalam Memorial Tower near a university campus and heard speeches which strongly condemned the actions of the security forces.

The final session of the Rally for Peace was held Nov. 14 at the campus of the state Syah Kuala university. People arrived aboard open trucks, buses, motorcycles, cars, pedicabs and on foot. Within two hours, about 500,000 people chanting "Freedom" and "Referendum" were packed into an open field inside the campus listening to a series of speakers. Mohammad Nazar, Chairman of SIRA, the Center of Information for a Referendum in Aceh, said he was certain that if there had been no blockades against people coming to Banda Aceh, more than two million people would have attended.

Parallel smaller rallies were held in Lhokseumawe and several other cities in the provinces, by residents

who had been blocked by security forces from the Banda Aceh gathering. A rally of 300 took place in Jakarta.

Meanwhile, weary of the government ignoring their calls for a referendum, on Nov. 3-11 student groups conducted a poll of their own in villages throughout Aceh. They report that 2,769,856 polling slips were distributed (in a population of about 4.5 million) and produced the following results: 92% in favor of independence; 0.1% in favor of continued association with Indonesia; 7.8% abstained. "We call on peoples throughout the world to give their support and recognition so that the people of Aceh can achieve independence and the creation of a new, peaceful Aceh," said the Central Coordinator of Polling Radhi Darmansyah.

Since civil society erupted in protest two years ago, groups demanding a binding referendum have called on the UN, NGOs and governments around the world to force Indonesia to stop the violence and respect the will of the people. Thousands of Acehnese have been killed in the last few years. "If you come here in a year's time, all of the human rights leaders sitting around this table will be changed," said Suraiya of the women's organization Flower Aceh to an emergency human rights delegation which visited Aceh in September. "All of us will have been killed, jailed, or run away."

As a result of the recent killings of peaceful demonstrators, GAM (Aceh/Sumatra National Liberation Front) called off scheduled talks with the government aimed at extending the cease-fire ("Humanitarian Pause") that has supposedly been in effect since June 2.

The government in Jakarta is now threatening to impose martial law in Aceh. It put out statements that the military cannot leave the province because people want it to keep order, and that "shooting civilians may be the only way soldiers can discharge their duty." The military frequently "sweeps" villages looking for GAM fighters, while robbing, raping and killing anyone. On Nov. 21, a village of 9,000 people fled the military, but instead of going to a refugee camp as have some 65,000 other people similarly threatened, they went to Banda Aceh, to camp out in the capital until the military violence is stopped.

At the Rally for Peace, a general strike was proposed, but threats of even more violence caused it to be called off. No one has been arrested for recent killings in the villages or on the way to Banda Aceh. But a few days after the Rally for Peace, Nazar was arrested for "disturbing the public order" based on a banner, displayed at an August rally against Indonesian Independence Day, that read, "Neo-colonialists out of Acehnese land." He has been moved to a prison.

—Anne Jaclard



Acehnese protester shouts for independence at Jakarta rally.

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# Election turmoil exposes fault lines in U.S. society

(Continued from page 1)

vote as well as a large number of union voters, who had fought to get election day off. The crucial nature of the Black vote became abundantly clear in Illinois and Pennsylvania when the tide turned as returns poured in from urban centers like Chicago and Philadelphia. The Latino vote was similarly critical for Gore in New Mexico and California.

Nowhere was the pattern clearer than in Florida, where Gore won 93% of the Black vote and Bush 57% of the white vote. Bush's supreme confidence that he has most of the white vote enables him to arrogantly dismiss losing the popular vote by more than 300,000.

It was precisely the deep Black opposition to Bush's reactionary plans that brought forth the pattern of intimidation and outright disenfranchisement unleashed in Florida during the election.

The battle gathered force in early spring, when a forum on Gov. Jeb Bush's euphemistically dubbed "One Florida" plan was transformed into a civil rights rally by thousands who protested the way he put into effect an anti-affirmative action initiative by executive order. In February more than 4,000 jammed into a room that seated only 1,700 and heard Black and Hispanic speakers, many of them women, condemn the plan.

Over the next few weeks other large-scale protests took place. Students from Florida A&M University sat in at the Capitol; eight new NAACP chapters appeared on campuses; and Black female law students teamed up with white women from NOW to organize more opposition. This culminated in March in a 50,000-strong "March of Conscience," called the largest civil rights protest ever held in Florida.

By June a vigorous statewide crusade got underway to boost voter turnout of racial minorities and women. The Republicans, who thought they had Florida all sewn up, suddenly began worrying that it might not be so.

That set the stage for the kind of intimidation, disenfranchisement, and ballot tampering that vies with the worst banana republic methods for stealing an election. IDs of motorists were checked by police near some polling places and Black voters turned away. Black college students with registration cards in their hands were told their names were not on the rolls. Ballots of military personnel that had been thrown out because they were not properly filled out were taken home by Republican workers and "fixed up." Spanish-speaking officials were sent to translate at stations where the majority spoke only Creole, and vice versa.

The most contentious vote-stealing—and the only one that Gore fought vigorously—concerned the Republican opposition to recounting ballots. This reached the point in Miami-Dade County of Bush supporters physically storming the office where ballots were being recounted.

## 'LEGALIZED' DISENFRANCHISEMENT

What was new in this election was not just the old-fashioned vote-stealing, but many new kinds of disenfranchisement which Gore refused to attack.

Because he supports it, Gore could say not a word about the disenfranchisement of 525,000 Florida citizens who were denied the right to vote because they were once convicted of a felony, even if they are now out of prison or never served time. That number is unparalleled in recent history. For the last 25 years the number of ex-felons disenfranchised has increased from 1% to almost 5% of Florida's voting age population. That includes at least 139,000 African-Americans—fully 9% of Florida Blacks of voting age.

The real crime is that the restrictions against "felons" voting include anything from writing a bad check 30 years ago to non-violent drug offenses. While Florida and Alabama disenfranchise the highest number of citizens, varying amounts of such disenfranchisement takes place in every state except Maine, Vermont and Massachusetts.

A different kind of "disenfranchising" also cost Gore thousands of votes, far more than the amount needed to win. That was the confusing ballot that resulted in elderly, many Jewish, citizens giving at least 3,000 votes intended for Gore to Pat Buchanan. Their anguish was compounded because Buchanan is known by them as an arch anti-Semite. Far from being taken seriously, their cries were dropped and provided nothing more than jokes for the stand-up comics about senior citizens.

## RIGHT'S LONG WAR FOR WHITE HOUSE

The Republican Party's desperation to win the White House has been growing ever since they failed in their attempt at a right-wing coup, American-style, with the impeachment of Clinton two years ago.

Whatever their attitude to Clinton's personal behavior, the disgust of the American people at the inquisition the far-right subjected him to was clear in the 74% approval rating given to him as soon as he was impeached! Then, as now, the deepest opposition came from Black America, yet what marked that episode was that the Right's power to bring about such an impeachment had taken the country by surprise.

In this election, the forces opposed to allowing the Christian Coalition to get into the White House via Bush were clearly not fooled by the lavish display of "diversity" at the Republican Convention or the "Compassionate Conservatism" served to them during the campaign. The question that remains is how the forces

of opposition will develop a vision of a very different future from that served up by either Democrats, Republicans, or even Nader.

It is true that many who turned out for Nader were expressing their dissatisfaction with the "two-party system." While they were looking for an alternative to the ever-expanding gap between rich and poor, Nader failed to address the ever-growing gap between Black and white. In the end, because Nader's populism fell so far short of any real alternative, so many pulled back from voting for him that he didn't even get the 5% to qualify for federal matching funds for the next election. He can now expect a backlash for being charged with playing the role of "spoiler."

Many of those drawn to Nader's campaign were from the new generation of activists born a year ago in Seattle. The coalescence of forces—environmentalists, women, youth and labor—that made Seattle a "new moment" raises the question of whether the coalescence of forces contesting this election could represent a deepening of that movement. Though the Black dimension seemed to be missing in Seattle, it has moved front and center in these events. Black and

of the pundits who have been giving us lessons about the Tilden-Hayes election of 1876 (when the Electoral College voted for the minority candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes) mentioned that they did so because Hayes promised to withdraw Federal troops from the South, which had been protecting freed Black slaves and enforcing Reconstruction after the Civil War. What none of the pundits mention is that the year after those troops were removed from the South they were used to crush the railroad strikes from Pennsylvania to Texas. (See *American Civilization on Trial*, p. 12, for a discussion of this page of our history.)

While none of this may seem to bear any similarity to what we face today, it illuminates the dangers of ignoring the importance of the Black dimension in any movement for freedom in the U.S. today.

## THE REAL 'STATE OF THE UNION'

There is no question that those opposed to the status quo include not only the thousands who came out to vote against Bush, but many of the 100 million who did not come out to vote at all, so sure were they that there was nothing to vote for.

In one direction or the other, the electoral impasse between Gore and Bush has brought to the surface the depth of the dissatisfaction with the whole system. What marks the 2000 election is not the closeness of the votes for George W. Bush and Al Gore, or even the many ways the Republican contender managed to steal the election. What marks it is the way the lines have been drawn for future battles by the forces of revolt, which we will soon be seeing in more fundamental ways than in the machinations and controlled chaos of this election.

While the spectacle has provided the comedy shows with a ready supply of jokes, and countries from Russia to Cuba to Zimbabwe gleefully offered to send observers to help count the votes, this election was no laughing matter. The crises that are looming ahead forewarn of the real "state of the union" as we confront everything from the economic insecurity guaranteed now that the techno-bubble has already burst, to the crucial threat to all the gains women thought they had won over 30 years ago, to even so imminent a danger as the dire consequences of the global warming which has already begun melting the polar ice cap. Never has the need for an alternative to the inequities and downright corruption that has passed for American "democracy" been more evident than in this Election 2000.

—December 4, 2000



Protest against electoral fraud in Palm Beach County

Jewish voters have been brought together in a way not seen since the civil rights era, as Jews and Blacks marched together to protest the unfairness of the ballot procedures to both groups.

What speaks to the crucial nature of the Black dimension is the way the 2000 elections have brought to attention the way a candidate can win the popular vote—as Gore did this year, by 300,000 votes—and yet lose the tally of the Electoral College. Very few, if any,

## ¡No To U.S. Intervention in Colombia!

New York—"We do not share political ideals with any armed group! They say that we support the guerrillas or that we support the government. Here in the U.S. they say we are neutral. We are not neutral! We have a position of No War! We are victims! We are not actors in this war and we want to make this very clear!"

These words were spoken by Emperatriz Cahuache, the president of the Organization of Colombian Indigenous Amazon Communities. These communities are located in the southernmost regions of Colombia, which have turned into the battlefield for control between the Colombian military, right-wing paramilitary groups and left-wing guerrilla groups. These regions are also the target of U.S.-aided military intervention proposed by the Plan Colombia.

The two days worth of passionately presented political, scientific and cultural arguments against the ill-conceived Plan Colombia will resonate in the minds of those who attended the conference at Columbia Law School, Nov. 17-18. The conference was organized by Colombia Media Project, a New York-based human rights organization.

The conference was devoted to addressing dangerous myths concerning the country's insurgent movement, the role of the army-supported paramilitary, as well as the peasants of coca cultivating territory.

All speakers addressed and denounced Plan Colombia, a plan that calls for \$7.5 billion worth of "aid to the Colombian peace process" to combat narco-trafficking, reform governmental institutions and strengthen the economy. Of this \$7.5 billion, \$1.3 billion has actually been generated, all of which is coming from the U.S. The vast majority of it will unfold in military aid to fight the "drug war."

The U.S. Congress seems to be indifferent towards the fact that the Colombian military is recognized worldwide as having one of the worst human rights records in the Western hemisphere. These issues were addressed by Colombian journalists, professors, a former governor, human rights workers, scientists and members of the indigenous community.

The conference consisted of three major panels. The first was "No One Left to Tell the Story: Persecution Against Journalists." Exiled journalists gave personal testimonies about their experiences in the conflict zones such as Putumayo, a department in the southern region where the majority of coca cultivation occurs, apparently taxed and protected by the dominant insurgent group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). This region has turned into the epicenter of Clinton's call to "push into southern Colombia" to fight the "drug war."

Exiled journalists emphasized that FARC is not narco-guerrilla, though they govern the coca cultivat-

ing region. They also wished the public to think twice about demonizing the poor peasants of this area who cultivate the crop as a means of survival and in the context of religious and folk healing traditions.

The second panel was "The War on the Poor: The Crisis of Forced Displacement." Panelists referred to the vicious human rights violations of the Colombian military and their connection to right-wing paramilitary violence. The result has been the displacement of 228,000 Colombian citizens just in the year 2000.

The third and final panel, "Views from the War Zone: The Implementation of Plan Colombia," was by far the most thought provoking. The panelists spoke of how U.S. aid will go to help the military push into coca crop regions in the south, a range of mountainous jungles controlled by the FARC. To do this North American military experts will train Colombian counter-narcotics battalions in advanced small unit tactics, light infantry skills and ambush techniques to clear this region of insurgency. The U.S. will also provide 30 Blackhawk and 33 Huey helicopters to escort the eradication of coca crop through aerial fumigation, a method that has failed in the past and is extremely harmful to the environment and its inhabitants.

The "war on drugs" will unfold in a much compounded counterinsurgency war leaving additional thousands of innocent peasants and Colombian citizens dead. Already political killings are estimated at five to ten a day and in 1999 over 1,000 civilians were killed by the government working in collaboration with paramilitary death squads. Meanwhile, the sad truth is that until the U.S. can deal with its high levels of drug consumption and addiction, even if Colombia wiped out the crop, the problem will only move elsewhere.

—Raquel Cardona Rodríguez

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## New student movement in Iran

(continued from page 1)

returned to Iran, we continued pursuing our goals with very few resources.

In 1998-1999, historic events occurred in the universities. Student protests in July 1999 were preceded by major student mass activities in May and June after a number of government-sponsored assassinations of opposition writers. One major clash with the police occurred at a funeral near Tehran when many of us began to speak out.

During this period of attacks we received no support from university administrators. Both the right wing and Khatami supporters attacked us.

In July 1999, after public student gatherings in support of freedom of the press, our dormitories were attacked and several people were killed. During the first night of attacks, we saw students being thrown out of windows. We saw bodies smashed on the ground, students shot from a few feet away, and heads split open. Countless others were viciously beaten.

There was no way to be silent now. It was at this point that our slogan became directly aimed at the supreme leader, Khamenei himself. At first we called on him as supreme commander to respond. He refused. Then our slogan became "Commander in Chief resign!" He was openly taunted and shamed.

## Mass protest at 'School of Assassins'

Fort Benning, Ga.—On Nov. 19, along with 1,700 other criminals of conscience who came to protest the deadly School of the Americas (SOA)—the army-run facility that trains torturers and murderers for authoritarian Latin American regimes friendly to the U.S. government—I found myself deep within Fort Benning in the custody of military police. One would assume that such a mass arrest would generate a response from the mainstream media and that the gathering of 6,000 outside Fort Benning's property line would be of public interest.

To my surprise, the mainstream coverage of this article amounted to three Associated Press releases. Could it be that the thousands of Americans demanding the infamous "School of Assassins" be shut down are, as post commander Maj. Gen. John LeMoyné said, buying into "propaganda" based on "emotion and falsehood"?

Or could it be that the lie of silence blankets this issue? Is the U.S. Army not proud of its elite school's

This was a major event. It helped to break the taboo of questioning a supreme religious leader in Iran. People who originally did not support us now valiantly confronted the regime and faced guns without any fear.

Two days later Mohammadi and I were arrested after being pursued by a large police force in house to house searches of neighborhoods. We were accused of bringing the supreme leader to tears on TV and were viciously beaten and tortured as an act of revenge. For 130 days we were in Evin Prison.

I was condemned to death on my first day of imprisonment. If this were the 1980s I would have been executed immediately. It is not that the regime is any different today; its that pressure internationally and from former supporters has weakened it.

That a majority of Iranians do not want a religious regime has become very clear. They are demanding a separation of religion and state. This is a crucial moment. If these demands are not supported, the people will take to the streets in a volcanic eruption. This will engulf the entire region.

We look forward to the creation of a new democracy. At this moment in Iran the foundation for a new society is taking shape. We won't allow our rights to be taken away again. It will happen one way or the other.

alumni's accomplishments, like the 1980 assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the El Mozote Massacre of 900 civilians, or the murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador in 1989?

I was surprised that the dozen or so military police officers I talked with had never heard of the SOA until the job of processing protesters fell in their laps. I told them it is never too late to change careers, and there are better ways to serve your country. Some of them even took literature and, after looking around, stashed it in their fatigues.

The School of the Americas is scheduled to close Dec. 15 and be replaced by the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. New name? Same shame.

—Ceylon



Activists brave rain during mass civil disobedience at the School of the Americas.

## Mumia activists speak

Chicago—Pam Africa, an activist and organizer for the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, delivered a high-energy speech at Columbia College's Hokin Gallery on Nov. 17. Africa was in Chicago to raise awareness of the current state of imprisoned Black journalist and revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal's fight for freedom. Abu-Jamal was wrongly convicted and sentenced to die for killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1981.

"Our position has always been to release Mumia," Africa told the large, and racially diverse crowd of students and activists. She related the history of the battle for Mumia's life since his original execution date in 1995 and described the successive layers of people who have joined the movement. "Our job is to show that this government is powerless," she said.

Traveling with Africa was Marlene Kamish, a Chicago lawyer who has relocated to Pennsylvania to participate in Mumia's legal defense. Kamish authored one of four Amicus Briefs recently submitted on Mumia's behalf to Judge William Yohn, the federal district court judge who is now hearing the case. Yohn refused to consider any of the documents.

"To deny all four across the board was extraordinary," Kamish said. She believes the documents, which raised questions of irregularities in Mumia's case, panicked Judge Yohn because they threatened to completely destroy the prosecution's case. "We believe the issues [in the briefs] can take the case right out of where it is and set Mumia free," Kamish said.

The audience responded to the talks by the two activists with an enthusiasm that points to a new level of commitment to the battle for Mumia's life.

—Kevin Michaels

## Election protest

Chicago—On Saturday, Nov. 11, I joined a group of protesters at the corner of Washington and Clark to protest the disenfranchisement of untold numbers of voters in the recent presidential election. I came with a group of eight other students from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. The crowd was a diverse gathering of the Left. Among the protesters were liberal Gore supporters, Greens, Trotskyists, Stalinists, anarchists and several members of News and Letters. Some of the more interesting slogans on signs were "Castro send help!" and "Re-vote or Revolt!"

Unfortunately, several vocal people in the crowd successfully kept most radical sentiments from being expressed. For a brief moment, we were able to get the crowd to chant "Jim Crow's gotta go!" in protest of the systematic disenfranchisement of Blacks throughout the South. For the most part, though, the moderate liberals ruled, preventing public discourse on such subjects as racial profiling and the abolition of the Electoral College. Even attacks on the almost openly fascist George W. Bush were discouraged by the liberals, in an attempt to seem impotently non-partisan.

I did not attend this rally as a Gore supporter. Rather, I attended as a supporter of the masses who voted for Gore out of desperation at the poor choice they were given. Millions of Blacks, women, workers and youth voted for Gore's relatively mild neoliberalism for fear of George W. Bush's draconian, murderous conservatism. Reports from all over the South tell of blatant discrimination against Blacks at polling places. The irregularities in Florida all tend to favor the Republicans. If this election is stolen, the real loser will not be Al Gore, but the millions who would suffer so greatly from a Bush presidency.

—Marxist-Humanist student

## Iraq sanctions kill

Memphis, Tenn.—On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, holiday shoppers at Oak Court Mall were joined by over a dozen activists from the Humanitarian Action Coalition wearing matching T-shirts explaining our opposition to the sanctions against Iraq. "Genocide? Not in my name. Lift UN sanctions. Stop the bombings. End the war against Iraq," read the front of the shirts, accompanied by a picture of a dancing skeleton. The backs gave facts from UNICEF about the embargo.

We were mostly young and almost half were Palestinian students. While avoiding actions that would get us thrown out too quickly, like distributing leaflets, we tried to get people's attention and engage them in discussion. Several said they were not aware of what the U.S. is doing to Iraq, and almost everyone was sympathetic to us.

Not satisfied with the relatively small number of people who paid attention, we tried a new tactic. Several of us infiltrated the window display at the Gap Kids store, posing along with the mannequins so that we could display our T-shirt messages from a more prominent place. Others stood in the hallway and pointed the unusual display out to passers-by, then engaged them in discussion about the over one million deaths brought about by the embargo. They pointed out that we too are opposed to the dictator Saddam Hussein, and that the sanctions are not hurting him but the common people.

Eventually we were ejected from the mall, but not before four people acquired T-shirts—including one Black woman who is going to attend our meetings, and the rent-a-cop who apologetically took us to our van.

—Solidarity activist

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## Marxism and Freedom's chapter on Stalin

"A seriously false turn at that juncture could unloose the disintegrative forces at work in a dual worker-peasant state which is surrounded by world capitalism, from which it cannot fully free itself without the help of the advanced European working-class" —Lenin

The above words from Lenin's Will show the foresight Lenin had in predicting Stalinism and the eventual decline of the Soviet Union. He saw that the Soviet Union needed to acquire capital from the advanced countries in order for the Soviet Union to progress and survive.

Raya Dunayevskaya begins chapter 14 in *Marxism and Freedom*, by briefly discussing the objective factors that caused a barbarian, like Stalin, to rise to power. The failure of the German Revolution forced the Soviet Union in a different direction than it reached for in 1917, toward state capitalist development; once on this pathway, it had to produce factories and goods. This by no means justifies the terror that happened under the dictatorship of Stalin; however, one has to understand the objective factors in

order to understand the rise of Stalin.

Raya states "although Stalin was crafty enough there is no point to assigning omniscience to him either." (p. 242) There is a tendency among historians and the Left to look at Stalin as a superhuman who single handedly destroyed the workers' state. This is far from true. Stalin was clever in maneuvering himself into power, by destroying both the Right and Left inside the party. However, the foundation of the Communist Party, Lenin's policy of no factions within the party and the simple fact that it was a one-party state, allowed Stalin to manipulate these policies in his rise to power.

Stalin was a creation of the Communist Party. He would destroy the revolution under the guise of the revolution. Understanding the rise of Stalin is important, especially in this stage of history. By examining the creation of Stalinism, one can comprehend that the failure of the Soviet Union and Stalinism, was not due to inherent flaws of Marxism but within the flaws of the Soviet Union itself.

—Efrim Rushanov

