

NEWS & LETTERS

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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\$ 1

WORKSHOP TALKS

Iraq war follows wounded vets home

by Htun Lin

The mistreatment of soldiers at Walter Reed Hospital, after coming home from Iraq with all manner of severe trauma, has shocked the country since being exposed by a *Washington Post* reporter. Others had been writing about this since the war started in 2003. The current expose came on the heels of a dramatic decline in Bush's popularity because of the quagmire in Iraq, which resulted in Bush's party getting thrown out of power in Congress.

Now politicians are tripping over themselves to get in front of the microphones to express their "shock." As usual a general in charge of soldier medical care thought nothing of calling the expose "yellow journalism," but this time he was summarily fired.

The larger story is not just about lack of sanitary conditions or mold infestation at Walter Reed. The larger story is that workers and their health are expendable under capitalism.

Casualties of the Iraq war like Tammy Duckworth, a double amputee who almost won a seat in Congress in a heavily Republican district in Illinois, said the problem was not the doctors and nurses who gave their all toward her recovery. The problem was the bureaucracy that did nothing when they were caught ill-prepared to handle the level of casualties and need for long term care as a result of this war. Health care providers were swamped with way more than the number of patients they could handle.

This kind of medical neglect by bureaucracy is busi-

Continued on page 3

BLACK/RED VIEW

Politicians distort Selma march legacy

by John Alan

The 42nd anniversary of the historic 1965 march in Selma, Alabama, has entered into today's Democratic presidential politics. On March 4, 2007 both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton acknowledged that event as opening up presidential politics for the likes of them. They would not be in position to be candidates without this historic turning point in U.S. history. But the meaning of the march in Selma goes far beyond any candidate's political ambitions or even politics itself. The real purpose of the original march, the African Americans' struggle for full recognition of their humanity, is a struggle that remains unfinished to this day.

In 1965 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) joined the protest march from Selma, Ala., to the state capital in Montgomery. This proposed 54-mile march petitioned Gov. George C. Wallace for protection for Blacks who wanted to register to vote. They got nothing from the Governor then.

Instead, on Sunday, March 7, 1965, 600 marchers out of Selma were attacked at the Edmund Pettus Bridge by state troopers. They were clubbed and gassed and driven back to Selma. Sheriff's deputies rioted in Black neighborhoods, sending dozens more to the hospital. The event became known as "Bloody Sunday." The whole nation became outraged as they watched it on TV.

This outrage drew many thousands to join the march two weeks later for the whole 54-mile route at

Continued on page 8

Anti-capitalist struggles in the 'new' South Africa

by Peter Hudis

A decade and a half after the end of apartheid, South Africa remains caught in an assortment of contradictions—foremost of which is growing friction between the government of Thabo Mbeki and the rise of new freedom struggles, especially in the impoverished townships (where seven million live). These and other struggles are posing the issue that is on the mind of humanity today—is there an alternative to capitalism?

An indication of the political battles likely to intensify in coming months showed itself on March 8, when Zwelinzima Vavi, leader of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), indicated that it might not endorse the African National Congress (ANC) in the 2009 general elections unless it delivers "concrete results" to workers. Despite Vavi's criticism of the ANC, neither he nor COSATU is trying to break up its "tripartite alliance" with the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP), which has ruled the country since 1994. Vavi is instead trying to defuse what he calls "massive anger" from workers by pressuring the ANC to "identify individuals who should be part of the new ANC leadership"—such as Jacob Zuma, former ANC deputy president.

COSATU and the SACP have embraced Zuma as a "left alternative" to Mbeki's pro-business policies, even though Zuma is a conservative who has engaged in shady business deals and recently stood trial for raping a woman. Though Zuma was acquitted of the rape charge, his effort to turn the woman he assaulted into a villain instead of the victim marked one of the most shameful episodes in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet COSATU and SACP leaders, entranced by being at the center of state power for 12 years, view support for Zuma as a way to maintain their hold on the ANC while mildly distancing themselves from some of its increasingly unpopular policies.

The extent of mass unrest in South Africa today was reflected just days before Vavi's speech, when hundreds of residents of Khutsong township, not far from Johannesburg, barricaded streets with burning tires and



Protest against housing shortages and evictions in South Africa.

fought police over efforts to incorporate it into North West province. Protests have raged in Khutsong for a year over the re-incorporation plan, as residents see it as a ploy by the government to undermine the delivery of water, electricity, and housing. The struggles in Khutsong are part of a growing movement in townships around the country, where living conditions have barely improved, if at all, since 1994.

IN THE HISTORIC MIRROR

The continent that has experienced the most mass upheaval in recent years is Latin America, as seen by events in Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela. At the same time, many questions facing the movements in Latin America are being grappled with by activists in South Africa—such as whether or not to seize state power; the relation between spontaneity, consciousness, and organization; and the dialectic of class, race, and gender. In some respects the movements in South Africa are posing these questions even more sharply, since the pitfalls of tying mass self-activity to the exigencies of "popular" regimes is nowhere more evident than in South Africa itself.

Continued on page 10

EDITORIAL Fifth year of bloody Iraq war

The fourth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq has come and gone with still no end in sight to the disastrous conflict. The war and the sectarian conflict it precipitated has devastated Iraqi society and opened up a dangerous new theater of confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. While George Bush and Dick Cheney stubbornly press on with the conflict, serious problems have arisen at home that even they may not be able to ignore.

Chief among these problems is the Veterans Administration Hospital scandal. Reporters at the *Washington Post* dramatically exposed deplorable conditions in the living quarters of grievously wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., the military's flagship hospital. In addition, the bureaucratic and adversarial labyrinth that confronts veterans throughout the system has been detailed and condemned by spouses and family members of soldiers in testimony before a Senate panel. The Walter Reed scandal and the condemnation of the entire Veterans Administration it represents challenges George Bush with his biggest domestic setback since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Another new development is a small but significant expression of open opposition from within the U.S. military itself. Almost 2,000 service men and women have signed an Appeal for Redress to Congress that calls for a withdrawal of troops from Iraq, citing the number of U.S. fatalities and the impact on the Iraqi people as motivating reasons.

Bush and his generals are struggling to maintain the numbers of troops necessary for continuing the war. The National Guard and reserve forces are being taxed like never before and reports of widespread depression, substance abuse and sexual harassment of women soldiers point toward serious problems within the armed forces.

Taken together with the recent conviction of Dick Cheney's aide, Scooter Libby, on charges of perjury in the Valerie Plame leak trial, a case directly linked to the cloud of deception surrounding the run-up to the Iraq war, the Bush administration faces a situation in which its room to maneuver is significantly diminishing.

ON THE GROUND

In addition to Bush's problems at home, the reality on the ground in Iraq offers him no comfort either. The threefold nature of this complex conflict is now starkly evident. The first element is the war between the U.S. and the Sunni-based insurgent groups. The second is the intense sectarian strife in which the extreme Islamist Sunni groups carry out indiscriminate massacres of Shi'as and the latter group violently retaliates with its own militia groups and the means afforded to it through its position of strength within the Iraqi government. The third and most recent element to emerge is the struggle being conducted within Iraq between the U.S. and Iranian influence on both the

Continued on page 11

ON THE INSIDE

'WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA'
 Stalin's attack on Marx's *Capital* p. 4
 EDITORIALS • Year 5 of Iraq War ... p. 11
 • Global warming & capitalism p. 9

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IWD 2007: the struggle continues

by Terry Moon

In Asia and the Middle East, International Women's Day (IWD) demonstrations and demands reveal the revolutionary nature of women when they are determined to create a new human world. It was just this determination expressed on IWD 2006 in a highpoint that has been brutally attacked ever since.

WOMAN AS REASON

Last IWD, we wrote, "What was new internationally was the breadth and depth of the demonstrations; the new leadership, some of which arose from the poorest, most exploited; and that the Reason expressed revealed a new militancy, and demands so total that to meet them would mean a transformation of existing society." The demonstrations in 2006 had been extraordinary, especially in IRAN, where over 1,000 marched for freedom in Tehran and demonstrations for Iranian women's freedom stretched from Germany to Canada and from The Hague to cities throughout the U.S.

Now Iran's totalitarian government is trying five women and holding four others for participating in a legal demonstration in June 2006—a demonstration brutally attacked by police, including women police recruited to deliver just such beatings (see February-March N&L, "Restive currents below Iran's theocratic rule"). While such beatings and arrests are meant to cow the thousand who demonstrated on IWD last year, they have not stopped women from fighting a law permitting the stoning of women to death for adultery, or the "One Million Signatures Campaign" demanding an end to discriminatory Shari'a laws. Furthermore, women continued their remarkable defiance at a new demonstration at the site of the trial for the five feminist organizers and 33 more women were hauled off to Evin prison, where the torture of political prisoners is common, and immediately began a hunger strike.

RETROGRESSION REIGNS



To see how badly retrogression has taken hold in IRAQ, compare IWD today to 2004, when almost 1,000 women marched through the streets and the poster of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) showed a woman with her hair blowing in the wind. This year, so dangerous has it become,

Belize feminist clinic

BELIZE CITY, BELIZE—That the Women's Liberation Movement is a world movement is seen at the Belize Family Life Association clinic (BFLA). BFLA has seven reproductive health clinics throughout the country, an English-speaking nation of 266,000 people only a little bit smaller than New Hampshire.

While abortion is available only to save the woman's life, for severe physical or mental health problems or fetal impairment—over 365 women were admitted to local hospitals in 2005 due to complications from illegal abortions. Sex under the age of 16 is also illegal, yet Joanne Burke, the clinic director, points out that 28 girls 12 years old or younger gave birth last year.

BFLA battles a Catholic hierarchy: fighting for young women to continue their education when pregnant or after they give birth; to talk about reproductive issues in schools. How hard that is can be seen in how a Catholic girls' school built a 12-foot concrete fence topped with barbed wire to separate itself from the clinic. BFLA defies the law by referring women to doctors who perform abortions; and by refusing to report underage youth who come to their clinic for information or for sex-related health concerns.

BFLA reaches out to men, offering prostate cancer and HIV/AIDS testing and counseling. It sees 50 to 60 youth a month. And they do all this on only donations plus \$5,000 per year from the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

They are fighting to change a culture where males don't access healthcare; where families condone young girls having sex with much older men. Less than 20 years ago, if a woman came to a hospital with complications from an abortion, she would receive no care until she revealed who did the procedure. Joanne knew a woman who died because of this outrage.

BFLA dreams of a reproductive health bus to make it possible to access the small villages where women have 12 or 14 children with no access to healthcare and no transportation to services. They want to stop women from dying from cervical cancer; stop the spread of HIV, where those getting it now are mostly young women from 14 to 25 years old—the fastest growing segment of the population to contract HIV, which is on the rise in this Catholic country where 33% live below the poverty line.

BFLA has helped create a transformation in healthcare and women's reproductive rights in Belize. If you want to help support them, they can always use donations: 2621 Caribbean Shores, Mercy Lane, Belize City, Belize; email: bfla@btl.net

—Feminist traveler

Yanar Mohammed, president of OWFI, tells us: "We are preparing for a symbolic IWD event in our Baghdad headquarters. We are not sure how many of us can make it on that day." Yanar describes this year's poster: "Although the poster may look gloomy, still it reflects our turbulent reality and a strong determination that our struggles continue until a better day comes." Yanar has been under a death threat from Islamic fanatics

for over a year, and recently Houzan Mahmoud, an OWFI organizer and speaker based in London, was also threatened with death.

In AFGHANISTAN, the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan also decided it was not safe to celebrate IWD with a demonstration and held their event of speakers, theater and song in a Kabul hotel. Malalai Joya, the young woman who has ceaselessly challenged the Northern Alliance thugs that the U.S. continues to fund lavishly, is also under death threat, must change sleeping places nightly, wear the burka that she hates, and travel with bodyguards.

Last year, PALESTINIAN women challenged Hamas supporters who called IWD "alien to Palestinian culture and tradition." But after the criminal bombing of Lebanon by Israel, Hezbollah's shelling of Israeli civilians, the increased support won by the fundamentalists of Hezbollah and Hamas, and most recently the assassination by suspected Hamas security forces of three women believed to be prostitutes—execution-style—Palestinian women this year confined their demonstration to protesting Israeli checkpoints.

SECOND NEGATIVITY IS KEY

What is undeniable after 40 years of the Women's Liberation Movement is the development of women's internationalism: masses in action and ideas which pass back and forth, get developed and deepened, and have become the dominant force today. The desire to be comprehended as whole human beings takes on more meaning as women in country after country take up the cry and develop it anew for their own circumstances.

When rulers and reactionaries are confronted by a highpoint of women's militant internationalism, they react with brutal repression aimed at killing any thought of revolution, and any person who holds that thought. Women as force and revolutionary Reason means not only witnessing oppression and extending solidarity. It means participating in the dialectics of revolution, working out the second negation—the creating of the new—in life and thought. It is why the Left—in the U.S. and worldwide, if they are actually for a new human society—must stop ignoring or belittling women's struggle for freedom and see, as Marx did, that not only is women's freedom a measure of how free a society is, it is the measure of how deep and total revolution must become.

Politics of veiling

This information came from the National Secular Society who co-sponsored this seminar on "Islam, Women's Rights and the Veil" at the University of London Union on March 15.

LONDON—Feminist writer Taslima Nasreen gave a moving account of the persecution she suffered at the hands of the religious authorities in her native Bangladesh because she refused to accept the role of an inferior human being. Driven from her homeland under threat of death, she aches to return. Her dream is that one day that will be possible on her terms and not those of the mullahs who demand that she squander her education and experience by confining her to what would be, in essence, house arrest.

Maryam Namazie, feminist and human rights activist, spoke passionately against the veiling of Muslim women, calling for it to be banned. She said the veil "is not just another piece of cloth, not just another item of clothing." She likened it to a body bag, chastity belt, or the yellow star that Jews were forced to wear by the Nazis. "It isn't a fashion accessory like a pair of Jimmy Choo shoes, it is like footbinding that was used to stop women from wandering." She said it creates sexual apartheid and represents women's enslavement.

Iranian women's activist Mina Ahadi has been instrumental in saving several people from execution. Founder of the Central Council of Ex-Muslims in Germany, Mina said the group's purpose is to highlight the difficulties of renouncing the Islamic faith, which she said is misogynist and tyrannical. She has been subject to endless death threats and stressed that renouncing Islam can carry the death penalty in a number of countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Mauritania.

Mina said there is no way to modernize Islam, the only way is to leave it and fight it. She says there is enormous support for secularism amongst those who have fled Islam, which is hidden and suppressed. Though you might have the label "Muslim," it cannot automatically be assumed you are religious.

Ann Harrison from Amnesty International gave a summary of the legal situation of women in Iran and the terrible injustices that they have endured.

California protest



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, March 8, was celebrated by a rally in Oakland, Cal. demanding that care be recognized as work. Nella Myhand, local environmental justice activist, spoke about the problems she encountered trying to care for her 83-year-old mother. Others pointed to the difficulties immigrant parents face, especially when the Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids have been breaking families apart. Still others linked child and elder care to the broader recognition of humanity of all members of society. The cuts for all social services were linked to the bloated military budget.

WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

On International Women's Day Portugal's parliament voted to liberalize their restrictive abortion laws, which only allowed abortions during the first ten weeks of pregnancy for health reasons, rape or saving a woman's life. Now all abortions during that same time period are legal after a mandatory three-day "reflection period." This followed a February referendum where 60% of the voters supported liberalized abortion laws in an effort to end the estimated 20,000 back alley abortions each year, and a three year prison term for women who have abortions.

The third American woman to die in the Iraq war (in 2003) was not killed from a "non-hostile weapons discharge" as officially reported, but committed suicide. Alyssa Peterson, an Arabic-speaking interrogator assigned to the prison at an air base in northwestern Iraq, objected to the interrogation techniques used on prisoners and refused to participate after two nights working in the unit known as the cage. The Army has refused to describe those techniques, and all records of them have been destroyed. Her parents have yet to be told the real circumstances of her death.

—Information from *off our backs*

Hundreds of defiant women marched through the working class city of Manchester, England, March 8, demanding safety for women on the streets, in the home and workplace. They first marched to "Reclaim the Night" 30 years ago demanding safe streets and expressing anger at police advice to stay inside because of the "Yorkshire Ripper" killings. Organizers stated that today 26% of women suffer domestic violence, two women are killed by their partner each week; one in four women experienced rape or attempted rape, and 30% have suffered child sexual abuse.

Comfort women rallies

It was distressing to read of Japan's further movements to the right, in the "Our Life and Times" column in *News & Letters*. It was more shocking to find that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe publicly denied the Japanese military's role in forcing over 200,000 women from China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea and other countries into sexual slavery during World War II. Abe's denial flies in the face of an official government statement acknowledging that the Japanese military did just that and, more importantly, demonstrates a flagrant lack of recognition of the dignity that each human being deserves.

In protest of such inhumanity, survivors held rallies in Sydney, Australia, and at the Japanese Embassy in Manila, Philippines, as part of International Women's Day, where they spoke about what they and hundreds of thousands more suffered. Eighty-four-year-old Jan Ruff O'Herne demanded what many so-called "comfort women" want so that they may regain their dignity: an official apology from the government.

What will happen to Japanese women as Japan moves further right, reaching back (think "backwards") to tradition, as Abe and his supporters insist? Now, Japanese women still have to deal with the "boys' clubs" in the business world, working twice as hard as men and demonstrating that they're twice as smart, without any guarantees. If they marry, they are expected to fill the "traditional" roles of obedient wives and stay-at-home moms whose husbands often work late and don't help with domestic tasks. Many Japanese women are not marrying.

As the Japanese government strives to deprive the former "comfort women"—women who survived an inhuman organized atrocity—of their humanity, their words and lives reveal the way to move forward to something new and truly human.

—Elise, half-Japanese and living in the U.S.

Shipyard workers fight forced labor

More than 300 Indian workers in Pascagoula, Miss. from different parts of India claim that their employer, Signal International LLC, a marine fabrication company in Mississippi and Texas, is guilty of extreme labor exploitation. The workers are in the United States with temporary "H2B" guest worker visas to work as welders and fitters. They report paying up to \$20,000 to acquire these visas.

The workers report living in substandard conditions in the camps where Signal has housed them. They live in isolation with 24 men in each cramped "container" unit, with only two bathrooms for all of them. Visitors are not allowed in the camps, and workers cannot make any complaints to the company.

They are frequently threatened by the company with salary reduction or termination; the latter would compromise the terms of their visa and likely result in deportation.

Last week, Signal conducted a raid of the workers' camp. Company representatives entered with armed security guards and took six workers. The company locked the workers in a room and told them they would be sent back to India. One of these workers, who had sold all of his possessions for the H2B visa, ran from guards into a bathroom and emerged with bloodied arms as the result of what witnesses believed to be an attempted suicide. He was taken to a hospital.

In a statement to local immigrants' rights advocates, representatives of the workers said, "We paid money to a U.S. lawyer working on behalf of the company and to Indian recruiters. We have proof of this payment. For some of us, this is a lifetime of earnings in India. We all sold our property and our houses to come and work for Signal.

"In India we were promised that we would be getting

WORKSHOP TALKS

Continued from page 1

ness as usual in the shop where I work. Frontline health care providers are constantly admonished to remember that "health care is a business" that requires controlling expending of resources. Constant cost cutting over the years has brought treatment to substandard levels. No doubt this was also the case at Walter Reed.

Where I work nurses have fought and won some quality control provisions in their contract. They then fought for and won the passage of legislation mandating specific care standards enforced by regulatory agencies. This has only changed the nature of the intense antagonism on the shop floor.

When a state compliance auditor comes through, a hospital official becomes obsessed for that moment with satisfying often superficial technical criteria for compliance. There is a palpable frustration level felt daily in the hospital. One day I heard a chief physician in the ER tell a hospital administrator, "I understand your preoccupation with state regulatory compliance issues, but I'm trying to treat patients here and that is not the same thing."

More regulation doesn't relieve the crisis because, for the bureaucrats, quality care is nothing more than a public relations game. For frontline health care workers and patients alike, quality of care is a life and death issue.

One can easily imagine similar kinds of frustrations experienced by care providers at Walter Reed that went unheeded by bureaucrats. Now after the spotlight on scandalous conditions at Walter Reed, Bush is promising more regulatory oversight. Capital will find ways around regulation because the human being is not its priority. Over 200,000 die annually from "medical errors." It is the conditions under which health care providers are forced to work that causes those "medical errors," which is a euphemism for HMO abuse.

The Bush administration early on prohibited news coverage and photographs of soldiers returning from Iraq in body bags. Severely wounded veterans are a living refutation of U. S. victory in Iraq. So like veterans, along with those segments of society with the least political voice—workers without insurance, the unemployed, immigrants and prisoners—receive the worst health care. A federal judge even ruled that the California Department of Corrections cannot be allowed to run its medical services because of its criminal neglect. On March 20, a San Francisco judge refused to send a convicted robber with a medical condition to prison because it would be giving him a death sentence.

The current uproar over abuses at Walter Reed can open up a real discussion over health care as a human value in-and-of-itself, in contrast to policy games politicians play as they broker human needs made hostage to capital's prerogatives. What does it say about a society where average human beings, who might otherwise avoid danger, have to put themselves in harm's way just so they can receive an education and health care?

The ongoing war and casualty rate with returning veterans recounting their struggles to be whole in the face of bureaucratic negligence, has brought new urgency to the issue. Health care as a human value encompasses all whose lives have been mutilated by this war—returning vets as well as Iraqi civilians, casualties from U.S. militarism as well as sectarian terror. Only when workers control production and solidarize with other workers across borders will priorities and this inhumanity be reversed.

green cards and permanent residency. This was not true. We were given temporary H2B visas which expire on July 31, 2007. We have been treated like animals here. We do not know if we will be extended on a new visa. We cannot recover the money we have spent on the visa in less than two years."

Recently, a Punjabi worker was threatened with termination and being sent back to India. Subsequently, he suffered a fatal heart attack, which fellow workers attributed to the stress of the situation. The workers collected money amongst themselves to send his body back to India.

Despite opposition from Signal, the workers have formed a committee called the Signal H2B Employees Organization. Members of the committee say that workers are still being confined by the company against their will. Two hundred of them are holding a vigil outside the room where their fellow workers are locked up in an attempt to monitor the situation and prevent the workers from being sent back to India.

The committee has collected over 150 signatures for a statement of support. They demand that Signal International:

- Stop the firing of these workers and reinstate the worker who may have attempted suicide.
- Release imprisoned workers immediately.
- Return the money the workers paid to the company to come to the United States.
- Ensure basic human rights and standards for food and accommodation.
- Assure that workers are paid the wage they were promised.

To show support or for further information, call Bill Chandler, Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, (601) 594-3564; Vicky Cintra, Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, (228) 234-1697, or Saket Soni, Alliance of Guestworkers for Dignity, (504) 881-6610.

—Sharda Sokaran



Rescue team preparing to enter Segou mine in January 2006 almost 12 hours after explosion.

Peasant massacre in Indian state land grab

There has been a shocking massacre of peasants at Nandigram, West Bengal. Peasants who had been protesting and resisting heroically the forceful acquisition of their land by the Left Front government for a chemical hub to be built by the Indonesian Salim Group under the Special Economic Zones (SEZ).

It is reported that about 50 peasants have lost their lives in the police firing and more than 200 have been injured. The unarmed peasants were shot at point blank range. Women were specifically targeted for being in the forefront of the struggle. Even those carrying the injured and the dead were not spared and were beaten mercilessly by the police.

It is a shame that the Left Front government has committed this massacre of peasants in the name of progress and development. We condemn the Left Front government for this massacre, which is perhaps the worst in Independent India. Even the memories of the Bailadila massacre during the Janata Party regime fade before the horror of today's massacre in West Bengal. We appeal to all members of CNDP (the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace) to condemn the massacre unconditionally.

This coldblooded massacre in West Bengal has demonstrated that opposition of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—CPM—to SEZ outside West Bengal is a sham and hypocritical and it has no moral right to oppose SEZ anywhere.

Let's be very frank. Unless CNDP takes a clear stand on the issue and condemns what has happened today at Nandigram, it would be difficult for many of us to remain associated with CNDP in the future.

—Arvind Ghosh

The Left Front government in West Bengal has done it again. And done it more brutally this time. Hundreds of police entered the Nandigram area in Hooghly district and fired indiscriminately, resulting in grievous injury to about 100 peasants, and at least 35 peasants were killed. Armed cadres of CPM along with armed police have blockaded all the approach roads to Nandigram. The dead bodies are strewn in the villages and there is no one to carry them.

Nandigram is the fertile and prosperous area earmarked for the Special Economic Zone, conferred on the Salim group of Indonesia by the West Bengal gov-

Cutting corners cost Segou miners' lives

DETROIT—Reports of state and federal mine inspectors reveal that hundreds, if not thousands, of mine block stoppings, or seals, are deficient. The inspections were ordered after last year's Segou mine disaster in West Virginia, which killed 12 miners, and the subsequent Kentucky Darby mine explosion that blasted five miners to death, both disclosed block stopping failures.

The circulation of air in the nation's underground coal mines is of critical importance, not only because of the oxygen the miners need to breathe, but also to drive off explosive methane gas that is released in the mining process. This is accomplished by driving air shafts down into the mine and installing huge air fans at the shaft opening to draw air through the mine from the outside.

Inside the mine, the air is directed by concrete blocks that are laid from top to bottom and from side to side, with each block firmly mortared to create airtight seals that are installed along both sides of the mine working areas. On the intake side, the air is drawn in from the outside and directed to the working areas to drive out the methane gas and is expelled through the opposite air return side.

What you have in effect are two parallel air tunnels, the intake and the return. The integrity of these air-directing block stoppings is obviously of great importance to the miners' safety. Much care goes into putting up a block stopping, and I worked for months with a stopping crew in the mine. The seal crew members all took their work very seriously and were very skilled workers. They could easily qualify as professional block layers, and were always in demand by building contractors.

The inspection reports noted that mine owners have been using "alternative" materials, which were cheaper and lighter, rather than standard concrete blocks. An evaluation of the construction and material integrity of the seals is underway, and mine owners must submit information requested by the Mine Safety and Health Administration and receive its approval on seals.

Since the Bush administration has decimated the number of safety inspectors, huge bottlenecks are delaying the processing of the reports, which infuriates the mine owners. The Bush administration has responded by giving "provisional approval" to plans before they get all of the information they need to grant formal approval.

There are reported to be 14,000 "alternative seals" in mines, and many of them don't have any mortar at all to seal them. Of the 96 plans submitted by the coal operators, only 54 have been reviewed, and only one plan has been fully approved.

In the meantime, the thousands of underground miners who go to work every day are risking their lives needlessly because of the failures of both the MSHA and the coal operators who have always given top priority to coal production rather than miners' safety.

—Andy Phillips

ernment. Despite the assurance by the chief minister of the state of stopping all attempts to seize the village lands for the SEZ, the police and cadres entered in the area with a clear intention to clear the area for the multinational capitalists.

The villagers still kept a vigil and did not allow anyone involved with the displacement and SEZ to enter their villages for over two months, erecting barricades and maintaining round-the-clock watch.

The villagers time and again expressed their opposition to acquisition of their land and had announced that they would resist the takeover and that they would try and stop the police from entering the village.

The police face opposition from the Bhumi Uched Pratirodh Committee, consisting of the villagers and their organizations and people's organizations all over W. Bengal and India, like the National Alliance of People's Movements

This is not the first time that the police have opened fire in the area. On March 6, police fired in the air at Mahespur village to rescue a CPM leader. Before that, six peasants were killed on Jan. 7 in an attack by CPM cadres in Nandigram. The so-called progressive Left Front government takes pride in beating Singur farmers and killing Nandigram peasants for the sake of the capitalists.

Even before indiscriminate firing by police on March 14, the police and powerholders of Bengal started their usual glib explanations that "Villagers pelted stones at the police and damaged their vehicles. That's when the police opened fire on the villagers" or "Many policemen were also injured in the violence."

It is high time that the bluff of the CPM being the pro-people and progressive force—at least in Bengal—is called. It is painful to see that prominent progressive people in Delhi and other places on India have even avoided talking about outrages in Bengal, let alone condemning it.

We who are outside of Bengal have experienced brazen and unashamed adamancy and arrogance of CPM activists, even in the face of atrocities by the West Bengal government. There is nothing progressive in these killings, even though some vulgar party people would quote from Lenin and Stalin. The corporations now have in their pocket communists also, to unleash on the people who dare to oppose naked capitalism.

—Sanjay Sangval

FROM THE WRITINGS OF
RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Uprooting capitalism's law of value

EDITOR'S NOTE

As part of our ongoing discussions on what is required to uproot the capitalist law of value—and thereby create a truly new, human society—we are reprinting excerpts of Raya Dunayevskaya's 1948 essay, "Stalinists Falsify Marxism Anew." It originally appeared in *Fourth International*, September 1948. The first half of the essay appears below. The rest will appear in the June/July issue of *News & Letters*. For the original, see *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 1311-1316.

Until 1943 not even the totalitarian Stalinist bureaucracy dared lay hands openly on Marx's *Capital*. In that year there was published in the country's chief theoretical journal an obscurely entitled article, "Some Questions of Teaching Political Economy" (*Under the Banner of Marxism*). This article initiated a new cycle in the Stalinist revision and falsification of Marxism.

The article caused a sensation in the European and American press because, reversing the traditional Marxist conception that the law of value is in the last analysis the dominant economic law of capitalist society, it claimed that the law of value also functioned "under socialism." To support this new anti-Marxist theory, the author was driven inescapably to undermine the old foundation, viz. the structure and content of Marx's *Capital*.

The article is unsigned, but it bears the stylistic imprint of A. Leontiev, one of the editors of *Under the Banner of Marxism*. Leontiev asserts that Soviet teachers have erred in constructing their courses on political economy "as a simple copy of the structure of *Capital*." This, according to Leontiev, 1) violated "the historical principle," and 2) was "harmful pedantry." Obviously, it was not the teaching but the political economy taught, that was under attack here...

I. THE STRUCTURE OF CAPITAL

Leontiev dares to base his conception of a political economy as a "general" historical science on a statement from Engels, to the effect that "in the widest sense" political economy is "the science of the laws which govern the production and exchange of the material means of livelihood in human society." Leontiev, however, has evaded the essence of the quotation on that very page which Engels aimed precisely against the Leontievs of his own day: "Whoever wishes to bring the political economy of Patagonia under the same laws as those of modern England would, in so doing, obviously bring to light nothing but the most banal commonplaces" (*Herr Dühring's Revolution in Science*).

In any case, Marx's *Capital* is not a study of political economy "in the widest sense." It is an analysis of the capitalist mode of production and its mode of thought. It is an analysis of no other system. Marx, in a single phrase, separated himself from all political economy by subtitled *Capital*, "A Critique of Political Economy." Marx demonstrated thereby his determination to destroy the very foundations of political economy—the capitalist mode of production. Leontiev's attempt to transform political economy into a "general historical science," on the other hand, compels him to place upon the proletarian revolutionist Marx the bourgeois task "to reconstruct the science of political economy."

Leontiev cannot but concede the indisputable fact that Marx begins his work with an analysis of a commodity. But, argues Leontiev, "if we teach political economy according to the historical principle, it is necessary to consider such categories as commodities and money not only in the section devoted to capitalism, but also in the preceding parts of the course." And, of course, if a commodity can be "considered" in courses dealing with pre-capitalist societies, why not for post-capitalist societies? By means of his newly conditioned "historical principle," the Stalinist falsifier seeks to divest the commodity of what Engels called its "particular distinctness," and to transform it from a class phenomenon to a phenomenon common to all societies.

Thereby Leontiev has once again enthroned the commodity and with it the fetishism whereby the relations between human beings "assume the fantastic form of relations between things." The relation between workers and capitalists can thus be made to appear as the mere exchange of one commodity—money, for another—labor power, and not as it really is—a social relation between classes.

Marx, on the other hand, by beginning his analysis of capitalist production with an analysis of what he called "the economic cell-form" of capitalist wealth, was able to bring out most clearly the fetishism inherent in the commodity...

Marx proceeds, first, to reveal that the twofold character of the commodity—its use value and exchange value—arises from the nature of the human activity involved—abstract labor and concrete labor. This, writes Marx categorically, "is the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns." Then, with broad historic strokes, Marx traces the development of the commodity from the stage when it makes its first appearance—the surplus of primitive communes—to the highest stage, its "classic form," under capitalism.

Thereby he makes abundantly clear that the law of value cannot apply until abstract labor has been developed. The labor process of capital, wherein surplus value is extracted, is, of course, the essence of capitalist production, as it is of Marx's work. But capitalist production and capitalist theory is based upon the historical transformation of labor into a commodity.

Therefore, when Leontiev says that "This exposition (the exposition of a commodity) serves him (Marx) as the necessary prerequisite for the discovery of the secret of surplus value, which is involved in the transformation of labor power into a commodity," he is turning Marx on his head. It was the transformation of labor power into a commodity and into abstract labor that made possible the production of surplus value. Marx's exposition is based upon this historic development. Not vice versa.

HISTORY AND LOGIC

It is generally known that the structure of Marx's greatest work was not fixed from the beginning. From the publication of the *Critique of Political Economy*, the first version of *Capital*, in 1859, to the French edition of *Capital* in 1875, Marx had many times, as he put it, "to turn everything around"...the one thing that remained unchanged in all versions of *Capital* is this, that they all began with the analysis of the commodity...

Here is how Engels explained the structure of *Capital*: "If you just compare the development of the commodity into capital, in Marx, with the development from Being to Essence in Hegel, you will get quite a good parallel for the concrete development which results from the facts."

Thus, far from breaking with history, the structure of *Capital* is deeply rooted in history. In the dialectical materialism of Marx there is no contradiction between the historical and logical method of treatment. In the structure of *Capital* is reflected a historical development, a specific historic epoch. Capital is the product of historical evolution, and, whenever Marx viewed any aspect of capitalism as a logical abstraction, he constantly checked and rechecked and illustrated the corresponding economic category by the facts of its historical development.

Leontiev, on the other hand, introduces "the historical principle" only in order to rob the commodity of its class content and clothe it in "general historic" garb. The compelling force here is the need to falsify the Marxist analysis of the law of value. Since Marx's entire analysis is rooted in capitalist relations of production, the Stalinist theoretician would be unable to maintain that the law of value functions in the Soviet Union without "revising" the Kremlin's claim, that the Soviet Union is a land where socialism is "irrevocably established." He must either do this or else he must revise the concept that the law of value is dominant in capitalist society alone. There are good and sufficient reasons why the Stalinist hack preferred the latter course. But to accomplish this feat of distortion, Marx's analysis of a commodity had to be "revised," and with it the structure of *Capital*.

II. THE LAW OF VALUE

The break with the structure of Marx's *Capital* lays the theoretical groundwork for a complete revision of Marxist economic theory, but the new edifice still remains to be constructed. It is no simple matter to extend the operation of the law of value to a "socialist" society. So solid was the structure Marx had built to prove the opposite that no one—not even the all-powerful Politburo of the Russian Communist Party—could merely circumvent what Marx called his major original contribution: the analysis of the twofold character of labor.

Nor could the Stalinist henchman, Leontiev, reconcile his admission that labor in the Soviet Union bears a dual character with the claim that all capitalist relations had been eradicated in the USSR. The central point of Marx's critique of political economy is contained precisely in Marx's exposure of its failure to see exploitation, although it had discovered that labor was the source of all value. Ricardo, Marx had written, "...sees only the quantitative determination of exchange value, that is, that it is equal to a definite quantity of labor time; but he forgets the qualitative determination that individual labor must by means of its alienation be presented in the form of abstract, universal, social labor" (*Theories of Surplus Value*).

The qualitative determination of labor is the exploitative relation. By laying this bare, Marx revealed also how the law of value is, in reality, the law of surplus value...

LEONTIEV DISCOVERS A NEW DUALITY

Not even the Leontiev of 1943 can deny the exploitative nature of the dual character of labor. But he attempts to argue that whereas this is true "under capitalism," it does not hold "under socialism"...

It is easy to see why Leontiev would like to hide Part I of *Capital* from the eyes of the Russian workers. He wishes to screen social relations behind the fetishism of commodities. It is thus that he "discovers" that, regardless of the dual character of labor, all labor "useful" to society is properly "rewarded." This quagmire of Stalinist falsifications becomes the basis for inventing a "duality" between "labor useful to society" as opposed to labor "useless to society."

It is clear that Leontiev acted as he did not because he "willed" it. As a servant of the Kremlin bureaucracy, fearful of the wrath of the Russian workers, he could not do as Marx did—leave the market and follow

the worker into the factory. It was there that Marx saw that not only are the commodities the laborer produces alienated from him, but so is his very activity. This being so, it became the basis of Marx's original contribution to political economy: the analysis of the dual character of labor, which arises in the sphere of production, not in the sphere of distribution.

Leontiev, on the other hand, who has remained in the market not by accident, is now prepared to replace the duality between concrete and abstract labor by another: the "duality" between "labor useful to society" as opposed to labor "useless to society"...

Leontiev's tortuous attempts to resolve the irresolvable contradiction between his admission that labor in the Soviet Union bears a dual character and his claim that all capitalist relations have been eradicated, has ended, of necessity, in his abandonment of the Marxist analysis of the dual character of labor...

'DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO LABOR'

[With] his new "revisionism," Leontiev clothes in a formula culled from the Stalinist Constitution of 1936: "distribution according to labor." Leontiev apparently believes that by employing this phrase he has succeeded in translating the law of value into a function of socialism. At the same time this Stalinist "theoretician" rejects the formula that has always stood in the Marxist theory for socialism and the abrogation of the law of value: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

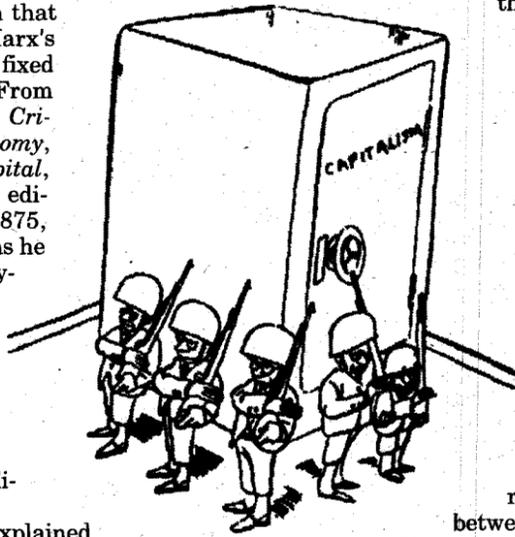
Moreover, *Under the Banner of Marxism* also rejects as inapplicable to the land where socialism has been "irrevocably established" the Marxist formula applicable to countries "just emerging from the womb of capitalism": payment according to the "natural measure of labor"—time. Finally, the author makes clear that the money which is the medium of payment for labor is not some scrip notes, but money as the measure of value: "labor continues to be the measure in economic life." Thus, by the time Leontiev has wound up the argument for the Stalinist "socialist principle" of "distribution according to labor," that formula has every outward appearance of payment of labor—as of any other commodity—at value, a basic manifestation of the dominance of the law of value under capitalism.

Leontiev's attempt to extricate himself from what logically flows from his own argumentation further deepens the self-contradictions in which he is immersed. Just as previously he tried to smooth his path toward breaking with the structure of *Capital* by defining political economy as a "general historic science," so now Leontiev tries to erect a bridge toward the Stalinist falsehood contained in the assertion that the law of value functions "under socialism." He begins with a broad generalization to the effect that "there can be no scientific knowledge if one recognizes no laws."

From this generalization Leontiev then leaps to the following anti-Marxist conclusion: "Thus we see that there is no basis for considering that the law of value is abrogated in the socialist system of society. On the contrary, it functions under socialism, but it functions in a transformed manner. Under capitalism the law of value leads inevitably to the rise and development—inevitably linked with the destruction of productive forces, with crises, with anarchy of production. Under socialism it acts as a law consciously applied by the Soviet state under conditions of the planned administration of the national economy, under the conditions of the development of an economy free from crises. Under the domination of private property in the means of production, operation of the law of value leads inevitably to the rise and development of capitalist exploitation; in a socialist society the rise of exploitation is blocked by the domination of the socialist property in the means of production."

Leontiev apparently believes that the words, "under socialism," suffice to clothe in socialist raiment the dominant economic law of capitalism.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE



NEW FROM LEXINGTON BOOKS

Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'

A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency

By Andrew Kliman

ABOUT RECLAIMING MARX'S 'CAPITAL'

This book seeks to reclaim *Capital* from the myth of internal inconsistency, a myth that serves to justify the censorship of Marx's critique of political economy and present-day research based upon it. Andrew Kliman shows that the alleged inconsistencies are actually caused by misinterpretation. By modifying the standard interpretation of Marx's value theory in two simple ways, the recent "temporal single-system interpretation" eliminates all of the alleged inconsistencies. Written especially for the non-specialist reader, in a clear, accessible style and with the bare minimum of mathematics, *Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'* introduces

readers to Marx's value theory and contrasting interpretations of it, the history of the internal inconsistency controversy, and interpretive standards and methods. Kliman then surveys Marx's falling-rate-of-profit theory, the relationship of prices to values (the "transformation problem"), Marx's exploitation theory of profit, and other topics. The book ends with a discussion of why the myth of inconsistency persists, and a call to set the record straight. The book is written especially for the non-specialist reader, in a clear, accessible style and with the bare minimum of mathematics.

EXCERPTS

Marx's theories need not be interpreted in a way that renders them internally inconsistent. An alternative interpretation developed during the last quarter-century—the temporal single-system interpretation (TSSI)—eliminates all of the apparent inconsistencies. The very existence of the TSSI carries with it two important consequences. First, the allegations of inconsistency are unproved. Second, they are implausible. When one interpretation makes the text make sense, while others fail to do so because they create avoidable inconsistencies within the text, it is not plausible that the latter interpretations are correct. Thus the charges of inconsistency, founded on these interpretations, are implausible as well.

None of this implies that Marx's theoretical conclusions are necessarily correct. It does imply, however, that empirical investigation is needed in order to determine whether they are correct or not. There is no justification for disqualifying his theories a priori, on logical grounds.

In recent years, Marx's critics have found it increasingly difficult to defend the allegations of inconsistency against the TSSI critique. Thus they generally try to avoid this issue altogether. Instead, they now prefer to debate the pros and cons of Marx's work and of alternative approaches to Marxian economic analysis. In other contexts, these are of course important and interesting

topics, but to discuss them here and now is to fall into a diversionary trap, at the very moment when correction of the record has become a real possibility.

* * *

One main reason why the question of internal inconsistency is important is that the alleged proofs of inconsistency are ubiquitous and influential. As the following examples show, their influence extends far beyond the small circle of radical and Marxist economists, into the rest of economics, other disciplines, radical thought outside of academia, and public opinion generally.

In 1995, the leading journal of the history of economic thought published a symposium on Marx. Anthony Brewer's lead paper argued that, even "in Marx's own terms...*Capital* must be counted a magnificent failure." As his principal supporting evidence, Brewer rehearsed the allegations of logical error in Marx's value theory and law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit. "If both fail, as they do, not much is left." Marx's eco-

"This book seeks to reclaim *Capital* in a very specific sense; it seeks to show that the charges of inconsistency are unproved and implausible."

omic writings are of historical interest only. Papers that refuse to accept this conclusion and instead attempt to "resuscitate Marx's ideas...should not be published in journals devoted to the [history of economics]."

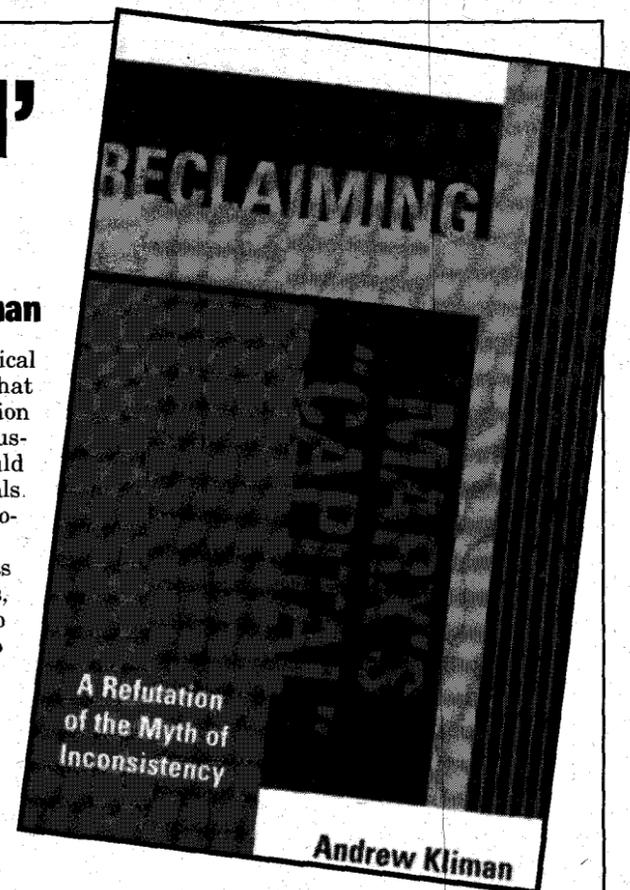
Nine eminent economists and historians of economics, some quite sympathetic to Marx, were invited to respond. They typically took issue with the last four words of Brewer's conclusion that "[i]f both fail, as they do, not much is left," yet all of them implicitly or explicitly endorsed the first part. It would seem that even if Marx is not exactly a dead dog, we have to accept the fact that two of his internal organs have permanently stopped functioning.

John Cassidy's widely discussed essay, "The Return of Karl Marx," was published in a 1997 issue of *The New Yorker*, a magazine that appeals to a general educated audience. The overline hailed Marx as "The Next Thinker," and the text of the essay was likewise chock-full of praise for Marx. "Many of the contradictions that he saw in Victorian capitalism...have begun reappearing in new guises...[H]e wrote riveting passages about...issues that economists are now confronting anew, sometimes without realizing that they are walking in Marx's footsteps."

Yet when he turned to Marx's value theory, Cassidy was uncharacteristically curt and dismissive: "His mathematical model of the economy, which depended on the idea that labor is the source of all value, was riven with internal inconsistencies and is rarely studied these days." The alleged proofs of internal inconsistency are so pervasive and little-challenged that he did not need to elaborate, except to suggest that Marx lacked the necessary mathematical tools. Since the particular tools that Cassidy—a journalist, not an economist—mentions are irrelevant to the issue he is discussing (the "transformation problem"), it is clear that "riven with internal inconsistencies" is not a judgment he arrived at on his own. In any case, it is hard for the reader to avoid concluding that, if even a great admirer of Marx has to acknowledge that his value theory is inconsistent, this surely must be so.

The following year, a major radical journal devoted an entire issue to a book-length essay on economic crisis by Robert Brenner, an eminent Marxist historian. Its fortuitous appearance in the midst of the Asian economic crisis has helped make it the most widely discussed Marxist work, by far, of the last two decades. So has the editor's introduction, which suggested that Brenner should be awarded the Nobel Prize and which concluded, "Marx's enterprise has certainly found its successor."

Yet in his 265-page essay on econom-



Contents

- Preface
- Introduction: The Question of Internal Inconsistency
- Marx's Value Theory and Contending Interpretations
- A Brief History of the Controversy, Making Marx Make Sense: On Interpretive Method
- Simultaneism, Physicalism, and the Law of Value
- Was Marx a Simultaneist?
- The Falling Rate of Profit Controversy
- The 'Transformation Problem' (1): Marx's Solution and its Critics
- The 'Transformation Problem' (2): If It Ain't Broke, Don't Correct It
- The 'Fundamental Marxian Theorem' An Empirical Defense of the Law of Value?
- Summary and Criticisms

ic crisis, Marx's successor devoted only one footnote to his law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit—and only in order to dispose of it and the theory of crisis based upon it. To dismiss the law summarily, he needed only to cite the Okishio theorem, which purportedly proves that the law is false: "Formal proofs of this result can be found in N. Okishio...as well as in J. Roemer." After rejecting some other theories (on the basis of somewhat more evidence and argumentation), the rest of the essay develops Brenner's own account of falling profitability and economic crisis. It is this account rather than Marx's that became the focal point of the ensuing discussion of Brenner's essay. Such is the power of the Okishio theorem.

In 2000, the leading U.S. journal of sociology carried a symposium in which the lead paper, written by a noted Harvard University professor, put forth a new theory of exploitation as the basis for class analysis. Given that "Marx's explanation of inequality and oppres-

continued on page 9

Acclaim for Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'

"Almost everyone, orthodox and Marxian economists alike, has accepted the view that Marx's value theory is internally inconsistent. This book sorts out a bewildering tangle of approaches and issues in order to demonstrate that the charge of internal inconsistency is false. *Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'* is a fresh attempt to get it right, in terms Marx himself would have recognized."

— Thomas Jeannot, Professor of Philosophy, Gonzaga University

* * *

"Kliman's arguments — and it is largely a book of arguments — operate like a buzz saw clearing away the underbrush of misplaced criticisms that have kept the real *Capital* hidden from most of its potential readers. The project is much needed, and brilliantly and clearly (and for this reader, convincingly) executed. Highly recommended for all those who need *Capital* (and who doesn't?)."

— Bertell Ollman, Professor of Politics, New York University

* * *

"Marxist economists tend to treat Marx as a distant basis upon which to build their own individual opinions. This al la carte approach stems from acceptance of the supposed errors and internal inconsistency in Marx's theory of value. In contrast, *Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'*, by decisively refuting the allegations of error and internal inconsistency, returns Marx's own work to centre stage. It is thus an important unifying work, rather than just another divisive personal opinion."

— Nick Potts, Reader in Economics, Southampton Solent University

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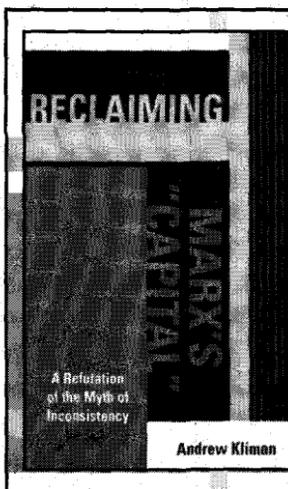
"Someone has finally rescued Marx from the Marxists. If you want access to the real ideas of the man who famously quipped 'Me, I am not a Marxist' and if you don't trust anyone or anything 'til you've checked for yourself,' this is the place to start."

— Alan Freeman, Department of Social Sciences, University of Greenwich

* * *

"This is the first comprehensive introduction to all aspects of the transformation 'problem.' It will become the standard reference work in the years to come. No serious work on value theory can afford to ignore it."

— Guglielmo Carchedi, author of *Frontiers of Political Economy*



RECLAIMING MARX'S 'CAPITAL'

A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency
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This book reclaims Marx's 'Capital' from the myth of inconsistency. An accessible account written for non-specialist readers, it shows that the inconsistencies are actually caused by misinterpretation. The recent "temporal single-system interpretation" eliminates all of the alleged inconsistencies.

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OPPOSING BUSH'S PERMANENT WAR

I admire the principled stance of Lt. Ehren K. Watada. In his court martial, held in February, he agreed to the stipulation of the fact that he did miss troop movement. His legal defense was that the order to go to Iraq was an illegal order and that as an officer he was obliged not to follow an illegal order. Lt. Watada risked his freedom, if found guilty, in order to have a hearing in a military court about the legality of the orders to go to Iraq. The judge claimed that Lt. Watada was "confused" about his stipulation and ordered a mistrial. A new court martial is set for June. To see more about his case, go to <http://www.thankyoult.org> and express your support for Lt. Watada.

**Anti-war activist
Oakland, Cal.**

★ ★ ★

Bush is losing this war on two fronts, one in Iraq and one here in the streets of America. I think the persistent marches for a just society in the U.S. and other nations may result in a tilt of power. The next step is to re-write the Constitution so that any president who lies and carries out war plans against the will of the majority will be recalled so that future presidents would not be allowed to unleash the barbarism Bush did just because by the Constitution he was allowed to do so. We deserve the right to recall corrupt leaders.

**Manel
Los Angeles**

★ ★ ★

Whereas your wider peace in Iraq movement appears to be just emerging, our peace movement in Britain emerged with a bang in 1953 and appears to have declined ever since. Largely no doubt because the SWP has so ardently tail-ended old hard-line Stalinists and new right-wing Islamists. But because the Stop the War Coalition they dominate has managed to maintain a grip on anyone who remains active on the issue, the more principled Left isn't managing to grow. It's not all bad; there is a lot of internet interest and every year a little over a thousand people visit the London Anarchist Bookfair. And there are others like it around the country.

**Laurens Otter
England**

★ ★ ★

Yanar Mohammed asks (February/March N&L, p. 2) "if the U.S. troops were not there, why would these terrorists, fundamentalists be heading to Iraq and why would they stay?" Answer: for the same reasons they remained in Afghanistan after Russian forces left. To impose theocracy on the country and use it as a base for operations elsewhere. Also if Sunni and Shi'a fundamentalists fight each other to decide who will fill the power vacuum, militants from other countries will enter the fray on both sides. It is difficult to foresee whether an immediate American and British withdrawal would make the situation better or worse for the workers movement and secular and democratic Iraqis. I wish I could be more optimistic.

**Richard Bunting
Oxford**

★ ★ ★

We are faced today with the most arrogant and most criminal president

ever to occupy the White House. George W. Bush's policies are unprecedented among all the administrations before him. He poses both an immediate and a long term threat to the safety and welfare of the people of this country and the world. Unfortunately, some seem to feel that getting rid of him is a peripheral issue and that he will be out of office soon anyway. What they seem to forget is that the dynamics his policies have set in motion will live long after his term in office. How long can the spirit endure before it either asserts itself or perishes in the face of its impotence?

**Angry and worried
Springfield, IL**

RESTIVE CURRENTS IN IRAN

The front page article in the February/March 2007 N&L by an Iranian feminist on "Restive Currents below Iran's theocratic rule" points to the Iranian freedom movement as a beacon for the Middle East and the world. You don't get that anywhere else. It was important that she ended with ways we can express our solidarity and communicate with the student activists, the feminists and the Bus Drivers Union.

**Mitch Weerth
California**

★ ★ ★

The Lead about the dissident movements in Iran contains a wealth of information on recent protests by students, women and workers. Even more important is the discussion of the ideas being debated by Iran's secular movements and Islamic reformers. Apparently, the generation that grew up under theocratic repression following the 1979 revolution's transformation into un-freedom is not turned off from revolutionary theory. What makes the article uniquely Marxist-Humanist is its attention to the power or ideas to determine what happens after the revolution.

**Supporter of Iranian feminists
New York**

★ ★ ★

The Iranian feminist writer did something that is very hard to accomplish. She showed the unfolding of concrete events in an explicit theoretical framework. An Iranian friend told me he really liked the article but wanted more in it about other non-Islamic opposition in Iran. But the theoretical framework presented resonates with situations in many places. Why were fundamentalists able to take over the revolution when most of those in the movement were Marxists? Are we sure that won't happen again?

**Feminist lecturer
San Francisco**

★ ★ ★

When we took N&L to the anti-war marches several were surprised we were talking about Iran when Iraq was what was on everyone's mind. They said we want to deal with the situation now, not examine the history. This kind of amnesia is to avoid any discussions based on the ideas.

**Revolutionary
Oakland**

REMEMBERING TILLIE OLSEN

There were a number of memorials for Tillie Olsen (1912-2007) in the Bay Area. I attended the one organized by her family on Feb. 17. Several hundred family and friends as well as admirers of her work, especially teachers, librarians, and writers she inspired, came to celebrate her life and accomplishments. Many aspects of her life were brought forth: that as a daughter of an immigrant Jewish family she felt voices of people of her class/sex/background were not there in the books she lived to read; how much she loved music—several of her favorite songs from the Spanish Civil War were



performed; how much she loved being a mother and the energy she put into making a community around every place she lived; and how, when she wrote, it was of her experiences from her heart. Far from appealing only to people in circumstances similar to hers, her writing carried a universal message of immigrants coming to a new land, as well as to all ordinary hard-working people. Those speaking at the Memorial brought out Tillie Olsen's multi-dimensional legacy, the impact teaching her writings had on students, her inspiring many ordinary people to tell their story. It was clear from the outpouring that her spirit will live on in those whose lives she touched.

**Urszula Wislanka
Oakland**

READERS' VIEWS



ISSUES OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach asserted in March that the rumored 30% cut in the Office of Women's Health annual budget would not have a negative impact on the office. "It's not to be viewed as a reduction of our commitment to women's health," he insisted. Is he kidding?

**Women's liberationist
Illinois**

★ ★ ★

MADRE, which bills itself as "demanding human rights for women and families around the world," hides some disgusting politics behind their rhetoric. In a press release and interview about their report, "Gender-based Violence and the U.S. War on Iraq," Yifat Susskind, communications director of MADRE, described how the report "documents the use of gender-based violence by Iraqi Islamists, brought to power by the U.S. overthrow of Iraq's secular Ba'ath regime." The only reason to mischaracterize the Ba'ath regime as "secular" is to paint the U.S. as the only enemy and say that if only the U.S. hadn't overthrown the secular Ba'ath regime, things would be great for women. But in the interview, Iraqi feminist and member of the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq, Houzan Mahmoud, said, "I don't agree with this term, a 'secular Ba'athist,' because Saddam relied on religion in his latest years...he was trying to use Islam and become a Muslim leader among Arab countries." Yes, the U.S. is a powerful and dangerous enemy of freedom, but we don't do women any favors when we paint a monster like Hussein as "good" because he's an enemy of the U.S.!

**Feminist
Tennessee**

★ ★ ★

It turns out that Jean-Francois Plante was too far right even for the right-wing Canadian party, Action democratique du Quebec (ADQ). Revealing a stunning insensitivity wedded to inhumanity, Plante, who was running in the Montreal and Quebec City area, put on his website that he refused to wear a white ribbon in commemoration of the 14 women gunned down in 1989 at Ecole polytechnique. He was talking of when Marc Lepine took a gun and knife to the university, separated the women from the men, called them a "bunch of f--- feminists" and opened fire. Plante opined in his internet podcast, "We keep hearing this song every year about violence against women. What about violence against men?" Originally the leader of the ADQ defended Plante but eventually the outcry was so great that Plante had to go.

**Terry Moon
Memphis**

★ ★ ★

N&L celebrated IWD in Chicago by showing "Bread and Roses," Ken Loach's 2000 film about the rebellion of Los Angeles women janitors, seeing it a precursor to today's immigration struggles. The opening scene is of illegal immigrants crossing the border between Mexico and the U.S. in a truck racing to the designation where they are to get off, exchange money, and reunite with their families. Anti-union activities, racism, threats of deportation, working to get a college education, desperate measures to get money, all are touched upon. One of the most powerful scenes to me was when one of the cleaning ladies, who happens to be Russian, when confronted with the selling out of those who want a union, expresses her concern that it would not be worth it. It highlights how one gets stereotyped. Of course there were the must-have love

scenes and cultural conflicts, but its realism made it a very good film and appropriate for celebrating IWD.

**Sue
Chicago**

SEGO MINE DISASTER

The United Mine Workers' union's investigation of the Sego mine disaster that killed 12 miners last year gives a far different conclusion than the company. The company claims that a lightning strike that somehow traveled underground set off the methane explosion that resulted in the deaths, obviously to claim in the expected court action that it was an act of God. The UMW report implicates a faulty block stopping seal and a possible roof fall that created a spark to set off the methane gas accumulated due to the deficient seal.

**Ex-miner
Detroit**

HELP FOR NEW ORLEANS

I made it to New Orleans in December for 12 days to help stop the war on the poor. They sure need help. In the lower and upper ninth ward most homes are still empty. Some 77,000 homeowners applied for and are eligible for federal funds to rebuild but FEMA has been stonewalling. Only 632 families have received funds as of Feb. 15. Over 250,000 former New Orleans residents are still displaced persons. They are in Houston, Atlanta and elsewhere, unable to return because: 1) no funds to rebuild; 2) impossible to find affordable housing—rents have doubled in poor neighborhoods; 3) few buses are running in poor neighborhoods; 4) housing projects are closed and slated for bulldozing; 5) 30% of jobs are gone; 6) the only free hospital is being demolished.

I hooked up with Commonground Collective, founded by Malik Rahim a few days after Katrina. While I was there, they asked for volunteers to gut houses. By day I gutted houses and by night I roamed the city taking photos. The collective provided us with three hot meals each day. We worked in teams of seven or eight women and men. After gutting the houses another crew treated them with a natural bacterial emulsion to wipe out at least 85% of the mold.

New Orleans is waiting for your help. No more house gutting, but lots of other work is waiting for you. To check out groups who need your help, contact us at Welfare Warriors, 2711 W. Michigan St., Milwaukee, WI 53208 or e-mail us at wmvoice@execpc.com.

**Pat Gowens, Director
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

COOPERATIVE LABOR: A CONTINUING DEBATE

Two critiques of my response to Htun Lin, published in your last issue, seriously misrepresent what I wrote. Ron Kelch claims that I "question[ed] the way Htun draws a relationship between workers striving to take control of their cooperation...and the reach for a non-value producing future." What I actually questioned were his claims that Marx held that "workers guide and direct themselves" in capitalist production (the very opposite of Marx's actual view); and that "[e]very worker knows firsthand" that they guide and direct themselves. "David, California" claims that I critiqued the column for not being explicit about the need for revolution. Actually, I critiqued the concept of revolution it put forward for failing to include "breaking with the enslaving laws of capitalist production."

**Andrew Kliman
New York**

THEORY, REVOLUTION AND THE YOUNG MARX

Eli Messinger's essay on Michael Löwy's "The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx" (February-March *N&L*) intriguingly highlights the dialectical interplay between working class activity and thought, and Marx's development of his concept of revolution. Yet he surpasses Löwy by singling out Marx's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic of negativity as integral to that development. As a result, Marx's concept of revolution goes beyond communism as goal, and thus lays ground for our day, when we are trying to make revolution real again, without letting it be equated to the "Communism" that spelled out exploitative state-capitalism in life. This deepens the meaning of the social revolution that Löwy insists is far more than political change.



Subscriber Tennessee

idea is an attribute of the subject (instead of the other way around). The way forward is through engaging political alienation in the "real" subject, which at this point for Marx is the family and civil society, out of which the state arose.

What shapes Marx's whole critique is Hegel's posing of the state as a Kantian "ought" which ignores the necessary development through ideas which are an attribute of the "real" subject. Marx is holding Hegel to account for his dialectic which is about capturing the immanent and necessary development of the idea in contrast to Kant's stopping dead with a halfway dialectic.

Ron Kelch California

A NOTE FROM NICARAGUA

I hope this year will be better than last year was, after former Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega takes office as president. I'm hoping he will lower the interest rates on bank loans. Right now I'm working; I don't make much money, but it gives me a chance to apply for credit. Now we're getting a new government with Daniel and they say he will regulate various things. It will be a government of austerity that doesn't spend too much. I was very active in his campaign because I wanted to see a change. Many people supported him; his main support came from the youth. My children voted for him. People have hope that they will have more opportunities now. He is a person who wants to accomplish what he promised in the campaign.

Working woman Nicaragua

WORKSHOP TALKS

I especially appreciated Htun Lin's reference, in his "Workshop Talks" column last issue, to Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables" in commenting on the demonizing of undocumented workers. It brought his point home clearly and with grace. Political writing works better when it is not bombastic.

From a psychological as well as a

political point of view, I agree with his statement that for the worker a central concern "is how not to be forgotten as a human being." Indeed, the kinds of work we hope to see in the new society will further human growth in all its dimensions. His last paragraph posed two distinct paths for political development. The first referred to the struggle against the "rule of capital" to extract the most unpaid labor but did not explain that framework. The second referred to the extension of human solidarity which I find nebulous. I look forward to his future columns in which these paths can be further developed, including their relation to one another.

Psychiatrist New York

The ongoing discussion in *N&L* on health care is important to read. At this time here in Britain the National Health Service has invested \$40 billion on a system that will not work. It spends \$14 billion on management consultants, 10% of its total NHS expenditure on private care, undisclosed wages for top brass and hospital consultants. At the same time young children are having limb amputations due to poor diabetic control. This seems to illustrate the importance of *N&L* in reaching for the truth and the facts.

Nurse England

MAKING HISTORY LIVE

I've taken a lot of history courses but what Raya Dunayevskaya does for history in her essay on the "Black dimension and women's liberation" is to make history live and to show us how to look at what is happening today.

The "language of freedom" she talks about is what we must try to hear today in all the struggles around International Women's Day, in all the struggles against male chauvinism. What you hear in those struggles is not always the language of freedom. You have to look hard for that double negation she mentions, especially the second negation, "the creation of the new." She gives a hint of that when she talks of Doris Wright wanting to know what comes after revolution and poses it as some-

thing we have "to answer before, in the practice of our own organizations, our own thought and our own activity." The Left—and indeed the world—would be a whole different, more liberated place if these words of hers were taken seriously and worked out.

Anti-war activist and feminist Memphis



VOICES OF REASON FROM WITHIN THE WALLS

I'm a Buddhist prisoner who was transferred to another prison for writing grievances in an attempt to obtain religious rights and to try to shut me up. It won't work because I just picked up the struggle here. Please wish me luck. Texas is hard to bear, especially for a passive Buddhist.

Buddhist Prisoner Texas

Your paper is explosive. I was a drug addict and ran my family and friends away when I was free. My solace and company comes now from the prison library where I met Marx, Trotsky, Lenin, Mao and many others. I want to keep learning as much as I can about the world which is why I want to thank the donor who provided a subscription for me to keep me reading and learning.

Prisoner Cameron, Missouri

I have a question I hope you can answer. Are there any groups or individuals who are actually making solid plans for an alternative system by which I mean an alternative to capitalism? There seem to be many yelling about how terrible it is, and how something else must be created, but I have yet to read of any plans or attempts to actually do so. I really appreciate your paper. I hope you continue to spread alternative views.

Prisoner Florida

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Ogoni people fight oil company and Nigerian government

CAPETOWN, SOUTH AFRICA—Until Ken Saro-Wiwa started the struggle to put the protection of minorities into practice in Nigeria, over 90% of Nigerians did not have any knowledge of Ogoniland—despite the fact that it contributes 30,000 barrels of crude oil to the country daily. Shell Petroleum, the foreign multinational that has operated in Ogoniland for 33 years, admits that Ogoniland has produced 680 million barrels of crude oil from over 100 oil wells drilled on the farms of local people.

The perennial plight of the Ogoni people is caused by four factors within Nigeria's militarized politics: 1) The perfidious operation of constitutional provisions to oppress the minorities, which have their own ontology different from the way that the British colonial authority grafted and consigned the Ogoni people into the hands of the bigger groups; 2) An aristocratic economic spider web that is connected to the global imperial network; 3) Total disregard for local and indigenous communities by multinational companies; 4) Shell Oil, which possessed the land through the backdoor and now does not want to leave it.

OPPRESSION PERSISTS

As we remember Ken Saro-Wiwa and the eight others who were killed on Nov. 10, 1995, we must also not forget that Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo played, and is still playing, a very sensitive role in the oppression of the oil producing area.

First, he is responsible for the enactment of the notorious Land Use Decree and Petroleum Act. Twenty years on, his cohorts among the military and politicians brought him back as a civilian president. After eight years of misruling the country, the 1978 decrees were neither repealed nor the living condition of the people improved.

Second, Obasanjo's two terms have done nothing but concentrate on erasing the footprints of Saro-Wiwa, so that the political, economic and ecological fate of indigenous ethnic communities can remain opaque even within a democracy.

Obasanjo facilitated the 1978 decrees that amputated the Niger Delta communities. He then came back to power to wreck havoc upon the Odi community, killing thousands of innocent people. However, he does not face a war crimes tribunal. Moreover, his prompt action of sending military troops into the creeks of the region at the slightest provocation is a visible sign of which side of the divide he falls on.

When I read that another set of oil workers has been taken hostage in the Delta, I become anxious because those behind the actions fail to remember that the Nigerian ruler was trained in the military when a career in it meant exerting brutal power. The militants of the Niger Delta do not take cognizance of the fact that for Obasanjo one is considered a good soldier by the number of souls he can exterminate.

Those who are taking oil workers hostage may have

their reasons, but the timing seems to be late because there would have been victory in the Delta long ago if these actions were taken by the other communities with the aim of stopping all the oil companies in their domain, as the Ogonis have done since 1993. When Ken Saro-Wiwa was going from one village to the other at night talking to his people and teaching them the power of mass mobilization, he was laughed at. He was



Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ogoni activist executed by the Nigerian government in 1995.

accused of wanting to be a "bush emperor" because he could not find his place in cosmopolitan affairs.

But as I sit behind the computer and behold the face of Reverend Father Mathew Kukah, the "federal government facilitator" of peace in Ogoniland, I smile with fulfillment because the words of Ken

Saro-Wiwa are manifesting themselves.

Nigeria and Shell are the ones on trial now. Ken has finished his turn of running from one end of the world to the other to explain the plights of the Ogonis. Even though his body is dead, he still rests in peace while Shell, the Nigerian government and their special facilitator are doing the talking and running. It reminds me of an Ogoni proverb that says every great race starts from a mere walk. I see Kukah doing a "great job" by running round the world, but his efforts will end in vain.

A CHANGED PEOPLE

I am not a prophet of doom, but I bet that Kukah's committee will not succeed. It ignores the fact that the struggle pulled down the regal political and gerontocratic hierarchy in the area. The Ogoni people have moved on from the era when leadership was equal to lordship. They are comfortable with the type of mass and collective decision making style that Saro-Wiwa offered the Ogoni people.

The ordinary man in the villages of Ogoniland have broken down elitism, making the "masses' parliament" the supreme authority.

Kukah has not done his homework to find out how decisions are taken in Ogoniland since the new era commenced by Ken's revolution. He does not recall that the Ogoni people, because of their level of political education, are able to decipher treacherous roles by some of those working with him. He does not know that the Ogoni have neither forgiven nor trusted these men and women that assisted the government of Abacha that fabricated evidence to crucify Ken and his colleagues.

Kukah should ask his Ogoni colleagues to tell him how the Ogoni Bill of Rights was drafted and accepted. Asking the Ogoni people to enter into a peace and reconciliation with Shell or the government without the Ogoni Bill of Rights is like asking an Ogoni man to go to farm without a tool.

It is also not logical to the Ogonis that while Shell has never accepted responsibility for the degradation of the Ogoni environment, Kukah's committee goes ahead and facilitates the cleaning up of the environment through the United Nation Environment Program. If the government of Obasanjo wants to clean up the environment because of the operation of the oil firms in the Niger Delta, why doesn't the clean up start from Oloibiri, where Nigeria's first barrels of oil were drilled? The government should come up with a comprehensive program for the whole Niger Delta, starting with an environmental impact audit so that the extent of damage can be ascertained.

Until the Ogoni people have found another Ken Saro-Wiwa, they will not forget him, and the Ogoni do not need Kukah to come and organize them. They organized themselves without Kukah who was in Lagos or Kaduna. The Ogonis are searching for a leader that would continue with the revolutionary legacy of Ken before they would take the next step in their struggle.

Conclusively, if anybody is under the impression that the Ogonis are confused or they need organization, such a person is insulting the whole land by trying to remind us of when our neighbors believed that a proverbial imbecility runs in our blood. We have moved from that humiliating phase in history and we are looking forward to actualizing the Wiwaism that Ken Saro-Wiwa injected into our blood. Abacha took Ken away at a crucial time in our history, while his successor, Abdulasem Abubakar, sedated those who would have replaced Ken. We shall not allow Obasanjo to take away the Wiwaism in our blood by letting any manipulative moves of Shell to succeed.

A luta Continua to the Great Ogoni People against imperialism.

—Barry Wuganaale, organizer, Ogoni Solidarity Forum

Organizers work with Black community youth

LOS ANGELES—A group of Black activists, some of them elderly ex-gang members with time served in prison, are organized as the Cease Fire Committee in the South Central Los Angeles, Inglewood, Watts and Compton areas. Their goals are to halt gang violence and mass imprisonment of today's Black youths by instilling in them hope for their future and an attitude of self-respect.

Founded in 2005, this coalition of the organizations Community Call to Action, Unity 1, Unity 2, Cry No More and Concerned Citizens of Los Angeles, has "it takes a neighborhood to raise a child" as its theme. One member said, "Too many of our youths are dying." Cease Fire includes women, one of whom told a young youth, a gang member: "My son was 16 when he was killed. He lived as if he had no hope for his future. He didn't expect to live a long life." A youth stated, "I'm looking for a way out of the hole I'm in."

The activists have a multifaceted approach to meeting their goals. Some intervene directly with the dysfunctional youths (a Black activist prefers "dysfunctional" to the word "gang—the police now call gang members "domestic terrorists"). An example of intervention is speaking directly to the dysfunctional youths to create a safe passage for students to school by discouraging "hits" on students (a hit refers to asking what territory they live in).

Others are active in seeking job opportunities and training for the youths or advising on how to fill out a job application or how to conduct themselves in an interview. Others speak of organizing homies to get their G.E.D., offering tutoring and promoting literacy and education. Still others give legal information and advice. They organize speaking engagements at various churches to speak directly to some youths and also dialogue with teachers, parents and community members. They discourage drug sales and use, as they have become paths to incarceration.

These approaches go against the mass corporate media of TV, movies and radio which encourages an extensive middle-class life of unlimited consumption, as if these jobless youths had unlimited resources. The media also portrays the Black and Latino "gangs" as engaging in a race war.

The Cease Fire Committee rejects the programs of the federal Department of Homeland Security and local police departments' surveillance, "gang injunctions" and suppression-only tactics, as fundamentally targeting dysfunctional Black and Latino youths into long-

term imprisonment, by putting as many of these youths into the computer database as gang members. Under state law, a crime under "gang enhancement" adds 10 years. A federal proposal would increase gang enhancement to add 30 years.

Politicians, such as Gov. Schwarzenegger, funded by prison guard unions, support building more prisons on the pretext of relieving present overcrowded conditions. As one youth stated, "They spend billions to put us away but have no money to educate us." —Basho

Queer Notes

by Elise

Handing out red carnations wrapped in flyers that appealed for the legalization of same-sex marriage, half a dozen gay and lesbian activists held a demonstration in Beijing on Valentine's Day. Fortunately, this demonstration proceeded without incident. Police broke up a GLBT culture festival in 2005 citing that permission had not been sought for the event.

Organizers of a Moscow pride parade are going ahead with plans to hold the parade, despite Mayor Luzhkov illegally banning it again. Last year witnessed police detaining pride parade participants while neo-fascists attacked and militant Christians abused the same marchers. The mayor's recent remark that pride events are "satanic" is the source of protests and a suit against him by the march organizers.



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BLACK/RED VIEW

Continued from page 1

the end of which 30,000 rallied when Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the conclusion of the march in Montgomery. The march did ultimately lead to the passage of the Voting Rights Act in August of 1965, which suspended the use of literacy tests and other voter qualification tests that were used to prevent African Americans from registering to vote.

Today's candidates are relating to African Americans through their window on this history, simply as voters, contending for their share of that bloc of votes. But the right to vote in 1965 was only a particular aspect of the African-American struggle for self-determination. The demand of the Civil Rights Movement was "Freedom NOW!" As events were unfolding Raya Dunayevskaya wrote that freedom cannot be confined to "legalisms" and addressed how to make it more concrete:

"What is needed now is a unity of theory and practice in which the masses are not only participants in action, but in thought. Instead of never-ending dialogue with the administration, it is time that the leadership of the civil rights movement started one with its own ranks. The dialogue must no longer be put off on the grounds that 'we are an activity organization.' Thinking, too, is an activity. An awareness of the significance of an action is itself a step toward total freedom. It is imperative that what has been implicit in the freedom struggles all along, now become explicit. Dialogue with the ranks involved in direct actions can make it so. Nothing else will fully arm them in their struggle against the forces of reaction. Nothing else will transform the goal of freedom into a reality."

Today's politicians' attempts to truncate the historic march to just a question of voting reflects the limits of their concept of freedom, which is only political emancipation. Political emancipation of the "abstract citizen" is the most a capitalist society can offer. It has to be carried through to full human emancipation where everyone realizes their social power and freedom in their everyday lives. We can't let the politicians steal our history for their narrow purposes and divert us from the quest for full freedom.

EDITORIAL

Global warming or revolutionary change?

Over 1,000 rallies and gatherings will take place April 14 and 15 in almost every state of the U.S., demanding serious action on climate change. Under the aegis of Step It Up 2007, from the levees of New Orleans to melting glaciers in the West, from the coral reefs of Key West to city streets, people will be demanding an 80% reduction of carbon emissions by 2050.

Scientific reports now routinely project that, if left unchecked, global warming will likely lead to the spread of malaria and other diseases, increased drought, famine, and coastal flooding. The conservative UN consensus estimates 130 million environmental refugees within a few decades. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has brought home what scientists have pointed out for years: poorer countries and poor people in all countries will be hurt the most.

COMMON WISDOM

Climate change's metamorphosis from esoteric climatology topic to Academy-Award-winning movie theme is enough to take one's breath away. What was, just a few years ago, painted as dubious by the Bush administration and by employees of think tanks funded by oil companies, is today common wisdom from elementary schools to evangelical churches.

This year the most conservative U.S. scientific organization, The American Association for the Advancement of Science, acknowledged that human-caused climate change is "a growing threat to society." This swift and broad shift in consciousness includes near universal recognition that the crisis must be addressed. Even Fortune 500 companies and Republican Senators have joined calls for mandatory caps on greenhouse gas

emissions.

But this is more than an environmental public relations coup. Both corporate leaders and activists recognize that the mounting crisis of global warming has created an opening for major change. The looming battle is over the nature of the change that will occur—new life for capitalism or a fundamental social transformation? Will the anti-Black, anti-poor, anti-worker rebuilding of post-Katrina New Orleans become the model?



Will the rulers forge a temporary adaptation to climate change by sacrificing the living conditions of three billion laboring and oppressed people, shifting the burden to people of color, women, and the poor? Or will masses in motion

forge a revolutionary solution that cuts off capitalism's inhuman dynamic and opens new, sustainable paths to development?

Some activists, academics and policy wonks are advocating, in their own words, "fundamental change." This reflects, at one and the same time, a reach beyond the destructiveness of capitalism's unsustainable motion, and the pull of the ideology that there is no

alternative to capitalism.

LAW OF ACCUMULATION

While appreciating Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* for the impetus it has given to the movement against global warming, more radical environmentalists have criticized it as calling for changes within the existing system. Carbon taxes, "cap and trade" systems, investment in renewable energy—as important as these are, all involve the market as part of the solution. Yet many radicals' counterproposals founder on the question of what is the needed fundamental change.

Calling for new moral values or for austerity by consumers does not touch capital's limitless drive to grow. Even those who point to roots of the crisis in the "current economic system" usually dream of returning to an earlier, pre-corporate stage of commodity production, as if we could keep capitalism and wish away the laws of its development. As long as the structure of capitalism stands, the law of accumulation of capital cannot be suspended.

Yet sustainable development is increasingly discussed, not only among activists but among scientists studying how to deal with global warming. Lurking in the background is the question, What kind of development is human development? If followed out fully, it points to the need to transform this racist, sexist, capitalist society into a new human society. Don't let the rulers divert the revolutionary aspirations unleashed by this crisis. What is needed is to support the April 14-15 actions, and critically push the climate action movement forward in both actions and ideas.

New From Lexington Books: Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital'

sion is a very attractive one," Alase B. Sørensen felt the need to disqualify it before setting out his alternative. He did so by appealing to authority, especially to the fact that even the Marxist economists have abandoned Marx's value theory: "For most of this century, there has been agreement that the original concept of exploitation proposed by Marx is untenable. It is based on a labor theory of value abandoned long ago, even by Marxist economists." It is true that Sørensen then tried to defend the notion that the "transformation problem" is genuinely a problem, but his argument evinces a near-total lack of understanding of the issue, even on a charitable reading. It thus seems clear that he declared Marx's theory untenable without having first seriously studied the value theory controversy. But if Sørensen was not qualified to reject Marx's theory, he also had no basis for recommending his own theory of exploitation to replace it.

★ ★ ★

Dozens of accounts have told us that rigorous mathematical demonstrations—often coming from the

Marxist camp itself—have proved that Marx's theories of value, profit, and economic crisis are riddled with logical inconsistencies and errors, and that these proofs have withstood the test of time. It is therefore necessary either to reject or correct his work. Those who refuse to accept that such inconsistency has been proved have [as M.C. Howard and J.E. King put it] "done much damage to the intellectual credentials of Marxian political economy"...[T]he internal inconsistency allegations are implausible as well as unproved, because there exists an interpretation of Marx's value theory that removes the apparent inconsistencies.

On the standard interpretation, Marx had a simultaneous and dual-system theory:

- inputs and outputs are valued simultaneously, so input and output prices are necessarily equal, and
- there are two separate systems of values and prices.

According to the temporal single-system interpretation (TSSI) of Marx's theory, however:

- valuation is temporal, so input and output prices can differ, and
- values and prices, though quite distinct, are determined interdependently.

Once these two simple modifications are made, all of the alleged inconsistencies in the quantitative dimension of Marx's value theory are eliminated.

These results have been established during a quarter-century of TSSI research.

★ ★ ★

The main reason why I consider the question of internal inconsistency so important—important enough to devote a whole book to it—is precisely that Marx's value theory would be necessarily wrong if it were internally inconsistent. Internally inconsistent theories may be appealing, intuitively plausible and even obvious, and consistent with all available empirical evidence—but they cannot be right. It is necessary to reject them or correct them. Thus the alleged proofs of inconsistency trump all other considerations, disqualifying Marx's theory at the starting gate. By doing so, they provide the principal justification for the suppression of this theory as well as the suppression of, and the denial of resources needed to carry out, present-day research based upon it. This greatly inhibits its further development. So does the very charge of inconsistency. What person of intellectual integrity would want to join a research program founded on (what she believes to be) a theory that is internally inconsistent and therefore false? The reclamation of *Capital* from the myth of inconsistency is therefore an absolutely necessary and vital precondition to any efforts to reclaim it in more ambitious ways.

Another reason why I consider the question of internal inconsistency so important is that the whole of the century-long controversy over Marx's value theory has fundamentally been about this one question. Only incidentally and derivatively has it been a debate about the meaning and significance of his work. His critics' primary, conscious, and avowed aims have been to discredit the logic of his arguments—thereby disqualifying his theory, in its original form, from further consideration—and then to correct his supposed logical errors. The different schools that have arisen in and around Marxian economics since the 1970s (Sraffianism, the New Interpretation, value-form analysis, and so on) are in essence just different ways of correcting or circumventing these supposed errors and working out the consequences.

These facts are often insufficiently appreciated. It is sometimes suggested, for instance, that there are many things wrong with the way in which Marx's critics have understood and modeled his value theory. The specific problems that the TSSI focuses upon—simultaneous valuation and the severing of values and prices into two systems—are not even the most important problems. However, the question is "Important for what purpose?" The critics' models are attempts to disqualify Marx's value theory on logical grounds and to correct its errors. Their purpose is not to provide a descriptively rich, comprehensive account of the original theory. Accordingly, the purpose of the TSSI is different as well. It seeks to overturn the findings of inconsistency, and the narrow issues upon which it focuses are important for this purpose. Indeed, they are the only important issues; the jettisoning of simultaneism and the dual-system interpretation is both necessary and sufficient to acquit Marx of the internal inconsistency charges.

A similar failure to appreciate the centrality and import of the question of internal inconsistency arises in connection with the so-called "transformation problem," the alleged inconsistency in Marx's account of the relationship between values and prices of production. Many Marxists (and some non-Marxists) have tried to dismiss the issue by arguing that Marx's critics have missed the point he wanted to make; he was not really interested in explaining prices. But it is this dismissal that misses the point. The critics are not concerned with what Marx wanted to say. They are trying to prevent what he did say from continuing to be said, on the ground that it is logically invalid. And if it is indeed invalid, a better understanding of what Marx was really getting at does not make it any more valid. Questions of meaning and intent are relevant only insofar as they directly alter our understanding of the actual logic of the arguments.

Those who would downplay the question of internal inconsistency also seem not to appreciate that there is little point in discussing many of the topics they prefer to discuss unless Marx can be acquitted of the errors with which he is charged. Since an internally inconsistent theory simply cannot be right, it is worth studying and discussing, if at all, only as a historical artifact and source of inspiration for a better theory. It is certainly a waste of time to devote scarce research time to employing it in empirical analysis.

Would-be defenders of Marx who try to minimize the importance of the question of internal inconsistency often seem unaware that they are repeating a key theme of his critics. The latter frequently claim that his inconsistencies and errors are ultimately insignificant, because they have corrected these inconsistencies and errors in a manner that substantiates *Capital's* essential theoretical conclusions. One of the present book's principal aims is to show that this claim is false. Contrary to what Marx's critics often claim, for instance, their "corrections" of his theory contradict his conclusions that technological progress can cause the rate of profit to fall and that the exploitation of workers is the exclusive source of profit.

In sum, there is really no way of getting around the logical issues; they need to be confronted head-on. And given that the alleged proofs of inconsistency serve a suppressive function, evasion of the logical issues is certainly not in the interests of those who seek to develop Marx's work.

New York Readers!

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Anti-capitalist struggles in 'new' South Africa

Continued from page 1

South Africa had the richest mass movement on earth in the 1970s and 1980s. In the mid-1980s it was on the verge of mass insurrection. Yet unlike the opposition movements of the time in East Europe and the West, its struggles did not move away from Marxism. The movement's depth, along with the impact of an economic crisis spurred by the collapse of commodity prices and the isolation of the regime, convinced South Africa's rulers by 1990 that it had no choice but to strike a bargain with part of the opposition.

The negotiations of 1991-94 that brought the "tripartite alliance" of the ANC, COSATU, and SACP to power led to an agreement that the white rulers will transfer political power into the hands of the Black majority while keeping its economic power and privileges intact. It led to one of the most rapid demobilizations of a mass movement in history, as former activists went over to the politics of accommodation. The period 1994-99 was summed up in a phrase often heard today—"La Lutta Discontinua" ("The struggle stops").

The end of apartheid marked a victory in ending formal racial discrimination, creating a parliamentary democracy with one of the most progressive constitutions on earth, and allowing some Blacks to enter the political and even economic mainstream. These gains explain why the ANC still enjoys overwhelming electoral support from the Black populace. However that does not change the fact that Mandela and then Mbeki committed South Africa to the "Washington Consensus" of neo-liberal economic restructuring, IMF-imposed structural adjustment programs, and all the economic and social disasters that come with it.

CRIPPLED BY CAPITALISM

Unemployment in South Africa now stands at 42%. Much of the populace has never had a job. The gap between rich and poor has never been greater. There are 1.7 million more in poverty today than in 1994, and South Africa now has the most unequal income differentiation of any country on earth. The white minority is making out like bandits while a small but increasingly dominant Black bourgeoisie rakes in billions under the slogan (as Zuma put it), "I didn't spend all those years fighting apartheid in order to remain poor."

South Africa's economy grew 4% last year, but employment growth was 1%—barely enough to provide jobs for new entrants to the work force, let alone put a dent in those already unemployed. In 2006, 140,000 jobs were terminated in the transport, mining, and electricity industries.

Since 1996 the economy has been led by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program. It mandates export-led growth, low wage increases, and limited government spending on health, education, and sanitation. GEAR was written by a team of economists, only one of whom was a Black South African, and was adopted with no input from the populace. It marked the shift of the ANC from a post-liberation movement to an enforcer of "free market" restructuring. As a result, annual wage increases have decreased steadily since 1996, while labor productivity has gone up from 3.2% to 6.3% ("Shifting Currents in South Africa," Centre for Civil Society, Durban, 2006).

The notion that there is no alternative to embracing the logic of capital has thwarted even the basic goals of the anti-apartheid struggle. Trevor Ngwane writes, "The new South Africa has failed to overcome the geography of apartheid...The Black working class is to be found in the old apartheid ghettos while whites live in their suburbs. Some Black middle class people have moved into the suburbs leaving their working class folk behind. New ghettos have emerged in the form of informal settlements...The post-apartheid racial and class reconfiguration of space seems to have made matters worse not better" (*The Accumulation of Capital in South Africa*, edited by Patrick Bond, p. 184).

Meanwhile, South Africa's neo-liberal regime—which is expanding its economic, political and military power in parts of Africa to the point that a major debate in South Africa is whether to label it an "imperialist" or "sub-imperialist" power—is given a left cover by the SACP, which controls 73 of the ANC's 279 seats in parliament. The government finds itself in the odd position of considering itself Bush's best friend in Africa at the same time as claiming adherence to "a left progressive tradition" rooted in workers' struggles.

NEW STRUGGLES IN TOWNSHIPS

Although the "great reconciliation" of 1994 led to an enormous demobilization of mass activity, this did not spell the end of mass struggles. New social movements began to arise in 1999. They are largely rooted in town-

ship struggles that oppose the commodification of water, electricity and land, and mobilize against housing evictions, the lack of social services, and environmental devastation.

These include the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, which arose out of struggles against electricity cut-offs and protests against prepaid water meters and evictions. The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign was formed by residents of communities opposing forced evictions for nonpayment of services. The Ethekweni Social Forum also fights water and electricity cut-off and opposes efforts to evict people from shack settlements in preparation for the 2010 World Cup.

The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance has protested pollution from Island View Storage, the largest chemical storage facility in Africa—home to Shell Chemicals and others. It has also protested oil spills in Durban harbor and explosions at oil refineries within walking distance of poor communities. Earthlife Africa is opposing the construction of a Pebble Bed Modular Reactor by Eskom, at Koeberg. It opposes making South Africa a testing ground for new nuclear technology.

The Treatment Action Campaign is an

HIV/AIDS group that calls for anti-retrovirals to be made available by the public health service—which the government has dragged its feet on for years because of its absurd claim that HIV does not cause AIDS. It has earned the hostility of the government by taking it to court for failing to set out an adequate program to dispense anti-retrovirals.

Movements have also emerged against land evictions. South Africa produces 90% of the world's platinum. Mining companies have taken over land in Bushveld Mineral Complex, which stretches from North West Province across Limpopo to Mpumalanga. Two of the world's largest mining companies—Anglo Platinum and Impala Platinum—have driven tens of thousands off the land, herding them into hastily built townships with no water or electricity. The companies plan to relocate an additional 10,000 in Mapela.

Efforts to form new kinds of unions based on casual and temporary workers have also emerged, such as Sikhula Sonke (We Grow Together). It is "a social movement labor union." It was started in the Western Cape by women employed as seasonal farm laborers in response to the failure of traditional unions to deal with casual workers (permanent workers consist of 92% of COSATU's membership). Sikhula Sonke deals not only with workplace issues but also opposes evictions, fights for access to HIV/AIDS drugs, and calls for an end to school fees. Like many of the new social movements, it targets not just conditions in the workplace but also the spaces of intersection between work and everyday life.

A key group is the Anti-Privatization Forum, formed in 2000 in Johannesburg by activists in the Municipal Workers' Union and the National Union of Health and Allied Workers Union. A debate has occurred in it over where to orientate itself to the spontaneous uprising in townships such as Khutsong or to COSATU's unions. One activist in it argues, "Unlike the 1970s and 1980s, the neo-liberal restructuring of the workplace has led to the weakening of employed and organized workers...the technological changes and the restructuring of the workplace have led to an increase in the number of casuals and subcontracted work...COSATU trade unions have not been able to respond creatively to this neo-liberal attack on workers" (*The Struggle Continues*, August 2006).

A crucial organization in the townships is Abahlali BaseMjondolo, the largest movement of the poor in South Africa. It works for shack dwellers and other poor people, like street traders. It grew out of a protest at the Kennedy Road settlement in Durban in 2005, when land long promised for housing was turned over to build a brick factory. Last year it organized a boycott of elections for local councilors on the grounds that "there is a difference between 'party politics' and 'people's politics' and while party politics is often about the politics of ambition and control, people's politics can be about creating democracy where people live" (*Yzwi Labampofu*, December 2006).

Its president, S'bu Zikonde, stated: "We know that our country is rich and we know exactly what makes it rich. We know that we were once regarded as short minded and now we insist that we will think and speak and act for ourselves. We are poor in life but not in mind. Let the time of respect for the lives and experience and intelligence of the poor begin."



Township dwellers in Durban, South Africa.

THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

What is most striking about the struggles in South Africa is how seriously many take ideas of liberation. Marx, Luxemburg, Lenin, Biko and Fanon are not distant figures. Their ideas are seen as integral to grasping and transforming the present situation. This was evident at a conference on "State, Party, and Popular Power" that I participated in from March 1-3 in Capetown, sponsored by the International Labor Resource and Information Group and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. It was attended by 200 and brought together township dwellers, social movement activists, and intellectuals from various left tendencies.

It was striking to see that Rosa Luxemburg is avidly read by many activists and intellectuals in South Africa. Many see that her ideas speak directly to questions being debated in the streets and universities—such as the limits of bourgeois parliamentarism; the relation between reform and revolution; the dialectic of spontaneity, consciousness and organization; and the need for socialist democracy in revolutionary transformation.

This level of discourse is tied to the fact that South Africa, unlike much of the Third World, has a developed bourgeois democracy. As a result, the Marxist Left does not feel the need to work alongside bourgeois democrats to secure basic democratic rights. This enables the critique of capitalism—and the ideas of Marx—to come to the fore. Marxism may be in crisis, but it isn't dead in South Africa. Many realize that no movement can make meaningful progress outside of a Marxian theoretical framework.

This was reflected in Capetown in debates over whether or not to "seize" state power. Some said, "We have to take the power of the state away from capital." Others said the idea of "seizing" state power should be dispensed with, since it has led to one betrayal after another. An activist said, "too often the state becomes the terminus of the struggle instead of what we are fighting for." Many applauded the idea of **smashing** state power and returning to Marx's concept (from his *Critique of the Gotha Program*) of "converting the state from an organ superimposed on society into one completely subordinated to it."

There was also discussion of how Luxemburg's concept of socialist democracy after a social revolution differs from the SACP's defense of parliamentary democracy as a cover for supporting a neo-liberal capitalist agenda. Molefi Ndlovu stated, "Yes, we got democracy after 1994, but neo-liberalism is not simply a result of the rise of a new Black bourgeoisie. Instead, it is a modification of a globalized capitalist project. The 'democratic' state is the manager of this capitalist formation and is inseparable from it."

There was also much discussion of women. Shereen Essof spoke of Raya Dunayevskaya's study of Luxemburg as "both revolutionary and feminist" in light of tensions in the Left between gender issues and socialist transformation. Another woman said, "we have suffered from the lack of a comprehensive theory that explains how struggles play out in terms of the connection between race, class and gender. We in the anti-Stalinist Left have also been weighted down by a two-stage theory—the idea that women's emancipation comes after or is secondary to the class struggle."

It was refreshing to attend a conference where theory was neither dismissed nor treated as an academic enclave. This is due to the legacy of freedom struggles in South Africa, especially of Biko and the Black consciousness movement, which posed ideas and consciousness as a force of revolution. As one activist noted, "The entire social imagination of the oppressed must be elucidated in the effort to transform society."

This is a crucial insight, so long as it is coupled with recognition that theory must also reach to **philosophy**—to the philosophy of absolute negativity that defined Marx's transformation of Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution. Class, gender and race consciousness does not exhaust cognition—the idea of a totally new society. Needed today is a philosophy that not only reflects the creative mind of the oppressed but which spells out for our day Marx's concept of a new human society that transcends capitalism. We cannot do without the creative mind of Marx, his **distinctive** concept of socialism, infused as it was by the dialectic of absolute negativity as new beginning. There can be no better way to solidarize with the ongoing South African struggles than to develop this anew for our day.

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Thousands of demonstrators say 'no more war'

Memphis

MEMPHIS, TENN.—Our annual anti-war march was smaller than it has been in the last three years—probably because many may think that the Democrats in office will do the job. Nevertheless, the spirit was great and determined in the close to 300 of us who did march: END THE WAR NOW! Brenda Pearson of Military Families Speak Out, did speak for most of us there when she began her talk saying, "I hope this is the last year we have to do this."

This year our march began at the National Civil Rights Museum. At one point, Pete Gathje, who emceed our rally, began to yell the truth to the many visiting the Museum: "You won't find Martin Luther King in there, he's out here with us!" reminding everyone of King's opposition to the Vietnam War. Our demonstration snaked through some projects where mostly African Americans live.

The most moving part of the march by far was when we stopped at the Military Entrance Processing Station. This building is the place that all military personnel in Shelby County, regardless of rank or military branch, check into before being deployed. All of us had



photos of American soldiers who have died in Iraq or Afghanistan and we tied them to the perimeter fence. We felt that it was crucial to humanize the fairy tale told by the Bush administration by showing the human cost of the war.

We left the military installation with new energy and marched up a crowded Beale Street packed with St. Patrick's Day celebrators. While most onlookers just stared, a good many gave us a thumbs-up and a few cheered us on by chanting with us.

—Participants

Stop military testing

MEMPHIS, TENN.—The 2006-2007 campaign against military testing in Memphis high schools appears to have resulted in a marked reduction in the number of students taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).

For decades, the Memphis high schools in cooperation with the military recruiting command, has been administering ASVAB, which is given in about two-thirds of the high schools throughout the U.S. to students as young as 16. Army recruiters use ASVAB as a recruiting tool and to assess students' aptitudes for military jobs. It gives the military access to the student's name, address, phone number, gender, ethnicity or race, and even their Social Security number. Some schools require students to take the test. Parental permission is not required.

Beginning in September 2006, the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center requested the city school board examine ways to make ASVAB less likely to give away students' privacy. In January 2007, we introduced a resolution to require default use of the ASVAB Option 8, which allows students to take the test without their test results or private information being turned over to the military.

Initially, the board commissioners responded favorably. One commissioner said she believed the board members were in favor and that there should be no problem in getting the resolution passed. But later, we learned that the Army's local ASVAB coordinator, Mr. J.B. Smiley, was lobbying the board members.

On the day the resolution was to be voted, a dozen or more men in battle fatigues marched into the meeting room. Smiley announced that some had come from as far as 500 miles to attend. He warned that if the Option 8 resolution passed, students' access to military recruiters and opportunities would be greatly reduced. "There is no sustainable evidence that students who join the armed forces fare worse than students who attend traditional colleges," Smiley brazenly added in a written statement—as if attending college was on the same level as fighting a war in Iraq!

The board postponed the vote. To date, the resolution to implement Option 8 remains on hold, although the district did set a policy prohibiting compulsory ASVAB testing. Furthermore, the district notified all school principals and eligible students that the ASVAB test was strictly voluntary. Students are now required to sign up for the test in advance and have to go to a single room to take the test rather than taking it in their normal home rooms as they used to.

Head counts at two schools show that only five to ten percent of the eligible students have taken the ASVAB. If this is representative of the dozen or so schools taking the ASVAB this winter and spring, our campaign is a success. We failed to get what we asked for, but instead may have gotten something better.

—Counter-recruitment activist

New York City

NEW YORK—As the United States entered the fifth year of the war in Iraq, opponents of the Bush administration policies spent three days voicing their opposition across the country. On March 18, thousands gathered in large-scale rallies held by the anti-war coalition United for Peace and Justice and other groups in cities from coast to coast.

At least 39 people were arrested, March 19, in protests against war profiteering at the New York Stock Exchange. Many of the New York City protesters in and around Wall Street were members of the local chapter of the War Resisters League, the country's oldest secular peace group, an endorser of the March 19 Coalition. "We come to the Stock Exchange today to call attention to the companies that are profiteering from the war," declared the coalition, "companies like Lockheed Martin, which has seen its stock price rise 116% since the start of the war."

—Information from the War Resisters League

San Francisco Bay Area



An estimated 50,000 people marched in San Francisco on March 18 to protest the war. Especially prominent were Iraqi veterans against the war and many sporting buttons supporting Lt. Ehren Watada, a war resister whose defense is based on his claim that the orders to go to Iraq were illegal.

Editorial: fourth anniversary of Iraq war

Continued from page 1

Shi'a militias and the Iraqi government itself.

The U.S. war against the Sunni insurgent groups is not making any headway. Several recent instances in which insurgents on the ground succeeded in shooting down American helicopters indicates that their tactical sophistication is increasing. If the insurgents can threaten the air supremacy of the U.S. in addition to their successes in making overland travel dangerous through the use of roadside bombs, they will have presented the U.S. with a new and serious challenge.

The second aspect of the war continues apace as well. Shi'a pilgrims traveling to the city of Karbala for

a recent religious holiday were mercilessly targeted with suicide bombings and sniper attacks. Many Shiites are deeply resentful that the U.S. is trying to curb their sectarian militias, which are increasingly looked to as protectors in the absence of a reliable police force that can prevent the incessant attacks.

ESCALATION OF SURGE PLAN

The war's third aspect represents the potential for an enormous escalation of the conflict. Bush's surge plan was directed as much at the Shi'a militias and Iranian influence as it was the Sunni insurgency. The Shi'a militias in Baghdad, including Moktada al-Sadr's Madhi Army, appear to have chosen not to confront the increased number of troops sent into the areas they control and to instead bide their time until a changed opportunity presents itself. This aspect of the war is risky for the U.S. because of the close ties between much of the Iraqi government and the Iranians. If the U.S. pushes too hard against Iranian influence, the Iraqi government may cease to be as cooperative as it has been, opening new layers of difficulty for the U.S.

That government continues to be fragile at best, with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki constantly faced with challenges to his coalition. The most recent threat to the slim majority of his supporters in parliament was the withdrawal of a small Shi'ite party. If Moktada al-Sadr's supporters cease their support of Maliki as well, a political crisis would ensue.

All of these elements add up to a society pervaded from top to bottom with fear and hopelessness. The level of unemployment in Iraq is massive. A whole generation of young people is growing up solely within the walls of their own homes because of the threat of sectarian violence or kidnapping on the street.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Women are finding themselves confined as well because of the level of violent crime and the increasing dominance of religious conservatism in Iraqi society. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced from their homes by sectarian threats or the fear of violence. On top of those numbers, hundreds of thousands have fled the country entirely to eke out a precarious living in exile in Jordan or Syria. This is the legacy the U.S. intervention leaves to Iraq and the future of its people.

The protests marking the fourth anniversary of the war show that open opposition to Bush's war persists. But equally important is the passive opposition of the far greater numbers of those who have tired of the Bush administration's stonewalling on the prosecution of the war. While Congressional opposition to the war has failed to meet the expectations of many in the wake of last November's elections, Bush's new setbacks may contribute to new waves of people joining those openly opposing the war and further diminish the administration's ability to carry out its open-ended aims in Iraq.

NY cops indicted for Sean Bell's murder

NEW YORK CITY—Following months of protests in African-American neighborhoods and midtown Manhattan over the Nov. 25 shootings that killed Sean Bell and wounded two of his companions, a grand jury has indicted three of the five cops involved. The victims were unarmed and were in their car leaving a nightclub on what was to be Bell's wedding day, when the cops fired 50 times at them. The grand jury returned serious charges, including first and second degree manslaughter against the cop who fired 31 shots, reloading his gun to do so, and against the cop who fired 11 times.

The indictments were greeted with hope, skepticism and continued anger. People question whether any of the cops will be convicted, remembering the acquittals of the cops who killed Amadou Diallo after the trial was moved far from New York City, and the many other cases of failure to indict or convict cops who took the lives of innocent Black and Latino men. Paultre Bell, the murdered man's finance and mother of his children, said when the indictments were released, "Today was just a baby step in this long road we have ahead of us. We are here to fight, and we're going to continue to pray for justice."

The Bell family is receiving support from families of other murdered youth. Nicholas Heyward, Sr., whose son was killed by a N.Y.C. housing cop in 1994, stated at a rally after the indictments: "It's the DA's fault that not all five of them are indicted. And we have no trust or faith that DA Joe Brown will prosecute to the fullest the ones that are indicted. In my son's case, in the case of Malcolm Ferguson (Juanita Young's son, killed in 2000) and Anthony Rosario (Margarita Rosario's son, killed in 1996), and many others, the DA failed to prosecute the cops and continued to cover up for the officers. We know that these police officers right now need to be locked up and in jail. But they're not. That's why it's important that we continue to fight, continue to struggle."

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OUR LIFE AND TIMES

by Kevin A. Barry and Mitch Weerth

Bush's trip to five Latin American countries, March 8-14, helped to reveal to the world how powerless the U.S. has become in its efforts to make its military and free trade agreements function in the region. Even before he embarked on the trip Bush seemed intent on letting all know the tour would be a farce, by declaring on March 5 the official theme would be the "promotion of social justice in the Western Hemisphere," as if he just woke up and heard that there are 300 million living in abject poverty south of the Texas border. On March 15 Tony Snow could not state one specific accomplishment of the trip, though he insisted it nevertheless showed those millions of poor that the Bush administration cares deeply about them, something that he feels they just haven't seemed to understand up to this point.

At every stop—Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico—the tour was met with large protests, despite the fact that protesters had to deal with swarms of police everywhere. In Colombia it took some 20,000 troops and one decoy motorcade to insure Bush's safety for his seven hour stay in the country. Bush's entourage was so taken with the uniformity of the outcry from five very different countries—everywhere signs depicted him as Hitler and labeled him "assassin" and "terrorist"—they tried to suggest they were coordinated and even possibly paid for by Hugo Chavez. The accusation was as stupid as it was hilarious. Bush has become so paranoid about Chavez's influence over the poor that he adamantly refused to mention his name on the tour. And the administration's ignorance of the solidarity that Latin Americans everywhere feel for the suffering in Iraq made it impossible for them to see why everywhere he is called a terrorist.

Bush made it clear, albeit inadvertently, that far from any concern for "social justice" all he has to offer is more of the same failures he has already delivered. He was asked repeatedly what he would do to produce an immigration reform that respects the humanity of

Ruling on Bosnia

In March, the International Court of Justice, which the U.S. has refused to join, ruled against a Bosnian lawsuit claiming that Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia was guilty of genocide during the Bosnian war. The Court did find that genocide took place against Bosnia, however, something that the French public opinion, let alone that in pro-Serbia Russia or Greece, has up to now refused to recognize.

But the Court found for genocide in only one instance, the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of 8,000 Muslim boys and men. The rest of the 200,000 killed and the many more "ethnically cleansed," they concluded were not genocide. Moreover, since there was supposedly no direct proof that the Milosevic regime had actually ordered Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic to carry out the Srebrenica massacre, the Serbian state was therefore "not guilty" of genocide. The Court acknowledged with unintended irony that Milosevic had not done "enough" to prevent the genocide at Srebrenica.

Up to now, Serbia has been under serious consideration for European Union membership. In fact, this genocidal state is at the same rung on the ladder to membership as democratic predominantly Muslim Turkey. This has been the case despite Serbia's proven sheltering of war criminals. For example, a Serbian court revealed late last year that Mladic, under indictment by the international Hague Tribunal, had lived for three years in Belgrade under military protection at a sumptuous high-rise apartment on 118 Yuri Gagarin Street. He moved out only in January 2006!

Bush's tour of Latin America

those going to seek work in the U.S. and he gave the exact same answer that he gave six years ago: he'll "work his hardest" on it. He was asked why it's now necessary to erect a wall between our countries after over a hundred years of sharing the same continent, and he could only produce the pathetic refrain: laws must be enforced.

Most glaring was his inability to speak to the concerns that even the bourgeoisie now have regarding whether they will survive the next round of free trade agreements shoved on them. The new conservative Mexican President Felipe Calderón had no success getting him to consider the precarious position the country is in now that the final installment of NAFTA—the removal of trade protections for corn and beans—is coming in 2008. Calderón is seen as a staunch free trade ideologue, yet even he had to intervene to stop the increase in the price of tortillas when it shot

signed by Bush and Uribe. Nor did he listen to their protests to his efforts to continue with Plan Colombia.

That Plan has been a colossal failure. A billion dollars a year in military aid has been funneled to Colombia since 2000 to combat drug trafficking, but the U.S. government's own statistics reveal that the flow of cocaine to the U.S. has only increased. The aid has only fueled war and the integration of the right-wing paramilitary organizations into the state apparatus. Bush went to Colombia to show his support for Uribe, even as a growing scandal racks the country; eight politicians are now in jail waiting trial on charges that they have colluded with paramilitaries.

Iranians oppose Holocaust denial

In recent weeks, as the war threat loomed, Iranian intellectuals have given us some of the finest examples of moral courage in recent years. Unlike most of the Western Left, they have continued to target both U.S. imperialism and their own theocratic regime, in equal measure.

On Feb. 20, 23 Iranian intellectuals, many of them living under the Islamic Republic, penned "An open letter by a group of Iranian academics, writers, and artists regarding the Tehran Conference on Holocaust Denial" (<http://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php?news1/12081>). It pointed to "the appalling speech presented by a former Ku Klux Klan leader, a group infamous for its involvement in hate crimes against the African Americans," before stating:

"The fact that since the inception of the state of Israel many crimes have been committed against the Palestinian population does not provide moral ground for the denial or undermining of the genocide of the Jewish people...Forgotten amongst all the sensationalism in the Iranian media accompanying the conference, was the bitter reality that the undermining or denial of human suffering for the sake of making political points—whatever they might be—will inevitably lead to moral degeneration."

Signatories included Hassan Mortazavi, translator of *Marxism and Freedom* and other Marxist works. Such declarations can land one in notorious torture chambers like Evin Prison.



Colombian troops challenge anti-Bush protesters.

through the roof in December and January, causing mass protests. Even with state intervention the price increased in those two months 41.6%, ten times more than the minimum wage increased.

The U.S. produces six times more corn per acre than Mexico does, three times more beans per acre, and assists U.S. farmers with more than \$19 billion per year in subsidies. From 2000 to 2004 corn exports from the U.S. to Mexico increased more than 80%, causing the rural exodus of millions of campesinos.

Opposition politicians in Colombia did not get a chance to make their case to Bush on his short visit that they fear the same conditions are coming to their country with the Free Trade Agreement recently

Oaxaca megamarch

The Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO) showed that it has not gone away despite state repression, by staging a successful mass march on International Women's Day. This was the first "megamarch" held since the military cracked down on the movement in late October last year. In February APPO held its First State Assembly in an effort to give itself a more permanent organizational structure and statement of principles. The organization has stayed alive and maintained unity based on: opposition to participation in state electoral politics (members cannot campaign in the name of APPO), support of political prisoners and their families (approximately 70 APPO members are still jailed), and re-organization of the mass movement. The latter has included putting the movement's radio station, Radio Planton, back on the air, as well as focusing on defeating the so-called section 59, an illegal "union" of teachers, formed by PRI activists to counter section 22, the Oaxaca teachers' union whose members form the majority of APPO.

Italy and Bush's wars

In March, Italy's social democratic Prime Minister Romano Prodi won a razor-thin vote of confidence in parliament. This put him back in power after his coalition had collapsed over Italy's ties to the U.S. war machine. These ties continue despite the 2006 election, in which voters repudiated pro-Bush Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Afterwards, Prodi moved to withdraw U.S. troops from Italy.

But by early 2007, the Italian Left was beginning to mobilize to force Prodi to do more to separate Italy from Bush's militarism. In February, 100,000 demonstrated in Vecinza against plans to allow the U.S. to expand a local military base, chanting "Bases Go Home," with many waving rainbow peace flags. The demonstration was entirely peaceful despite police "revelations" that violent terrorists would show up. Italy's participation with 2,000 troops in the Afghan war has also come under attack from the Left, which has failed, as elsewhere around the world, to take a clear stance against Islamic fundamentalism even as it opposes Bush's war drive.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. News & Letters was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907-83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject

what is, but to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough and her final 1987

Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our Constitution states: "It is our aim... to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the Constitution of News and Letters Committees.