

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

The boss is spying

by Htun Lin

The media has been awash with articles on U.S. government surveillance since the bombshell revelations by National Security Agency analyst Edward J. Snowden of Big Brother data mining of citizens' phones and internet use. The legal framework for wholesale surveillance, created by the Patriot Act, was fully sanctioned by the U.S. Congress and a special post-9/11 “Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act” Court.

The data mining by large U.S. corporations gets less attention. It goes beyond the tracking of every mouse-click, purchase and “like” registered by every consumer on the internet, and relies not only on sophisticated electronic devices, but on the currency of fear and sheer intimidation which would make a Big Brother tyrant proud, the kind depicted in George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*.

SHAPE UP OR PAY UP

The April 6 *Wall Street Journal* reported in “Shape Up or Pay Up: Firms Put in New Health Penalties” that six in ten major Fortune 500 companies, like Michelin, plan to mandate compliance by individual workers. Or else: “Are you a man with a waistline measuring 40 inches or more? If you want to work at Michelin North America Inc., that spare tire could cost you.” The article continues: “Employees at the tire maker who have high blood pressure or certain size waistlines may have to pay as much as \$1,000 more for healthcare coverage starting next year.”

Where I work at a major HMO, there is a campaign
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EDITORIAL Support striking prisoners!

Since February, prisoners at Guantanamo Bay have carried on a massive hunger strike to protest indefinite detention in abusive conditions with no end in sight. They are calling the world's attention to the fact that those cleared for release, 86 in all, have been languishing for more than a decade without any charges. As the hunger strike gained publicity, President Obama suddenly recalled his long-abandoned promise to close Guantanamo and began a new round of lip service, yet the torture of people there continues.

As of June 14, 104 of the 166 captives at Guantanamo are on a hunger strike, 43 of whom are tortured twice daily with brutal force-feedings. Medical ethicists George Annas and Sondra Crosby wrote, “Force-feeding a competent person is not the practice of medicine; it is aggravated assault.”¹ They call on the specially flown-in doctors to refuse to participate, in effect to mutiny. More than 150 medical professionals published an open letter in *The Lancet* asking President Obama to allow them to treat the prisoners.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRISONS

Guantanamo, a creature of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, is the latest reminder of how little human rights mean to the U.S. government. Veterans Elliott Adams and Tarak Kauff, prisoners Norman Lowry and “Indiana Inmate 1776,” and seven other U.S. citizens are on hunger strikes or fasts in solidarity. They are right to draw a connection between Guantanamo Bay and prisons generally.

1. “Guantanamo Bay: A Medical Ethics-free Zone?” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, June 12, 2013, <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1306065>

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt

by Gerry Emmett

“There is nothing real about them but their common conspiracy against life, their egotism of class interest, their wish to feed upon the carcass of French society, their common slaveholders' interests, their hatred of the present, and their war upon Paris.”

—Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*

The mass protests in Turkey, the presidential election in Iran and, above all, the continuing struggle for the Syrian revolution express the depth of today's social crisis. These crises are interpenetrated and inseparable. The stakes are high.

The reactionary forces that were set back on their heels by the Arab Spring revolts two years ago have found a new lease on life.

Above all, this has been the result of dictator Bashar al-Assad's genocidal attacks upon the Syrian masses. Around this criminal assault has re-gathered the threat of regional war that had been pushed back by mass revolts.

What these regional powers—Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia—and their allies the U.S., Russia and China, hate and fear is revolution: people fighting for freedom and new human relations.

These powers have already shown themselves willing to sacrifice, by official estimates, over 90,000 Syrian lives (likely over 100,000); they have been willing to create millions of refugees; and they have been all too willing to accept the utmost degradation of world politics and culture.

At the same time, from Turkey to Brazil, mass protest and revolt continue to erupt. Would-be analysts of the Arab Spring who treated the experience of new human relations at Tahrir Square, for example, as if it were mere drunkenness that would pass without leaving a trace, were wrong. The masses in motion face the world with sober senses, while the rulers have nothing to offer but an orgy of slaughter.

TURKEY: MASSES vs. ERDOGAN, AKP

In Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been in power for 11 years. Viewed by foreign investors, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a savior of Turkish capitalism, Erdogan has been increasingly authoritarian. It is one of the worst countries in the world to be a journalist—dozens, including investiga-

tive reporters and minority Kurds, are being held in prison under vague charges. The anti-press campaign has resulted in a wide-ranging self-censorship of all media.

Erdogan's growing arrogance has created new social tensions as well. On May 28, these burst into mass protests over the defense of Taksim Gezi Park, one of the last green spaces in urban Istanbul.

Demands included an end to the sale of public spaces, the right to free expression without fear of arrest or torture, and the right to a free and open media. The key demand was *freedom*. It was widely felt that the “moderate Islamism” of the AKP was being imposed upon a traditionally secular population. Women's rights are threatened, and women's

voices have been prominent. As one woman said, “I am okay with extending democracy to women who want to wear the headscarf. That is acceptable. But it seems Erdogan wants to force *all* women to wear it. That is unacceptable.”

Another protester said, “The whole country is being sold to corporations for the construction of malls, luxury condominiums, freeways, dams and nuclear plants. The State under its conservative agenda passed laws and regulations concerning abortion, Caesarean birth, sale and use of alcohol, and even the color of lipstick worn by airline stewardesses. People are marching for their right to live freely with justice and respect. They demand to be involved in decision-making about the city they live in.”

OCCUPY GEZI REWRITES CITY

Another participant described the Occupation of Taksim Square and Gezi Park: “To the left of the stairs that lead to the park, Kurds dance the Halay in an ever widening circle. The Kurdish flag flies and the radio blasts guerrilla songs. A crowd moves past—‘Turkey for the Turks!’ Kemalists most likely with their red star and crescent banners. They chant, ‘We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal!’ Down the path they will come across a group of Gay men marching in the other direction and chanting, ‘We are nobody's soldiers!’ Between the two you find a tent for the Turkish Socialist Party—old school hardliners—and another tent of middle-aged Armenian church ladies distributing cookies.”

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Revolutionary from Turkey speaks

Events in Turkey appeared spontaneous, but are a continuation of a long history. It was not the psychology of Prime Minister Erdogan that created opposition, but the institutionalized fascism within a “deep state.”

Turkey is capitalist, but not like Europe, the U.S., or Canada. It did not have a series of bourgeois revolutions. Capitalism in Turkey was installed top-down by colonialist rule. Independence gained by the anti-colonial movement did not achieve concrete freedoms, it created neo-colonialism: native capitalists dependent on imperialism in metropolitan capitalist countries through finances, production systems, etc. Accumulation in Turkey is not just for the native capitalists, it has to be shared with the metro-capitalists.

During capitalist crises the military intervenes to clamp down any unrest. When the crisis abates, the military may step down, but it is not bourgeois democracy that takes power, it is institutionalized civil repression. The U.S. is moving in this direction also. This is the way it is becoming a Third World country.

In the 1980s the U.S. decided they would prefer a

moderate Islam to rule in Middle East countries. Previous rule was established by race/ethnicity. It did not allow huge sections of the population to be accepted, creating opposition. Erdogan came to power as part of the change into “moderate Islam.”

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE, KURDS' OPPRESSION

Since the 1920s Turkey has not been secular. In the Ottoman Empire, the nascent capitalist class was Armenian. When the Ottoman Empire crumbled, Armenians became the scapegoats. Modern Turkey was founded on that genocide. Then the Greeks were kicked out. At the time the Kurds, as fellow Muslims, were Turkey's allies. Then Kurds, too, became “externalized”: their language was banned, their communities abused by authorities. The unsolvable problem in Turkey now is the Kurds.

It was a Kurdish parliamentarian who put his body in front of the bulldozers that came to uproot the trees in the only—tiny—park left in Istanbul, to turn it into a shopping mall. He started talking about concrete freedom.

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Protesters occupying Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 8, 2013.

WOMAN AS REASON

by Terry Moon

It was both shameful and astonishing when Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, cut Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand's measure giving military prosecutors rather than commanders the power to decide which sexual assault crimes to try. Gillibrand's measure was the first—ever—to offer a realistic solution to military rape and abuse.

Despite over 20 years of pontificating that the military has “zero tolerance” for sexual assault, it has continued to escalate and ruined thousands of lives. It has led to homelessness, post-traumatic stress and murder: 19-year-old LaVena Johnson in July 2005 and 20-year-old Maria Lauterbach in 2007—both murdered by fellow soldiers—and those are the ones we know of.

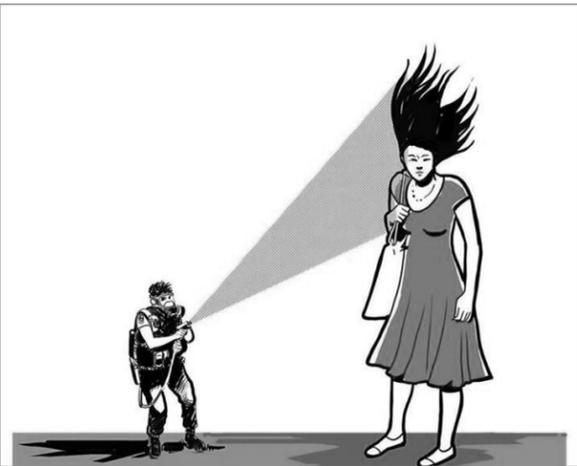
In just the few weeks succeeding Levin's actions, a West Point sergeant was found videotaping dozens of women cadets without their knowledge; an officer in charge of Air Force sexual assault prevention programs was arrested for sexual battery; at Annapolis Naval Academy three football players are under investigation for raping a woman midshipman; and an Air Force commander threw out an aggravated sexual assault conviction of an Air Force fighter pilot because he “wanted to show the pilot community [which in his mind were all men] that he had their backs.”

The Senate hearing at the beginning of June had not one woman sexual assault victim testifying. Those invited consisted of two supporters of taking the decision to prosecute out of the chain of command and 18 opponents.

Why has nothing changed? Why is Levin capitulating to those who insist on keeping the prosecution of rape within the chain of command when that is, in

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis



Women are at least half of those protesting in Taksim Square in Istanbul, Turkey, against the fundamentalist Islamic policies of Prime Minister Erdogan. The government had considered banning abortion in 2012 after years of campaigning to force every woman to give birth to at least three children. It has not supported working mothers but introduced financial incentives for them to stay home, and has renamed the Ministry for Women the Ministry for Family and Social Policy. Women have been leading demonstrations, chanting loudly, and drinking beer in public, while an image of a woman in a red dress tear-gassed by riot police has become a social media icon.

Asociacion de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina, Argentina's union for women sex workers, has started a campaign of images wheat-pasted on buildings. One side shows a woman in a suggestive pose, while the other shows her leading her children home from school or pushing a baby carriage. A caption states, “86% of sex workers are mothers. We need a law to regulate our work.” Prostitution is legal in Argentina, but brothels are not, and AMMAR states sex workers need protections against violence and exploitation. The campaign's emphasis on motherhood has been somewhat controversial among international feminists because that is only one reason that *all* workers need rights.

Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, two members of feminist activist punk band “Pussy Riot,” are serving two-year sentences for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred” for their protest against Russian president Putin's policies merging church and state. On June 1, Alekhina ended her 11-day hunger strike after officials at her prison colony in the Ural mountains ended a security crackdown she says was intended to turn other prisoners against her. She had spent five months in solitary confinement after stating that officials deliberately housed her with hardened criminals to intimidate her. Tolokonnikova's husband, Pyotr Verzilov, said, “It seems the public reaction was so big that there was a political decision,” because “it's not in the tradition of the prison system here to make any concessions.”

Stop military abuse

fact, the problem? One can only guess that the military brass fear that other crimes might also be opened up to military prosecutors, or even to civilian or international courts.

MILITARY CONTROL FREAKS

The military wants to control what happens to those who kill civilians, disobey orders, rape and abuse other soldiers, or go absent without leave. They don't want their practices opened up to a civilian world. We see this in how the U.S. has strongly opposed any kind of international court having jurisdiction over U.S. soldiers, which is why they never ratified the treaty for the International Criminal Court; and U.S. forces left Iraq because Iraq refused to grant them immunity from Iraqi courts. No, for the military, *nothing* can escape the chain of command.

That women have proved themselves equal in war situations is now so much a fact that the military announced it will “eliminate all unnecessary gender-based barriers” by 2016. This means that women can now work their way up this vaunted chain of command that has been closed to them because they were blocked from the required ground combat experience.

Feminist organizations are applauding, but should they? Such a move will put more women in harm's way—not only of being killed in a war, but of being assaulted or murdered by their so-called “fellow” soldiers. But even more, just what good has “our” military done in the last two wars?

WAR HASN'T HELPED WOMEN

A March 2013 report by scholars with the “Costs of War” project at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies estimated that “More than 70% of those who died of direct war violence in Iraq have been civilians—an estimated 134,000. This number does not account for indirect deaths due to increased vulnerability to disease or injury as a result of war-degraded conditions. That number is estimated to be several times higher.” The higher number taking account of those conditions was revealed when *The Lancet* published a study showing “that as of July, 2006, there have been 654,965 (392,979-942,636) excess Iraqi deaths as a consequence of the war.” As is true in almost every war, for every soldier killed, ten civilians die. What exactly has the Iraq war accomplished? It certainly hasn't helped women.

WOMEN SHOULDN'T HELP WAR

Afghanistan has known nothing but war for decades, and while women were one of the justifications the U.S. used to invade, it is doubtful that the U.S. war will have any lasting effect in improving women's lives, particularly now that the U.S. is so thrilled to be having talks with the Taliban. It has been clear for some time that for the U.S., Afghan women's freedom is expendable. When the U.S. leaves, Afghan women's rights activists fear that the little progress they have made will be destroyed.

Given this reality of war, of rape and brutal abuse of women in the military, why should feminists be happy that women, by 2016, will have reached “equality” with men? Like Women's Liberationists in the 1960s, we shouldn't be calling for more women soldiers, we should be demanding an end to war altogether as well as to the military.

Left Forum panel: ‘Low-wage workers forward’

Below we print excerpts from a Left Forum panel, Foundations of Economic Justice: Low-wage workers forward!, where S. and J., young workers at Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in New York City, spoke. A. works with New York Communities for Change (NYCC) (www.nyccommunities.org).

New York—S. People take advantage of their power. We are always working “off the clock,” but if the store isn't making enough money, they don't pay us for that. If you work 60 hours one week, they credit your work to the next week so they won't have to pay you overtime. It's always straight time, never overtime. If you speak out against anything, they reduce your hours.

We do things the right way when KFC corporate visits the store. But if you speak out when a manager has you do things the wrong way, your hours will be cut.

If you have three write-ups, you are out of your job. As a crew leader, if the store fails an inspection, I am written up. We are blamed for things that are out of our control, such as broken ventilation equipment.

I have been earning \$7.75 per hour. I'm supposed to make \$8.50, but my manager said, “Give me some time.” Well, you've had a year now!

NYCC said, “You are supposed to make more than \$7.75.” I said “What?” The goals of the organizing campaign are to see what is not right and to see change, change some minds. I have three children. My husband knows every job that I do because so often I am the only person in the store after it closes at 11:00 PM. He comes in and helps me close the store, until 2:00 or 3:00 AM. It breaks my heart that so much is wrong.

J. We are not properly compensated for the hard-working people we are. I was a crew leader; basically I

Anti-abortion fanatics

In El Salvador, 22-year-old Beatriz had such serious health problems that if she carried her fetus to term she would need a kidney transplant or die. Her fetus had anencephaly: part of its brain and/or skull was missing and it could not survive. But on May 29, fanatics in El Salvador's highest court refused her an abortion. They tortured her for six and a half weeks as her health worsened and she begged doctors not to let her die. When her health had deteriorated severely, the Health Minister, instead of opting for a less-invasive abortion, allowed Beatriz to have a Caesarean section—major surgery that could have killed her, and will take months to recover from. Of course the fetus died.

That is fanaticism.

We saw it before in Ireland when a Hindu woman from India, Savita Halappanavar, died last year in an Irish hospital while 17 weeks pregnant. She was having contractions prior to a natural miscarriage and despite septicemia, her worsening condition and a non-viable fetus, doctors refused to terminate her pregnancy until the fetus died—and there was no doubt that it would die. Halappanavar was tortured as she suffered what a lead investigator in a report of her death described as “a cascade of mistakes” overshadowed by zealot officials' refusal to remove the fetus until its heart stopped, which took four days. By then she was suffering sepsis from a ruptured uterus that killed her.

And these fanatics use the language “pro-life.”

Ideologues in the same mold are in the U.S. state houses and Congress. They wallow in fanaticism as they ignore science; mandate that doctors lie to women or withhold facts of their health from them; order women to undergo unnecessary, painful medical procedures like vaginal ultrasounds; force women to view unnecessary sonograms that they don't want; make women drive hundreds of miles for legal medical procedures; mandate that clinics be built like hospitals when women are 14 times more likely to die during or after giving birth to a baby than from an abortion.

Now Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives have pushed through a bill banning abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy—when 24 weeks is what the U.S. Supreme Court ruled legal. Fanaticism ruled as the original bill, put forth by six all-male members of a sub-committee, had only a narrow exception to save a woman's life, no exceptions for rape or incest or to protect a woman whose health is endangered or for cases of severe fetal anomalies. Only a last-minute revision allows a limited exception for rape or incest, but the crime would have had to be reported.

All the signs of fanaticism were evident: the bill's author, Trent Franks, ignores science, claiming, “the incidences of rape resulting in pregnancy are very low.” The excuse to ban abortions after 20 weeks is another denial of scientific fact: the claim that a 20-week fetus feels pain. Republican Michael Burgess bases his belief of fetal pain in sonograms where fetuses move their hands, “stroke their face” and “may have their hand between their legs,” as if that proves “they feel pleasure.”

The fact is that each year in the U.S., 700 women die of pregnancy-related complications, 52,000 experience emergencies and an additional 34,000 barely avoid death. Everything these zealots are doing will push those rates higher.

—Abortion rights activist

was running the business. I requested a demotion, so I no longer have the title or the responsibility but still do much the same work. In response, they cut my hours.

We are asking for a livable wage of \$15.00 per hour and the right to unionize. It's a bad economy; there is no flow: how is an economy going to work if rich people hog all the money? That's why we are in this campaign. The rich see us as poor people, only to serve them.

I'd like to see us bring all these organizing efforts together in a nationwide effort, because people forget a struggle here, a win there. We need to make people aware. Our goal is fairness, dignity. The cost of living keeps rising: \$5.00 today buys you a plate of junk food. I want to see economic justice for the working poor.

A. NYCC arose from the ashes of ACORN. Our organizing is community-based, and we find that the political will to support workers is there. We helped the carwashers sign two contracts (see *N&L* May-June). We support their efforts to prevent the owners from dumping chemicals into local waterways and for workers to protect themselves against harmful chemicals.

We fight against wage theft and exploitation. We let the store owners know: “We are watching you.” One million dollars has been returned to workers, and some stores pressured by Free Flatbush have actually paid their workers the minimum wage.

It makes a huge difference to fast food workers who walk out in protest to have 20 community people in support. We have a tactic of “walking the workers back to work,” which means a lot to the other workers and gets the protesting workers' jobs back.

—Susan Van Gelder

Wendy's escucha, el pueblo está en la lucha**'Listen, Wendy's — the people are fighting'**

New York—Several hundred farmworkers and their supporters rallied in the streets of Manhattan on May 18, demanding that Wendy's do what McDonald's, Taco Bell, Burger King, Subway and Whole Foods have already done: sign a Fair Food agreement to better the working conditions of thousands of agricultural workers in the tomato fields of Florida.

The rally featured a silent skit showing how people united had forced food chains to sign the agreement, and how farmworkers came together and realized their power through unity and struggle. As the skit ended, everybody began chanting at a Wendy's effigy, "SIGN, SIGN, SIGN!"

There were speeches in Spanish and English, with the farmworkers extending thanks to all who had turned out. It was mostly a youthful crowd, and the energy level as we began to march was high. First we had a spirited picket line outside a Wendy's, then we marched to a soon-to-open Wendy's.

Farmworkers I talked to spoke of the battles they had fought in Florida to get the Fair Food agreement. One man told me that the agreement had made life in the fields better, but that in fields not covered by the



Striking fast food workers rally in Milwaukee

lickr.com/photos/4096929@N05/8744954758/

agreement, growers are still using pesticides. And he spoke with pride of the new center that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) had built for the community—a place where citizens can meet, and where the farmworkers go for serious meetings and social functions.

I also spoke with Latino workers from New York who had come out to support their brothers and sisters from the Deep South.

One farmworker said Wendy's is the last national fast food chain that refuses to sign the Fair Food Program. For several decades now, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers has been fighting for justice in the fields where America's tomato crops are grown. One by one, the major fast food chains have agreed to buy only tomatoes that were harvested under fair working conditions. The CIW has been organizing to improve working conditions and wages for people who pick the tomatoes we eat. They fight to eradicate human rights abuses, like wage theft, sexual assault and modern slavery, which once ran rampant.

Most of the largest fast food chains agreed to pay an extra penny per pound of tomatoes to raise wages and to buy only from fields where workers' rights are respected. Wendy's is lagging behind in refusing to sign, despite being asked five times since 2007.

Latino participants at the rally and march enthusiastically received copies of *News & Letters* with the Spanish language insert. The New York branch is looking forward to even more involvement in labor and social struggles. Whether it is Trade Fair or Wendy's, we will be present, presenting our unique revolutionary perspective, that of Marxist-Humanism. —M.G.

New battle after Trade Fair lockout ends

New York—"Trade Fair update: All locked out workers have now been returned to their jobs, but at part-time hours, reduced wages, etc. The fight goes on!"

With the above post on the UFCW Local 342 web page, the union officially informed its members and supporters that the boycott of the Trade Fair supermarket chain based in Queens, N.Y. had come to an end.

The supermarket did agree to retain all the locked-out workers. However, deep concessions were made. The workers had their hours reduced to 24 hours a week, their jobs reclassified, and were given new rotations on the job. In addition, the scab workers hired during the lockout still have their jobs. Nonetheless, the union feels that by forcing the Trade Fair management to rehire all the locked-out union members, they did win a victory.

In addition, the union is pursuing its unfair labor practices claim against Trade Fair before the NLRB, and is guaranteeing that workers now working less than full-time will continue to receive full benefits.

However, all is not well at Trade Fair. Customers are complaining about the decline in services as understaffing has had a negative impact at the meat department at the stores where the lockout occurred. But the fighting spirit of Local 342 is far from dead. Union workers on the job still wear their union buttons, and will not rest until there is a complete restoration of workers' rights. —Michael Gilbert

Reclaiming May Day

New York—May Day, the day we claim our heritage in revolution. May 1, 2013: a day to herald the triumph of labor over capitalist sloth, over the enforced idleness of unemployment, over the inanities of the leisure class. It's a sunny spring day in Union Square. This is hallowed ground. How many revolutionaries have addressed the working class here, standing on improvised platforms, proclaiming the new day, proclaiming Socialism?

Then a hollow note, ill-sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal slightly out of tune; where is the solidarity of yesteryear? Like the Tower of Babel of old, there is a jarring of voices, each hawking its own brand of snake oil, an alphabet soup of shibboleth initials: SWP, RCP, WWP, ISO, and so on; but where is unity of purpose?

A small group warps our landscape. A muscular thug holds up a placard. It reads: "48% of all billionaires are Jewish."

We are galvanized. A current runs through us: white, black, brown, beige, old, young, men, women. "Racist out, racist out" is our anthem, rhythmized out in contrapuntal repetition, at the top of our voices, as we expel the rude intruders. We are one, a choir in unison. —Paul Geist

L.A. garment workers solidarity with Dhaka

Los Angeles—In reaction to the April garment factory collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which killed 1,127 people (see article, p. 12), a recent panel discussion at the UCLA Center brought together garment workers, students, and activists. The aim was to connect U.S. garment workers with garment workers in Bangladesh and to prohibit international merchants such as Gap and Wal-Mart from contracting with garment factories overseas who do not have worker fire safety standards.

A Los Angeles garment worker on the panel said, "Garment worker conditions in Los Angeles are no different than in Bangladesh" where emergency doors are blocked, fire extinguishers are locked, there is no first aid kit, and workers use sewing machine oil to cleanse wounds caused by sharp scissors and needles.

The garment worker said they are paid a few pennies for each piece they are assigned. If they do more pieces than what the boss was expecting, he reduces their pay the next week.

Deogracia Cornelio, from the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program at UCLA, said factory owners create exploitative conditions and fan the culture of "work, work, work." The program showed a video of a woman worker organizer whose assistant's dead and tortured body was recently found in a Bangladesh suburb. Despite the violence, the response of this woman organizer showed that workers will not stop fighting for their rights.

Powerful words of poetry were recited by the www.BeatsForBangladesh.org. That prompted a News and Letters Committees member to express her appreciation for the youth group envisioning a different world. We brought up the need to boycott amazon.com because of its MechanicalTurk.com website that encourages piece-meal work for next to nothing pay throughout the world.

Another Los Angeles garment worker took up workers' solidarity against microproduction methods used by corporations which have diminished the power of unions by dispersion of piece-work production via the internet to the other side of the world. He said that workers should be aware of their rights, and that we need to take risks and not accept repression by the bosses or their threats that they will call Immigration if we demand our rights.

What we're seeing is workers' subjectivity challenging the objectivity of this heartless world of capitalism. Marx's prediction that the workers of the world will unite is coming to reality.

—Manel

Grim high-tech future

Detroit—High-tech factories designed to bring together research and production are beginning to be built, touted as creating increased manufacturing in the U.S. and stimulating innovative development, like a GE facility in Schenectady, N.Y., devoted to a fluid ceramic that is poured into batteries.

These corporate efforts to unite thinking and doing are reminiscent of what Charles Denby, founding editor of *News & Letters*, described in *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* when new auto models were introduced for production. During regular production, the bosses were always on the workers' backs to get out more autos, but with the new models there were always problems that were discovered.

At that time, auto companies told the foremen to leave the workers alone, because they knew that the workers knew their jobs so well that they would fix the problems that arose. Companies even put up suggestion boxes in the plants, but workers knew that if their suggestions were followed, workers would be laid off, so they kept them to themselves. Today it has reached the point where companies will pay workers up to thousands of dollars for their accepted suggestions.

There is another side to the fact that nobody knows a job like the worker who is doing it. There is a well-known expression in factories, and I heard it in the coal mines, that if you can't break your machine any time you want to, you have no business running it. This knowledge is useful if a boss becomes too unbearable and a machine breakdown to decrease production is required to "educate" the boss.

Because of the advanced high-tech development in other countries, many of the high-pay high-tech jobs in the U.S. are also being outsourced.

In the capitalists' view of the future, manufacturing will not be characterized by millions of workers on production lines, like the repetitive-motion production that is involved in so much manufacturing that has been outsourced from the U.S. to other low-pay countries. They envision a few highly skilled specialists in a totally different environment, with millions more workers losing their jobs to swell the ranks of the millions now unemployed. This dim future will become even dimmer unless completely transformative changes are made in the economy and society.

—Andy Phillips

WORKSHOPTALKS

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sponsored to encourage us healthcare workers to do just that. At first glance, it's a no-brainer. Who'd not want to march along with a "get healthy" campaign, especially if one works at an HMO?

THE SINISTER SIDE OF PENALTIES

Besides, it is a voluntary program, laced with lots of fun incentives like free glucose monitors, pedometers, and lunchtime guided walks around the lake. We can keep track of our (and each other's) progress on the company "Wellness" website. Our union reps even helped pass out glossy color brochures and Wellness Visa Cards to accumulate health credit scores.

But what began as "voluntary" wellness programs based on incentives has revealed a sinister side of penalties. Pharmacy chain CVS sparked outrage when it asked its workers to report personal health metrics, including their body fat, blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, to the company's insurer by May or pay a \$600 penalty.

Mohawk Industries gloated that participation in its health risk assessment program shot up to 97% after the company imposed a \$100 monthly penalty on non-participants. The company complained that participation in its previous incentives rewards program was low. Honeywell, too, reported a spike in participation after it switched from an incentive to a penalty program, charging workers \$1,000, deducted from their health savings account, for transgressions like getting a hip or knee replacement without consulting company doctors.

BACKDOOR WAGE CUTS

The penalties in these wellness incentive programs are essentially a backdoor form of wage cuts. With corporate spending on healthcare expected to reach an average of \$12,136 per employee this year, according to a study by the consulting firm Towers Watson, penalties may soon be the new norm. This points to a future in which chronic conditions such as hypertension could cost workers their jobs, or prevent them from being hired in the first place. Medical ethics and policy analysts say practices like not hiring smokers are motivated not by employers' concerns for employees' health, but to keep smokers off their health bill.

Industry analysts say many companies want to move from not hiring smokers to also excluding job applicants with obesity, hypertension, and other pre-existing health conditions.

Wellness becomes a slippery slope of legal discrimination and corporate intrusion. Individual privacy of health information will be a thing of the past when seeking employment in a fully corporatized world.

These programs snoop into workers' health records in order to give employers control over the private lives of workers. Michelin's chief of Human Resources claimed that the old incentive programs "didn't lead to meaningful change." He wants to see the kind of sea change afforded by a campaign of fear and intimidation to advance corporate Big Brother, like post-9/11 security directives that enabled government to encroach on ever more aspects of private lives.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: July-August marks the 60th anniversary of the historic strike in the Russian slave labor camp in Vorkuta. Following Dunayevskaya's May 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes, the 1953 revolts in Russia and East Germany were formative events for Marxist-Humanism. Few agreed with her view that they were "the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism" until after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. This "Two Worlds: Notes From a Diary" column by Raya Dunayevskaya for Correspondence, June 12, 1954, is in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #9347-48.

"You all seem to be so skeptical about the chances of a revolution in Russia. I am not sure myself. But, believe me, Russia is more than ever full of revolutionaries."

Thus Brigitte Gerland addressed her co-journalists attending the Four Power Conference in Berlin last January. Miss Gerland, a German journalist who had been arrested in 1946 and sent to a Russian concentration camp, was one of several thousand German inmates who had suddenly been amnestied for the show at the Four Power Conference. Her audience was very skeptical because she was not telling a tale of woe, but of revolt. She would have found sympathetic listeners had she engaged in an abstract discussion of whether a revolt can occur under a police state, but not when she related that one had happened.

RUSSIAN YOUTH IN REVOLT

Gerland relates that she met students from the big cities of Russia: Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa. The outstanding among these were the sons of Old Bolsheviks, that is to say, sons of the leaders of the 1917 revolution who had been executed by Stalin in the infamous Moscow Trials of 1937. Those "children of the 'generation of 1937'...had been educated in State orphanages and had managed to fight their way to the universities only by endless efforts and tricks. Now these would-be philosophers, historians or economists sat in the camp with 25 years of forced labor as their only future..." But they weren't broken or resigned.

"In their view," continues Gerland, "the Socialist State of the future would not be run by either one or several parties, but purely by workers' and peasants' 'syndicates'—they used the French word, picked from a study of the Paris Commune of 1871, which Lenin himself had hailed as his model before he seized power."

Translated, the words Marx used in describing the Paris Commune were "the self-government of the producers." In any case, the program of the youth "had

Tom Rockmore's *Marx After Marxism*

Duquesne University Professor Tom Rockmore's book, *Marx After Marxism*, takes up Marx, Hegel and what he refers to as "Marxism," i.e., post-Marx Marxism. When he speaks of Marxism, he is speaking of the post-Marx distortions of Marx's ideas and methods, not Marxism *per se*. Although the book was published over a decade ago, it is still in print and is used as a college text around the country. It is important because it gives the reader a fuller grasp of the true relationship between Marx and Hegel, a topic which is still widely misunderstood by many so-called Marxists.

While Rockmore clearly wants to clarify the relationship of the two men—something which is still vitally needed in a period of philosophical and ideological confusion—his book would have benefited from referencing Raya Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*, which covers in depth much of the same ground and more. It has the advantage of being written from the vantage point of a revolutionary looking at the failure of 1968 when the masses were in the streets, but counter-revolution ended up ruling. Thus her contention that a philosophy of revolution is indispensable gives her discussion of the Marx/Hegel relationship an immediacy for today's struggles.

MARX AND ENGELS NOT THE SAME

Rockmore's first point is that all post-Marx Marxists identify Marxism as what Engels and his followers developed and that one should not confuse the ideas of Marx with that of post-Marx Marxism. Rather, in recovering Marx from his distorters, one must understand the foundational role that the Hegelian dialectic played in the development of Marx's ideas during his whole life, a point which Rockmore illustrates by examining all the substantial writings of Marx which have a Hegelian core. Throughout this work, Rockmore emphasizes Marx's debt to Hegel.

Rockmore notes that throughout his life Marx struggled with appropriated, and elaborated on the ideas of Hegel. He flatly rejects, as did Dunayevskaya,

Readers: We want to hear from you! Write or email us! See contact information, page 11.

In 1953 Russian slave laborers in Vorkuta acted

'Russia more than ever full of revolutionaries...'

been born from a desperate rejection of the alternatives of the system of Stalinist oligarchy on the one hand, and of Western 'bourgeois' democracy on the other. The parliamentary forms and the capitalist economy of the West held little attraction for these young people thirsting for social justice, who, as they put it, 'were not ready to be seduced by motor cars and nylons.'

It is this youth group which Gerland credits with the "courage, vitality and initiative that a new kind of play is now being enacted against the same old backdrop of the camp system, while the big officers of the secret police look on and do not believe their eyes."

STRIKE IN THE VORKUTA FORCED LABOR CAMP

The reference to the "new kind of play" is to the strike at Vorkuta, in European Russia. There are between 35 to 50 mines and 250,000 workers, some free, but mostly slave. Vorkuta supplies the coal for the industries of Leningrad; and no one had ever before heard, and the totalitarian bureaucracy had surely never conceived, of a strike of slave laborers. They began sending their big shots, their top names, down to the struck mines to offer some concession.

Gerland reports from her vantage point in a women's camp. She speaks of the three types of resistance: the students already mentioned, the "believers," a religious group, and the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians had all been in the underground movement. This week the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine is in session. Premier Malenkov and Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Russian Communist Party, are both there. The whole agricultural campaign, over which Khrushchev is boss, is dependent on this rich "breadbasket of Russia."

Of all the nationalities in Russia, the Ukrainians are the ones who are carrying on actual guerrilla warfare against Russia. It is clear that this is still going on.

that the "mature" Marx broke with Hegel. Rather he sees Marx: "...as located 'within' and working out some Hegelian views while criticizing or rejecting others, which he may or may not have understood." He comes out strongly for the idea that "the philosophical dimension of Marx's position cannot be separated from its economic dimension."

Rockmore is sharply critical of Engels for elaborating a dialectic that had little in common with the Hegelian dialectic of Marx and propagating a "popularistic" reduction of philosophy. *Marx After Marxism* stresses that, from the time of his doctoral dissertation until the completion of *Capital*, Hegel and Hegelianism were a major part of Marx's writings.

MARX, ALWAYS THE HEGELIAN

Rockmore notes that the "official" Marxists, citing Althusser as an example, see Marx and Hegel as two diametrically opposed thinkers. Rockmore rejects this, and argues that Marx's theory of modern industrial society is based on a Hegelian perspective, although one would have to disagree with his description of Marx as an "idealist" if that term is understood in the traditional Marxist manner. To be a Hegelian is not to be a pure idealist.

The great contribution of Hegel was his historical approach to philosophy and the development of humanity, as was Marx's. Marx was a Hegelian. For Marx, the development of the class struggle was always placed in a historical context. To the extent that Marx argued against Hegel, it was against right-wing Hegelianism. Rockmore concludes, "The main Hegelian legacy in Marx's position concerns the transition to a historical conception of human beings and society."

Finally, Rockmore emphasizes the many ways that Marx built upon and went beyond Hegel, especially in his understanding of the economic foundations of modern capitalist society: "Marx's theories remain and will continue to remain relevant for us as long as money is in short supply, and as long as problems intrinsic to the modern industrial world, such as poverty, differences in real opportunity between the rich and the poor, and similar economic difficulties continue to endure."

—Michael Gilbert

But at this point we are concerned only with the Ukrainians who were in this forced labor camp in Vorkuta and participated in the mine strike. At the time Frau Gerland left last Aug. 5, the strike was still going on.

Another eyewitness report by a Dr. Joseph Scholmer, who had directly participated in the strike, shows that the strike continued for several weeks. "Order" was finally restored, that is to say, troops opened fire. Sixty-four were killed, 200 wounded.

Dr. Scholmer had been in the anti-Nazi resistance movement during World War II and arrested by the Gestapo in 1943, only to be rearrested by the Russians in 1950 and sent to a forced-labor camp for 25 years at hard labor. He was one of those amnestied and returned to Germany.

THE WAY TO FREEDOM

Dr. Scholmer was asked for the motives of the strike.

"Our motives?" he asked. "Oh, they were fantastically mixed. Some wanted a little better living and working conditions. Others were hoping for a 'new era' now that Stalin was dead. Some wanted to imitate the 17th of June in Germany, which we had heard described over Radio Moscow and in *Pravda*. Others wanted to destroy the system, and there was an old man in my barracks who cried over and over again, 'Have we torn down the barbed-wire fence yet? Is it down, is it down?'"

No, the barbed wire has not been torn down, and freedom from Russian totalitarianism was not won by the East German revolt either. But two new pages in history were written: whoever before June 17 had heard of a mass revolt against a totalitarian dictatorship? Whoever had, before July, heard of slave laborers forcing concessions from a police state? Two pages in history that have shown the way to freedom.

That is why the former inmates, Dr. Scholmer and Miss Gerland, speak not so much of suffering as of revolt, of freedom. Not yet? "Not yet," they too say, and go back to the quote from the great Russian poet, Pushkin, who back in 1827 wrote to his imprisoned friends:

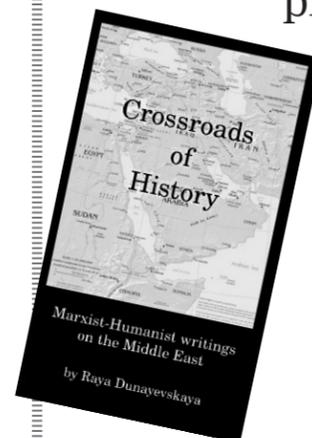
Deep in the Siberian mine,
Keep your patience proud;
The bitter toil shall not be lost,
The rebel thought unbowed...
The heavy-hanging chains will fall,
The walls will crumble at a word;
And Freedom greet you in the light,
And brothers give you back the sword.

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Communization theory and its discontents truncate Marx's dialectic

by Ron Kelch

“...after labor, from mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life...only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind...”

—Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program*

The persisting economic crisis has spurred new interest in Karl Marx, for example, at well-attended, self-organized, free Public School (PS) classes in Oakland, Calif. Much of the discussion there has been around the depth of the crisis, pointing to Marx's vision of a total revolutionary break from capitalism to a non-capitalist future. The latter is crucial, because the many revolutions that have transformed from within into monstrous authoritarian regimes have dampened thought about a possible alternative. “Communization Theory,” the topic of a PS class, projects Marx's dialectic as a total break with capitalism but without posing a need for dialectical mediation beyond capitalism.

Endnotes, an anti-vanguardist theoretical site centered in London, puts out a theoretical journal which began in 2008 as a critical exchange between former members of the journal *Aufheben* and the French journal *Théorie Communiste* which came out of the post-1968 French “ultra-left.” An article “Communisation and Value-form Theory” from 2010 (<http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/4>) constructs a line of development uniting Situationists, Communisation Theorists, and proponents of the “systematic dialectic” of Chris Arthur and Tony Smith with this dramatic conclusion:

The overcoming of capitalist social relations cannot involve a simple “liberation of labour”; rather, the only “way out” is the suppression of value itself—of the value-form which posits abstract labour as the measure of wealth. Communisation is the destruction of the commodity-form and the simultaneous establishment of immediate social relations between individuals. Value, understood as a total form of social mediation, cannot be got rid of by halves.

New “immediate social relations between individuals” means that revolution as communisation has no particular subjects like women or even workers. In this view, capital as subject has finally homogeneously subsumed all humanity. This leaves only individuals in their absolute singularity who abolish all divisions within social life. Further, the article claims that its conclusion—that the mediating totality of the value-form is replaced by immediate social relations—flows from Marx on “The Fetish Character of the Commodity” in Chapter One of *Capital*, which is quoted profusely at the beginning of the article. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

THE POWER OF ABSTRACTION

After the people of Paris created a new way of organizing their lives in the 1871 Commune, it became clear to Marx that the form in which reality presents itself to those who create that reality through their labor is absolutely a function of social relations. The commodity-form is the real-life reign of the concept of labor-time in things that rules over their creators. Human relations actually are social relations between things. The only

way out is production run by freely associated producers, for whom expending their efforts would then be done “in full self-awareness” as part of the whole. Thus, for Marx, **far from disappearing, social mediation becomes a conscious lived experience** (BF, 171).

The fantasy of immediate human relations is itself **capitalism's creation**. Humans **always** relate to each other through abstractions which, says Marx, specifically distinguishes humans from the “beasts” (CW, 30:232). The capitalist epoch forces humankind to openly confront **all** the ways the “power of abstraction” (BF, 90) shapes how humans reproduce their material and spiritual reality.

Thus, revolution for Marx was multi-linear with multi-dimensional subjects even as he focused on the self-alienating abstraction that shapes the capitalist epoch that continuously tries to negate previous forms of human relations. What happens after the revolution cannot be left at the mere negative of getting rid of the mediation of value in things without confronting mediation, that is, the power of abstraction in a positive sense.

Put another way, that means fully bringing to the fore the positive in the negative, that is, the mediation of the self-determination of the idea in what Marx called new passions and new forces striving to reconstruct society on new foundations (BF, 928). Even a cursory look at today's revolutions reveals the concrete need to realize philosophy, namely the Hegelian dialectic as Marx recreated it (see “The 200th Anniversary of Hegel's Absolute Method,” Nov.-Dec. 2012 N&L).

PRACTICE AS A FORM OF THEORY: WOMEN AND MARX'S DIALECTIC

The Women's Liberation Movement and Marx's designation in 1844 of the Man/Woman relation as the most fundamental are poles from which to investigate, practically and theoretically, one of those “new passions” of our epoch of mass movements that are also in themselves forms of theory. This year has seen the emergence of a global movement from practice against rape and violence toward women, in concert with an attempt to continue and deepen an ongoing revolution in Egypt (see “From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom,” March-April N&L).

Something has changed since 1979, when the founder of Marxist-Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya, pointed out—against the prevailing equivocation on the left—that the counterrevolution within the revolution in Iran took the form of attacking women's freedom even as she pointed to the need for “**a philosophy of total liberation such as is Marx's Humanism**” (*Crossroads of History*, 67).

Today even relatively conservative Catholic and Muslim leaders reluctantly endorsed a modest plan at a UN conference to combat violence against women in response to the global upsurge against the barbarism foisted on women. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, however, strongly objected to it as clashing with Islamic principles and being against their culture. What they no doubt didn't expect is that the head of Egypt's delegation, Mervat Tallawy, had her own idea:

“I believe in women's cause. I don't take money from the government. I work voluntarily. If they want to kick me out they can...Women are the slaves of this age. This is unacceptable, particularly in our region.”

Culture is no fossilized object but undergoes living development, a living development which is accelerated exponentially by the process of revolution.

The prominent participation of women in pre-revolution strikes and in the mass movement in Egypt's Tahrir Square, which brought down Mubarak, created new human relations. Lately, women who continue to practice a public role in moving the revolution forward are being singled out for rape. Counter-revolution gives the revolution a fixed form, whether as “culture” or a constitution in place of an ongoing unfolding of the multi-faceted idea of freedom.

A lack of theory to meet women's reason in actual revolution didn't save Communization Theory (CT) from disputes over the issue of women. The PS class in it took up an article, “Communization and the Abolition of Gender,” with the author, Maya Gonzalez, present (from *Communization and its Discontents*, edited by Benjamin Noys, on-line at: <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/CommunizationDiscontents-web.pdf>). Gonzalez, who is part of

Endnotes, challenges the claim that CT “involves the abolition of gender as much as the abolition of capitalist social relations,” noting that they do “little more than suture gender to an already existing theory of the capitalist mode of production.”

Yet Gonzalez, following CT's unilinear dialectic, also does “little more than suture” women's pre-capitalist role of sexual reproduction onto capitalist relations, making childbirth a principal force of production as the unacknowledged point of reproduction of labor power and capitalist relations. Accepting CT's view, Gonzalez writes: “The revolution as communization has no subject, no affirmable identity—not the Worker, the Multitude, or the Precariat. The real basis of any such revolutionary identity has melted away” (220).

Rather than engage Marx's original (1844) dialectical unity in difference between women and men, Gonzalez ends with the concept of equality of workers that depends on a technological breakthrough that takes women out of reproduction with test-tube babies. Such a conclusion only flows from reducing revolution to an immediate response to the development of capital as an all-encompassing mediating subject that finally subsumes all humanity. CT's view that capital makes possible the “immediate overcoming of all separations” (222) leaves no place for the universal as a new social individual in all her/his singularity emerging **through** confronting the particular barriers now dismissed as “affirmable identities.”

Why, in spite of the centrality of Man/Woman in Marx's philosophic beginnings, do Marxists fail to address its integrality to his whole body of thought, especially when our time has seen the unearthing of Marx's vast late writings on the family and pre-capitalist ethnographic studies? As Marx put it in 1844:

...the secret of the relationship of man to man finds its unambiguous, definitive, open, obvious expression in the relationship of man to woman, and in this way the direct, natural relationship between the sexes. The direct, natural, necessary relationship of man to man is the relationship of man to woman...From the character of this relation it follows to what degree man as a species has become human... (CW, 3:296-7)

Marx's reference to “the direct, natural relationship between the sexes” certainly includes within it sexuality and the reproduction of the species. The principle Marx unleashed still speaks to the concrete unfolding of the freedom idea in its multiple manifestations today. That principle was always seeing the reach for human freedom within any given level or dimension of material necessity. To grasp this aspect of Marx's humanism as total uprooting, one needs to reiterate the quality in the phrase “become human” in the quantitative measure “to what degree man as a species has become human.”

In 1844 Marx's concept of alienation **precedes** private property out of which capitalism emerged. Whatever stage of development, the determinate character of being human, humanity's species character, is human activity as free, conscious life-affirming activity in contrast to labor as a mere means to life (CW, 3:276). The same idea reappears as a continuing principle of the future in Marx's 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

This human species character is the idea that measures the particular revolutionary dimension, whether that is peasants toiling in the fields, African-American slaves, women struggling to be whole from within the patriarchal family or workers fighting both for a shorter work day and against the domination of capital, the machine, in their everyday working lives. The fundamental question that persists before, during and after overcoming production for value is: Is the human being the free, conscious architect of her own life activity or is that activity a mere means, whether in relation to her capacity to produce new humans or as a satisfier of needs? Within Man/Woman, says Marx, one sees the degree to which a human being is needed as a human being.

When Marx implicitly brings in human reproduction by alluding to the natural species connection in the man/woman relation, he is not talking about reproduction in relation to capitalism, namely, the point of reproduction of labor-power, through which many feminist Marxists search for theoretical validity for women's subjectivity. No, Marx is talking about multiple paths to freedom within the realm of material necessity. Our epoch shows that revolutions live or die depending on whether they deepen along these multiple paths which confront **now** what happens after a revolutionary break with capitalism's particular form of self-alienating, self-deluding social necessity.

* Alternate translation in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works* (International Publishers: New York) vol. 24, p. 87, further referenced as “CW” with the volume number and page number in the text, except for the commonly used Ben Fowkes translation of *Capital*, (London: Penguin, 1976), which is referenced with “BF.”



The self-organization of the masses in Paris in 1871, in which women played a leading role, helped Marx deepen his philosophy of liberation.

ESSAY

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ON THE MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES

The Draft Perspectives (“Capitalism’s violence, masses’ revolt show need for total view,” May-June *N&L*) was effective in ending with Arab Spring and philosophy. It comes just shy of saying Egypt didn’t succeed because of a void in philosophy by saying a void of philosophy is being felt. How can a total philosophy make a difference? We see who has the better military power, ask whom should the U.S. arm, which rebels. But the Draft Perspectives is talking about something completely different.

David M’oto
Bay Area, Calif.

I like the discussion of nuclear brinkmanship in the Draft Perspectives. I was surprised that Israel wasn’t mentioned first in that regard. I was trying to sort out what I think about Iran. I made the mistake of seeing the movie *Argo*, which was offensive. An Iranian woman was furious because the film collapsed the four years after the revolution—including the joy of getting rid of the Shah, which was not even presented—into getting the Americans out.

Jerry
Northern California

A woman from Ethiopia told me that what is in *N&L* is not found in other newspapers. Even in this day of the internet it’s still important to have a paper. Prisoners, many in Third World countries, many poor people, don’t have internet access.

Dan P.
Detroit

How do we present the philosophic structure of the nuclear brink being played out? The fact that the U.S. spends more on its military than the next ten countries combined manifests a sham allegiance to democracy and peace. The lie of the non-proliferation treaty is that it is really a framework for proliferation. Whatever the particular issue, the philosophic depth exposes not just the difference/opposition between the lie of the show and the reality, but the total contradiction. The contradiction, when experienced as a living one within the subject, drives toward a resolution.

Urszula Wislanka
Oakland, Calif.

I am impressed with the depth of the detail of the situation we’re in as presented in the Draft Perspectives. I am proud to be associated with this organization, which puts out such a document. It reviews so much of what is going on. It may seem bleak, since the situation is so dire. But people are fighting back.

Dee Perkins
Phoenix

My first national gathering of News and Letters Committees was amazing. All the reports—which covered local, national, and international struggles—

were clear and the dialog after was exciting. There was a feeling of camaraderie and we had many opportunities to talk about *News & Letters* and our work. I learned a great deal from the presentations by new and veteran members. Everyone pitched in, especially in the care and feeding of out-of-towners. It was a pleasure to attend a gathering of Left dedicated activists without partisan wrangling. News and Letters Committees is a great organization and the people are great people. I encourage everyone to contact our Chicago office or a local branch and think about joining.

Michael Gilbert
New York

CROSSROADS OF HISTORY

Enclosed please find \$10 for the book *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya, and please renew the subscription to *News & Letters*. I regret learning that *N&L* is now published every two months as opposed to monthly, particularly during this present economic crisis, which should be a main topic of discussion within the pages of *N&L*.

Latino prisoner
Terre Haute, Indiana

Thanks to the donor who made it possible to send me *Crossroads of History* and *Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers*. I appreciate having some radical words to read in a very reactionary environment.

Prisoner
Bastrop, Texas

As this is being written, it remains unclear whether or how the U.S. administration will follow through on its stated intention of providing lethal aid to Syrian rebels it deems worthy of support. From the first massacres of civilians by the Assad regime, it’s been clear that the U.S. and its allies have had no particular interest in Assad’s revolutionary overthrow. The 100,000 dead were not enough of a “red line”?

At the Left Forum in New York in June, Syrian activist Joseph Daher scoffed at the idea, common to many on the pro-Assad “Left,” that the U.S. has already armed anti-Assad rebels. Daher described a situation in which only Assad’s forces and the fundamentalists are well-armed. He probably put his finger on the U.S. government’s motives when he said, “If you want us to lose, just keep doing what you’re doing. Nothing.”

Gerry Emmett
Chicago

At a meeting in Chicago, people were nominally Left and yet very hostile to the idea that Assad and Quaddafi were no longer revolutionary—as if they ever were. Those people said, “It’s im-

BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON CAPITALIST STATE REPRESSION

It’s ridiculous that all the media jumped on the bandwagon of calling Edward Snowden—who told the world about the U.S. government over-the-top and outrageous surveillance of all our phone and internet records—a “leaker.” He’s a whistleblower or a muckraker, letting the world know the shaky ground the U.S. stands on when it touts its freedom and the privacy of the individual. Words matter and the media should know that better than most.

Media critic
Illinois

The secrets Snowden revealed show that the government is spying on pretty much everyone’s phone calls, emails, and other electronic communications. Almost all of the debate—left, right, and center—is confined within the bounds of how much spying is warranted, assuming that the state is there to protect the people and is

therefore legitimate. Nonsense! The state’s function is to protect order, which means protecting class rule, whether the enemy is Al Qaeda, the French President, Occupy Wall Street, workers on strike, or some small peace group in Oregon—all of whom we know have been spied on. The state’s need for secrecy is above all to keep the mass of people from understanding that we are the enemy they’re repressing.

Revolutionary
Southern California

What Snowden told the world is frightening. Even if you don’t fear Obama, somewhere along the line a Right-wing ideologue with some power will get his hands on that information and start gunning for the Left and for liberals, and then watch out! It’s not like it hasn’t happened before.

Concerned citizen
Bremerton, Wash.

READERS’ VIEWS

moral for you to be at this meeting with your position on Syria.” Others said it is our duty to oppose everything the U.S. government does. Really? I don’t think that’s how to get to a new society. What’s immoral is to support dictators just because they also happen to be against the U.S.

January
Chicago

Marx was opposed to those who called themselves Marxists, yet who wanted to “sit out” the Civil War. We have the same battle today with post-Marx Marxists who actually are cheerleaders for crushing Bosnian self-determination or for Assad’s massacre against his own people. It’s a farce and a tragedy having “Marxists” defend Assad and Russia in Syria.

Bob McGuire
Chicago

LABOR UNITY

Trade Fair workers have returned to work but conditions are not good. As a strong supporter of the workers, I think the union made a mistake in stopping the energetic mass picket lines of store workers, and going to a system of rotating pickets. It became hard to tell people to boycott the stores since there were no pickets except occasionally. But something more profound is involved.

Trade Fair workers belonged to two different locals: meat department workers and everyone else. Under the contract and U.S. labor law, the workers in the local with a contract, as sympathetic as they may have been, could not legally walk out in support of the meat department workers. So it was business as usual for Trade Fair. This old-style craft unionism will be the death of the labor movement. Here’s hoping that next time, everyone will walk and defy the draconian labor laws.

Union supporter
Queens, N.Y.

You hear a lot about sweatshops in the Third World, but I live in Los Angeles and we have the same thing here.

Healthcare worker
Los Angeles

I was really taken with the archives column where Dunayevskaya said “Hegel’s Absolute Idea is for workers.” She said she wanted a worker present at meetings discussing the writing of her book, because unless the most profound ideas are expressed in a way for workers to understand, it has no meaning. You have to use a language that doesn’t water down Hegel but is clearly understandable.

Retiree
California

Manufacturers in Bangladesh and many other countries are so squeezed by retailers that their need for surplus value forces them to keep wages low and hours long, and to cut corners. Just as Wal-Mart executives don’t have to order managers to have workers work overtime off the clock, because they impose cost and productivity requirements unattainable without cheating, so Wal-Mart demands production costs and timetables of suppliers that can only be achieved by driving the workers hard and harder. The corporations at the top of the global heap force down wages not only for their own employees but for those of other companies. A legal fig leaf hides their actual control of production. They use their worldwide reach and cut-throat competition to drive down other costs such as environmental or building safety regulations.

Observer
Memphis

WOMEN’S LIBERATION

Marx said a lot about what it means to be human, including being “in the absolute movement of becoming.” I love that; we would say in the Women’s Liberation Movement that we did not know what a free woman was or would be because she has never existed. Isn’t this why Dunayevskaya wrote that it would take a revolution for all of us to “become whole”? The absolute movement of becoming is another way of saying revolution in permanence.

Women’s Liberationist
Chicago

As the articles “Violence ‘normalized’” and “Rape and lies in Syria” (May-June *N&L*) report, violence against women—in its many forms—is callously ignored, pushed aside or lied



about the world over. Not enough people take it seriously. We need a world where all people deeply respect each other!

Elise
Chicago

A new report by One Law for All, “Siding with the Oppressor: The Pro-Islamist Left,” exposes Stop the War Coalition, Respect Party, Unite Against Fascism and individuals such as Ken Livingstone and George Galloway and their agenda and methods. This section of the Left uses accusations of racism and Islamophobia and a conflation of Muslim with Islam in order to defend Islamism and Islam rather than out of any concern for prejudice against Muslims or their rights, particularly since Muslims or those labelled as such are the first victims of Islamism and are on the frontlines of resisting it. The report is available as a free download on One Law for All’s website.

Maryam Namazie
London

OUTRAGE AGAINST RACISM

The trial of George Zimmerman, who killed Black teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida, resonates with almost every Black man in the U.S. Most have been made into objects of suspicion at least once, humiliated and degraded by the authorities. Detroit’s first Black mayor Coleman A. Young was elected on a wave of outrage against a police crackdown against Black men in 1973. In New York today, communities are fighting back against a Stop and Frisk law under which 80% of those stopped are Black and Latino men. Trayvon Martin’s murder reminds us of the needed social change, whatever the trial’s outcome.

Former teacher
Detroit

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES RESIST

I am sick of the way the government is trying to take away the benefits of the personal assistants who make it possible for those of us with disabilities to function. They want to lower their hours, their pay, their health insurance and everything else. Don’t they understand that doing these things affects the lives of two people, not just one? Don’t they understand that if I don’t have a personal assistant I can’t get out of bed in the morning? They think that because we are disabled we won’t or can’t fight back. We have to keep proving them wrong, or they will take away everything.

Disabled activist
Chicago

CAPITALISM STOMPS ON PEOPLE, ANIMALS AND PLANET

A developer plans to build a 55-acre \$195-300 million sports facility in Chicago. At least \$100 million is from taxpayers. It will have a basketball arena for DePaul University. One site mentioned was Washington Park, which already has many of the amenities that will be in the new facility. That neighborhood has been devastated by poverty and is being taken over by white people moving into the area. The area has been called "underperforming" by the City, which says the facility will foster "economic growth." At the same time, Chicago is closing 49 public schools on the west and south sides, also calling them "underperforming." The human, logical thing to do is to skip the sports facility and use that money to keep open and improve those 49 schools. Many students will now have to cross gang territory to get to their new schools. And one school is sending its 400 students to a school that only has 200 students now. Parents are worried about overcrowding in the classroom and whether there will be enough resources, especially for disabled kids who may need extra help.

**Suzanne Rose
Chicago**

As on Chicago's South Side, gentrification, a systematic destruction of communities of color, is happening in cities all over the U.S. We're talking about people's lives. Greed and power put human needs second, as opposed to Marxist-Humanism which embodies a belief in the full development of the person. Erich Fromm led me to Marx's 1844 Manuscripts and his essay on alienation. As long as we don't control our lives we are alienated from our own reality. Social estrangement is related to community struggles. The slogan of immigrants that "No one is illegal" shows that we have to create a society where that is in fact a reality.

**Labor defender
New York City**

The reality we're facing is daunting: the more aware I am of the idea of freedom, the more aware I become of unfreedoms. The yuppifying of cities is a real estate grab. It happened in New York and Toronto, now it's happening to San Francisco. The environmental movement seems to be at odds with workers. Environmentalists need to be challenged on Not In My Back Yard and shaming as a strategy. The question of "what kind of labor" is now posed also as "what are we building, not just how."

**Living in the city
San Francisco**



Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signed a bill to allow fracking. What are our legislators thinking of? We get lies and more lies. We know regulations don't protect anything. What happened to the Gulf of Mexico and the Sea of Valdez? There are no extra jobs; the jobs go to outsiders who drive millions of gallons of water and toxic chemicals into the land, where earthquakes are happening in Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas. Please sign our manifesto at <http://www.dontfractureillinois.net/a-fracking-manifesto-from-the-people-of-illinois-to-the-nation/>

**Kathy Cummings
Illinois**

I attended the Robert Stone film "Pandora's Promise" at what I thought would be a discussion about nuclear energy but it was one-sided. Each pro-nuclear person was portrayed as reasonable while anti-nuclear folks were portrayed as hysterical, purely emotional. Disingenuously, many of the pro-nuclear folks claimed they were once anti-nuke. Questions and comments were taken from the audience, but the panel members put down anti-nuke commentators. I am disappointed that the event was so one-sided rather than a real debate.

**Environmentally aware
Chicago**

I'm not an animal rights activist. I believe that we need to make this a better world for humans first. But pictures or videos of farmers inflicting senseless pain upon a multitude of innocent animals infuriate me. And now agribusiness lobbies from Iowa, Florida and Minnesota have bills aimed at punishing animal rights activists and whistleblowers, painting them as "eco-terrorists." They want to deny people their right to the truth. This seems crazy. It's those inflicting abuse on the animals who are "eco-terrorists," not the activist who takes risks to record and expose this cruelty.

**A reader
Midwest**

THUNDER OF FREEDOM

Sue Sojourner's book, *Thunder of Freedom*, has been published by the University Press of Kentucky in a wonderful hardbound edition. A veteran of the civil rights movement, she worked as an activist in Holmes County, Mississippi, from 1964 through 1969. Her book tells of the real dangers and fears that the local activists experienced and how they built one of the most effective grassroots movements in Mississippi.

It is marred somewhat by a "writing consultant's" efforts to frame the narrative in terms of "leadership" and administrative-mentality. After all, during much of the 1960s, people of the movement acted with a clear sense of participatory democracy, grassroots involvement, spontaneity, direct action, and community solidarity. We did not act to create "leadership" cadres.

I also recommend the following books: *Indignant Heart* by Charles Denby, the autobiography of a black activist; and *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* by John Alan. Both were published by my friends in News and Letters Committees.

**Seamas Cain
Minnesota**

FROM BEHIND BARS



I find N&L very insightful. It speaks on the broader issues around the world that this country's mainstream media fail to do. I do want to thank the many people who continue to donate the funds for prisoners who can't afford to receive this insightful newspaper.

**Prisoner
Houtzdale, Penn.**

Thank you so much for the awesome and informative mind inferno that is contained in your newspaper. I pass them on so others can exercise their minds. We are not allowed to have Marxist materials in our library because they say it leads to "riotous behavior." I would like to start a library in my cell locker so I can teach and educate through materials not otherwise provided. I am indigent and without family so obtaining materials is hard. I encourage other offenders to stand up for their rights and not become victims of this capitalist tyranny we call prison.

**Prisoner
Snyder, Texas**

When the masses of people wake up and fight the power as we are supposed to, only then will the war machine, the oppressor, the repressor be destroyed and its walls come crumbling down. Reporting live from within new Folsom State Prison, stand strong!

**Prisoner
Represa, Calif.**

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5, the price of a subscription, for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others. A donation of \$8 pays for a subscription plus the new Pelican Bay Hunger Strike pamphlet to be sent to a prisoner.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS

by Raya Dunayevskaya

- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today**
Foreword by Joel Kovel \$24.95
- Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** \$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition.
Foreword by Adrienne Rich \$24.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** \$24.95
- The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx** \$24.95
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Dunayevskaya en Español

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- Dos ensayos por Raya Dunayevskaya** \$5.00

by Charles Denby

- Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal**
Includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya \$14.95

**Pamphlets published by
News and Letters Committees**

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by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya \$8.00
- Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles: Race, Philosophy & the Needed American Revolution**
by John Alan \$10.00
- Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers: 'We want to be validated as human'** \$5.00
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Turkey: Chicago is with you!

Editor's note: Demonstrations were held throughout June in Chicago, as in many cities around the world, in solidarity with the occupation of Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey. The chants included, "Erdogan resign!" "Occupy Turkey, you are not alone," and, "Occupy Chicago, you are not alone." Here are some of the voices from Chicago's June 3 demonstration.

For over a decade, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) has been limiting our freedoms. For example, they recently tried to ban alcohol after 10:00 PM. We had enough of it. Gezi Park in Taksim Square is like Central Park in New York. Prime Minister Erdogan's administration wanted to knock it down and build a shopping mall, just to earn more money.

What started as an environmental protest in Taksim Square was non-violent. As soon as the protest started, the police started attacking with gas bombs. It grew to represent the fight against the suppressive government. That's why we're here. People have been killed. Many have been wounded, even blinded, because of the bombs.

The fact that protests spread so fast signifies that the modern Turkish people have had enough of this administration. The government changed the law and the only way we can express ourselves is by protesting.

—Young woman from Turkey

In Turkey there is pressure on the freedom of speech

Immigrants rally

Los Angeles—on June 13, 500 immigrants and their supporters held a press conference at a downtown immigrant detention center to protest the mass detention and deportations of undocumented immigrants under the "Secure Community" (SC) policies. SC, initiated by the Bush administration and continued by Obama's, targets primarily Latino immigrants through cooperation between the Immigration Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) and local police throughout the U.S.

Organized by CHIRLA for Father's Day under the theme of "family unity," speakers made the point that immigrants are mostly economic migrant workers, and being undocumented does not make them criminals. A mariachi band played and sang for those detained inside and activists shouted in unison at the prison windows: "Feliz dia del padre" and "Happy Father's Day."

Afterwards, we marched to the L.A. County Twin Tower Prison, where many immigrants are detained. We chanted: "Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha!" (Listen, Obama, we're in the struggle!) Many unions were there along with other organizations. Signs included: "Keep Families Together," "Immigration Reform 2013," and "Family means no one gets left behind."

The rally ended by all participants being asked to pressure Congress to pass a humane immigration reform bill as fast as possible.

—Basho



by Suzanne Rose

The disabilities rights group ADAPT demonstrated its frustration with the Obama Administration in April in Washington, D.C., crashing through barricades at Pennsylvania and 17th Street and blocking an entrance to the White House. At a rally outside the White House, 41 people were arrested. ADAPT gave the administration failing grades for leadership, integrity and engagement. "In nearly every way, President Obama and his administration have failed to live up to the promises about community living that he made during his presidential campaigns," said Josue Rodriguez of Memphis.

Campaigners have demonstrated in Cornwall, England, following the re-election of a councilor who previously said disabled children "should be put down." Collin Brewer resigned from the Cornwall Council in February over those remarks. But in May he was voted back in. Protester Pete Skea, who has cerebral palsy, wanted to know exactly how Brewer thought he should have been "put down" as a child.

An April ruling in Los Angeles, Calif., by a federal judge says that immigrants who are too mentally disabled to represent themselves in deportation proceedings are entitled to free legal assistance. Until now, some defendants stayed in detention centers for years after a judge declared them incompetent. Previously immigrants fighting deportation had to either hire private attorneys or represent themselves.



Franklin Dmitryev/News & Letters

and on television and newspapers. None of them are telling the true story. Erdogan doesn't care about us. He tells the police to attack people using gas bombs.

It became more than protecting a park. It's protecting our democracy. We want Turkey to be secular, and our Prime Minister wants Islamic culture. He's behaving like a dictator. We don't want to fight. What we want is to stop the violence of the police. We want democracy.

—Young Turkish woman

Seven days ago I was in Gezi Park, with friends, and we had no idea what was about to happen. They asked me if we have nice parks in Chicago with trees. They must have known what was going on. I must have irritated them because I said our lakefront is all parks.

A lot of the population is not going along with Erdogan. I support those standing up for freedom of speech and not to have their secular state eroded.

I'm a working man, I try to do what I can when I can. I felt a connection to the working people in Turkey, with the people on the street, sharing their concerns about banning liquor after 10:00 PM, and public displays of affection. They were really upset about that. There's a whole myriad of issues including that they're tearing down historical monuments and green spaces so they can build more malls.

—Working-class Chicagoan

We are here because we want to support our people in Turkey. Erdogan has been making bad decisions for 11 years. We are telling him this is not right, you have to do the best thing for your people. But he was just doing things for money, for his benefit. He made a lot of bad changes on health, social security, education. I just came to the U.S. ten days ago.

With the occupation of Gezi Park, Turkish people are standing up because we don't want that government anymore. We want to show our emotions and our thoughts in this way.

Turkey is not a religious country. But this government is not letting us be democratic. Newspapers are always printing pictures like women in head scarves. This is not Turkey.

—Young man from Turkey

Conflict at Left Forum

New York, N.Y.—The annual Left Forum conference drew over 4,000 participants here on June 7-9. The atmosphere was quite different from last year, when an infusion of youth from Occupy Wall Street brought with them the excitement of an actual movement. (See articles on workshops, pages 2 and 11.)

Some of the most interesting participants this year were young people, like two women college students from Vermont who passionately discussed sexual assault on their campus and their excitement about the idea of writing their struggle up for *News & Letters*.

Young women and men asked many of the probing questions at the two workshops that included speakers from News and Letters Committees: "Human Paths of Development vs. Capitalist Development," and "From Detroit to the Marcellus Shale, from South America to Central Europe: Struggles for sustainable human development." Both featured a lively exchange of ideas.

Two controversies roiled the conference. News and Letters and some others have established solidarity with the revolution in Syria, in opposition to Assad as well as to attempts to hijack the revolution by fundamentalists, and with no illusions about the U.S. government's role (see "Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt," p. 1). Pro-Assad leftists equated the spontaneous Syrian rebellion with U.S. imperialism.

Some participants demanded uncritical support of Bolivia's government, whereas we and others denounced its attacks on striking workers and on Indigenous people resisting "development" plans. The controversy was amplified because Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera was a speaker at the closing plenary.

When Garcia began to speak, people held up signs demanding the release of imprisoned strikers as well as "U.S. imperialism hands off Bolivia!" The organizers suddenly canceled the question/comment session. Audience members demanded a comment session.

Garcia quoted Karl Marx to whitewash his government's capitalist path of development. But his conclusions were the opposite of Marx's, who held a multilinear concept of development such that not every society necessarily had to go through capitalism. Garcia, however, argued that the Bolivian state is revolutionary and whatever strengthens the state advances the revolution; therefore, Indigenous peoples and striking workers who oppose state plans are counter-revolutionary.

Cutting off comments on a controversial topic, at a conference that is supposed to encourage free debate, speaks volumes about the contradictions within the Left.

—Marxist-Humanist participants

EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

The practices developed in war are used on prisoners at home, just as practices developed to deal with U.S. prisoners become the basis for conduct against the "enemy" in, for example, Iraq's Abu Ghraib. While the world was horrified in 2006 by images of debasing humiliation perpetrated by Pennsylvania prison-guards-turned-soldiers, prisoners in the U.S. were not at all surprised, as similar humiliations are their daily fare.

Just as the criminal injustice system is an essential part of preserving the exploitative structure of society, so the revolts, voices and thoughts of prisoners are part of the dialectics of liberation needed to revolutionize society and break its class structure.

On July 8 California prisoners being held in solitary confinement at the Pelican Bay "security housing unit" (SHU) for indeterminate periods will resume their hunger strike (see "SHU hunger strike," p. 9). The demands—end group punishment; abolish "debriefing"; end the torture of long-term solitary confinement; provide nutritious food and expand available programs—share one basis: to recognize prisoners as human beings.

In forging the unity needed to hold a hunger strike and change the condition of all prisoners, they are rejecting the racial and ethnic divisions fostered and exploited by prison authorities, and reaching to create new human relations.

When prisoners anywhere go on a hunger strike, they are saying: you are killing us. And if we die, we want our death to have significance so others won't experience the same torture and injustice.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT = TORTURE

Solitary confinement, institutionalized long-term denial of any human contact, is an indictment of the whole system—from Guantanamo Bay to California's Department of "Corrections and Rehabilitation," which tortures over 11,000 people in solitary. The U.S. admits to having over 80,000 people in solitary at any one time.

The struggle against solitary confinement has shaken up and inspired new sections of the population. The success of Mississippi's prisons in reducing violence by shutting down solitary was so spectacular that Emmitt Sparkman, the head of its Department of Corrections, is now an open advocate of closing SHUs.

Bills currently debated in Texas, Florida and California would ban the solitary confinement of youth. A special report on torture by the UN has called for an international ban on solitary for any person under 18 years of age.² A national conversation on the use of solitary in detention camps, where people have not, in fact, been convicted of any crime, is beginning.

Support the hunger strikers in Guantanamo Bay and Pelican Bay by direct solidarity *and* by opposing the rotten class society that has built this vast torture apparatus to protect itself! The implicit humanism underlying the struggles of prisoners must be made explicit as an organic part of a banner of revolution.

2. The August 5, 2011, report by Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, also found that "any imposition of solitary confinement beyond 15 days constitutes torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, depending on the circumstances" and "should be subject to an absolute prohibition." (<http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/66/268&Lang=E>)

Voice from Turkey

continued from p. 1

That first day, there were about 25 mostly environmentalists; the following day, hundreds; in a few days, hundreds of thousands.

It became possible to talk about every topic that had been taboo. Not just about Kurds, or Armenians, but women. A man who came to the square with his wife started beating her, as was usual. He was stopped, somewhat violently, by others there. He could not understand: "This is my wife, I love her and I beat her! What's it to you?"

THE LEAP IN HUMAN RELATIONS

Human relations in the square leaped ahead 20 years in those few days. No one can sell anything in the plaza. Any resources that come in—food, water, blankets—have to be shared. When the police attacked with gas and firepower, there are photographs of a Kurdish youth running hand-in-hand with a Turkish youth. This would have been unthinkable a couple months ago!

People living near the square put up signs in windows: "If you're running from the police, my apartment is a safe haven, ring unit 6." In makeshift clinics in local hotels, doctors have organized medical aid to those injured by police, since the police do not allow ambulances to transport the wounded and instead of taking them to hospitals, they detain and arrest the wounded. A general strike has been called for.

Of course we want democracy. But calls for abstract democracy do not challenge the system. That leads only to political solutions. Real change can come only through a people's revolution. Democracy cannot be the goal, it can only be a step toward the changes we need.

—Activist from Turkey

Countering far-right racism in the UK

London, England—Suspected hate crimes against Muslims are on the increase following the killing of British soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich in May. Corporal Rigby was stabbed to death in the street by two men thought to be Islamic fundamentalists, prompting a resurgence of the British far right's anti-Islam politics and violence nationwide.

"The vilification of Islam and Muslims is getting worse day by day," said Fazilat Shivji in an interview with BBC news after witnessing an arson attack on Granby Mosque in Milton Keynes. "I think I am more scared now than at 9/11, which is surprising."

Over 140 alleged hate crimes were reported via a government helpline in the two days following the murder of Corporal Rigby, at times prompting additional police deployments to protect "vulnerable targets" across London.

Organizations like the English Defence League (EDL) are attempting to capitalize on the Woolwich killing. "We have seen a sudden outpouring of racism and speedily-organised mobilizations by the EDL," claimed an anonymous author on the blog "While Rome Burns." "The death of Lee Rigby was a gift for the EDL," claimed the blogger, "and they have not been slow to utilise it...to get in that window of opportunity while everyone's feelings are still raw."

The EDL has gained notoriety since its founding in

SHU hunger strike

Prisoners in California's Security Housing Units (SHUs) gave prison officials almost two years to act on promises made during the massive peaceful hunger strikes to protest their indefinite placement in solitary confinement.

Their basic demand was that "gang validation," as cause for placement in solitary indefinitely, be based on evidence of criminal gang activity, not on rumors, innuendos and guards' opinions of material such as books, journals or art found in prisoners' possessions.

The official response was a supposedly new "Strategic Threat Group" classification system, which the prisoners read as codifying the existing arbitrariness of the now renamed "strategic threat group" validation and vastly expanding the number of people who might get caught up in it.

The prisoners state: "The basis for our decision to resume our nonviolent peaceful protest has been made individually, while presented collectively, on behalf of ourselves, and all similarly situated prisoners, as well as non-prisoners, who are adversely affected by the inhumane policies/practices..."

"The undisputable fact is that many of us have been held in solitary confinement for the past 10 to 40 years based on fabricated information provided by prisoners who have been tortured to the point they provide false information to IGI (Internal Gang Investigation Unit), to get out of the SHU/Ad-Seg. Few of us, if any, have ever been formally charged with, or found guilty of, a single illegal, gang-related act.

"[B]ased on the CDCR's (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) failure to meaningfully address our Five Core Demands, we have no alternative avenues to obtain the long overdue changes, in a timely manner, other than giving the CDCR until July 8 to meet our demands." The prisoners reaffirm their five core demands from 2011. (See <http://www.prisons.org/documents/FinalNoticewith5CoreDemands.doc>)

As examples of changes urgently needed: (a) SHU confinement shall be solely for determinate terms [no more indeterminate SHU terms!]; (b) Ad-Seg confinement...not to exceed 11 months, absent formal charges being filed; (c) Step Down Program shall be for a maximum duration of 18 months, and available to give prisoners an opportunity to shorten the duration of their determinate SHU term.

They ask that prisoners participating in the peaceful hunger strike not be retaliated against by guards and the system through write-ups, transfers, refusal of medical care, removal of their property, etc. They also ask that SHU prisoners be allowed access to programming, supplies, visiting, etc., which are available to others in administratively segregated units and are already included in the Department's Operational Manual.

They conclude: "In addition...we came to realize that we here in Pelican Bay State Prison SHU were not the only ones who have been tortured with solitary confinement and countless deprivations for the past 10 to 40 years. That all our fellow men and women prisoners all across California, from all security levels 1 through 4 and across all of these United States, in both federal and state prisons, have suffered similarly to us here. But most have never had a voice or forum to lay out their demands for change."

—The BPS-SHU Short Corridor Representatives

The full statement is available at <http://prisonhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/2013/02/14/peaceful-protest-to-resume-july-8th-2013-if-demands-are-not-met/#more-2219>

2009 due to violent demonstrations and political stunts intended to intimidate or directly harm opponents. Claiming to be a "a human rights organization" dedicated to "peacefully protesting against Islamic extremism," EDL members have committed numerous acts of violence against individual Muslims, left-wing activists and police officers.

In one incident in Portsmouth in 2011, EDL members tried to circumvent a police cordon to attack anti-fascist activists with scaffolding poles looted from a nearby building site. Individual EDL members have given Nazi-style salutes in public, the latest on June 8 whilst gathering near a war memorial in Sheffield, despite the organization's official line being one of anti-fascism.

"They claimed to be coming here peacefully," said Sheffield Central Labour MP Paul Blomfield to the *Morning Star* newspaper, "but I am disgusted that they stood in front of the war memorial and gave a Nazi salute, then chanted obscenities at the police and towards Sheffield's Muslim citizens."

Some believe that much of the Left is unnecessarily worrying and that "Left-wing fantasists" are actually assisting the EDL publicity drive by panicking over the organization's growth in activity. Patrick Hayes, in an article for the online magazine *Spiked Plus*, claimed that such fears are "unwittingly helping to bolster the knackered EDL."

Hayes claimed that the struggling British National Party (BNP)—an openly racist organization that has recently suffered a serious of election defeats and publicity nightmares—would require "a very big resurgence" to "make new inroads" on the political scene. Talk of an "explosion in far-right hate" thus remains "squarely in the heads of scaremongering commentators."

Despite the apparent political blunders of both the EDL and BNP—BNP leader Nick Griffin recently declared that the suspected killers of Corporal Rigby should be "wrapped in pigskin and shot again"—a potential resurgence in race hate and nationalism is still cause for concern.

Aside from an increasing number of aggressive demonstrations, EDL involvement in racially and religiously motivated attacks appears to be growing. Despite claims from the organization's leader—former BNP member Paul Harris, who goes by the alias "Tommy Robinson"—to be innocent of any wrongdoing, EDL graffiti was found close to the site of a Somali community centre in Muswell Hill, London. The centre was torched on the morning of June 5 in what is being treated as a suspected arson attack.

"I think they (the EDL) are enjoying a resurgence," said Ray McHale, a trade union activist and socialist from Cheshire, "Hopefully it will peak and drop off quite quickly, but this may depend on events. Obviously, the Lee Rigby murder has been a channel to allow a lot of below-the-surface racism to come out into the open.

"I think the main lesson I have learnt is that action to counter these groups needs to have a clear eye on how things are viewed by the wider public. If they intend to march through an area, especially with a high ethnic population, or to protest outside mosques, then counter-demonstrations are very important—emphasizing the unity of the community against them."

—Dan Read

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Moscow police arrested about 20 LGBT rights activists as they protested a proposed law, which has already passed Russia's lower house, to ban gay "propaganda"—disseminating information about "non-traditional" sexual relations to minors. Human rights groups suspect that debate around the law is partly responsible for the recent murders of two men.

A rally in Cleveland, Ohio, for a 17-year-old Transgender woman of color, Cemia Dove, who was stabbed multiple times and found in a pond, protested police refusal to call her murder a hate crime. The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation/GLAAD and Transgender rights blogs have spoken out against media that misstated Ms. Dove's gender.

Leaders of Israel's Queer community declared that the killings of two Queer youths, Nir Katz and Liz Trubeshi, at a Tel Aviv LGBT center were hate crimes, despite police claiming the gunmen, who have been arrested, intended to kill someone else at the center for personal reasons.

Archaeologists in the Czech Republic have unearthed a 5,000-year-old Corded Ware skeleton, physically presenting as male but buried as was traditional for Corded Ware women: lying on the left side, head pointing to the east, and with an egg-shaped pot. Men were buried on their right sides, heads pointing west, with objects such as weapons and hammers.

Yemen's Change Square

by Afrah Nasser

When Change Square in Sana'a became the focal point for Yemeni pro-democracy protests in 2011, one of the first posters to appear called the demonstrations there the "first step towards our civil state."

It was remarkable to find such a poster in a country that has always been known for its socio-tribal form of power structure. But that was a period of hope. Change Square was transformed into a collective of tents housing hundreds of activists. Today, however, after two years, the square has been cleared.

Before 2011, the square was just a regular large traffic space in front of Yemen's new Sana'a University campus. Change Square became a heavily politicized space. As independent revolutionaries progressively lost influence with the main political opposition, they



Children chant, "The people, it's over, the regime has collapsed," June 5, 2011, celebrating Saleh's departure.

came to own the square. But as time went on, the independent change advocates could only watch as other more influential political powers hijacked the Square and, eventually, the uprising that it symbolized.

In April, after President Abdrabu Mansur Hadi's decrees reshuffling the country's military structure, the Change Square Organizing Committee—which is now affiliated with Yemen's opposition alliance, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP)—announced that protesters' tents would be cleared and that the weekly Friday prayers would cease.

Some of the oldest tents in the square belonged to Yemen's Muslim Brotherhood, to members of Al-Islah political party, and to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Tawakkol Karman. She summoned reporters to a press conference at the end of April to declare that she was removing her tent and that she endorsed the whole move by the organizational committee.

Despite Ms. Karman's stature, the dynamics of the change in Change Square are suspect. One of the square's core activists, Rathwan Al Haimi, thinks that the decision to evacuate the square did not represent what the uprising stands for.

The decision was, he says, "a result of an accord between the First Armored Division and the JMP who long ago hijacked the revolution and transformed it into a mere political crisis. We independent young revolutionaries had no say on this whatsoever."

Hani Al Junid, a socialist activist and journalist, explains how Al-Islah attained dominance in the square: "They managed perfectly to get huge numbers of young people into the square and had an absolute grip of the square's dynamics, thanks to their money."

But then a new need emerged—to provide medical treatment to the hundreds who were injured in the 2011 protests against the new "consensus" government. That demand was met, after a fashion, but there were indications of corrupt distribution of aid. Dozens of protesters continued to suffer, with severe physical injuries untreated. Now the square is empty, and whatever momentum existed there has been dissipated.

Blogger and political activist Fatima Al Aghbri laments the evacuation of the square: "How can we say the revolution succeeded and simply abandon the square while there is so much to be done? They are killing the revolution slowly... Prisons are still full of political prisoners, wounded protesters have not all been treated, youth's voice is still marginalized. Half of the current government consists of remnants of the old regime, and opposition parties have been assigned to rule and have allowed immunity to murderers."

Change Square was the seed of Yemen's uprising, and the momentum built up there was a driving influence behind the changes of the past two years. The scene in the square was extremely politicized and polarized, but it gave birth to a wonderful and outspoken political movement of people who are determined to continue the revolutionary work that they started.

"Just because the square was evacuated, that doesn't mean we'll quit our political activism. The revolution lies within us," says Mr. Al Junid. —May 6, 2013

Used with permission from The National. Afrah Nasser is a freelance journalist from Yemen, based in Sweden since 2011. You can follow her at www.afrahnasser.blogspot.com.

Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt

continued from p. 1

“A few weeks ago, things would have been different. The Kurds and Kemalists would have been fighting in the streets; the Gay men harassed or jeered, the Armenians trying to keep a low profile, and everyone would have been watching what they said—as afraid of each other as they are of the government. But in Gezi Park this weekend they are all here. The media calls it a carnival or a festival. But it’s much more organized than that—a funhouse reflection of a state.

“Together our protesters have created a miniature city within a city that reflects the dream of Martin Luther King Jr.—however ephemeral, however tenuous, however fast the army of police and marauders approach, people are ‘free at last.’ These disparate groups have built a Museum of the Revolution, pasting up pictures of the police attacks and resistance. They transformed the overturned and looted police cars into day-glo platforms of free speech. Everyone grabs a spray can and writes what they think. In a first for Turkey, they write it without fear or hesitation.”*

The echoes of Tahrir Square were as clear as they were unexpected. As the Arab Spring revolutions have come face to face with counter-revolution, many have written off the masses’ creativity and tenacity. But as we have seen since the first nights of embattled people fighting the Egyptian state for Tahrir Square, the masses have continuously risen to the challenges put to them.

BUT 2013 IS NOT 2011

Because 2013 is not 2010-11, however, the Turkish protests have to be seen in that new context. For one thing, the criticism of Erdogan’s AKP isn’t just a Turkish issue. In the wake of Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the rulers hit upon the idea of a “moderate Islamism” patterned after the AKP, oriented to the interests of capitalism, as a way to contain the revolution. Thus the rebellion in Turkey is also a direct strike against this latest form of state-capitalist reaction. It goes hand in hand with the struggle against Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt, and the mass resistance to Ennahda in Tunisia that has escalated in the wake of Leftist Chokri Belaid’s assassination. Most directly, it can speak to the struggle being waged in the heart of Syria’s revolution against the attempt by various fundamentalist forces to redefine that broad-based, non-sectarian uprising in their own image.

This is where the clarification of ideas becomes vital. The attitude expressed by some Turkish protesters that Syria’s Assad is a defender of secularism is a deadly illusion. In fact, he has been the number one promoter of sectarianism in Syria. Further, he and Erdogan were close allies. It’s easy to find pictures of them embracing as warmly as Qaddafi, Mubarak and Ben Ali used to. Only after months of Assad’s brutality against peaceful protests, and 30,000 dead in Syria, did Erdogan denounce him.

In fact, it was *only* the continued resistance of the Syrian people that caused Erdogan to move.

IRAN’S ELECTION—REAL CHANGE?

By the same token, the Syrian revolution has had its effect on the presidential election in Iran. The stunning victory of Hassan Rouhani was a result of the Iranian people’s desire for peace, their understanding of the dangers of the threatened regional war. Iranians remember the horrors of the last great war between regional powers, the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, with over a million dead.

When Rouhani, in his election rhetoric, said things like, “We don’t want those who brought Iran to its knees to rule us again!” or “We must repair our relations with the world, first and foremost with our neighboring countries,” many heard an opening toward the freedom generations have struggled for since the betrayal of the 1979 revolution. There may be new approaches to the West over Iran’s nuclear program. However, Iran’s rulers—and despite his election rhetoric, Rouhani is one of them—have no intention of giving up their support for Assad. He is the genocidal heart of their own imperial project. The shabiha who murder Syrian civilians are often trained by Iranian military men.

Dissident union leader Mansour Osanloo pointed to the truer sentiments of Iran’s working people: “Just last week in Isfahan, during the funeral of the prominent dissident cleric Ayatollah Jalaleddin Taheri, thousands chanted ‘Death to the dictator’ and ‘Political prisoners must be set free.’” (“Reading Marx in Tehran,” *New York Times*, 7-13-13.)

What is stunning to realize, in regard to Turkey, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia is that this is humanity’s collective effort to overcome the Religious Right ideology that grew up in Khomeini’s Iran, Begin’s Israel and Reagan’s America from the 1970s, as a world stage of counter-revolution.

This ideology converged with a second stream of counter-revolution: the genocidal attack in Bosnia by Slobodan Milosevic and the Serb militias against the very idea of multiethnicity and coexistence. It is no accident that so much of Milosevic’s cheering section and

* From *Istanbul and Beyond*: <http://istanbulgibbs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/where-is-all-this-going-week-in-silivri.html>

allied states—primarily Russia—flocked to Assad. It is one of history’s more brutal ironies that now finds the Iranian state on the same side, as an ally in genocide. So much for principle in the “Islamic Republic.”

CONTOURS OF A REGIONAL WAR

“What the workmen had to break down was not a more or less incomplete form of the governmental power of old society; it was that power itself in its ultimate and exhausting shape, the Empire. The direct opposite to the Empire was the Commune.” —Karl Marx

An arc of violence cuts from Lebanon—where Hezbollah has joined in the attacks on the Syrian people, giving the lie to their role as “resistance”—through Syria and into Iraq. There, an intensified terrorist campaign has sought to stir up sectarian hatred and takes



Revolutionary demonstration in Kafranbel, Syria, Feb. 1, 2013

the appearance of a regional conflict between Sunni and Shia. This is far from the truth.

In fact, what we are seeing is a fight between state powers being conducted in the name of the Shia and Sunni. As it expresses itself in Syria, it is an attempt to utterly destroy the original non-sectarian goal of freedom for all—a goal that was reiterated at thousands of mass demonstrations during the early months of the revolution, and is still expressed by the majority of revolutionary activists on the ground.

First the Al Qaeda-linked fundamentalists of Jabhat al-Nusra have been allowed to rampage over the Syrian landscape, not least against the more secular elements of the Free Syrian Army. In Aleppo, for example, the fundamentalists have forced many of the secular, working-class elements aside. The grassroots rebel groups can’t match the weapons al-Nusra obtains from international backers in the Gulf states.

Now, the Shia sectarians of Hezbollah, backed to the hilt by the Iranian state, have entered Syria on Assad’s side, helping to roll back some of the revolution’s territorial gains. Take al-Qusair, for example. Hezbollah fighters came to the fore in that battle as a sort of sectarian exclamation point following the massacres of hundreds of civilians by Assad forces at Baniyas and al-Bayda last month.

The intervention by Iran and its Hezbollah clients has led some to fantasize about an Assad “victory.” In fact it merely increases the likelihood of a Bosnia-style partition being forced upon Syria. As a student from Aleppo said, “There’s no going back on the revolution now. Everyone remembers the years of repression that followed Hafez al-Assad’s destruction of Hama in 1982. For years after that you were liable to be stopped at checkpoints, and if your name was on somebody’s list you would just disappear.”

IRAQI, LEBANESE SHADOWS

The people of Lebanon have their own long, terrible history of sectarian war and slaughter—Hafez al-Assad’s Syria was a prime player in that. In recent years the dynamic of Lebanese politics has revolved around the desire to be free both from Assad’s influence, which was partly achieved by the Cedar Revolution of 2005, and from the continuing presence of Hezbollah as an armed militia independent of the Lebanese state.

In this context, the Lebanese people have refused to be drawn back into civil war. Hezbollah lost credibility in its 2006 war with Israel, involving Lebanon in a war its people wanted no part of. Despite Israel’s “failure” in that war, Hezbollah hasn’t claimed credit for any more attacks on Israel—the border has been quiet.

The situation has echoes in Iraq, where Shia

mosques have been targeted for bombings by shadowy groups harking back to the worst of the “resistance” during the U.S. occupation. As before, these groups aren’t representative of the Iraqi people, but they are representative of the way the U.S. invaders understood Iraqi society and promoted narrow sectarianism. The Iraqi labor movement, women’s movement, youth and intellectuals that the U.S. oppressed or ignored were precursors to the Arab Spring.

NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

At such a world-historic moment, the failure of theoreticians can presage an equally monumental disaster.

When *News & Letters* said two years ago that the revolutionary movement in Syria, in particular, was the anti-war movement, it was with this history in mind.

Syria has been the test of one’s attitude to revolution. Unfortunately, too many have failed that test—even the most basic questions, like the nature of imperialism as an expression of capitalism, have been thrown aside by elements of the Left.

Many of the reactionary players in the region operate under a hypocritical veneer of religion. It’s clear that the masses are aiming to throw that off. But that religious veil conceals the violence and authoritarianism that are inseparable from capitalism. Getting to the roots of counter-revolution and overcoming them require the total view of a philosophy of revolution.

That still means that only masses struggling for freedom can realize a new society. Further, their creativity and determination reveal that many paths to revolution remain

open: from the new human relations created in Tahrir Square to the Syrian masses who are now fighting both Assad and the fundamentalist face of counter-revolution.

What has been missing is a philosophy of freedom that can meet that creativity and help it continue to develop. That is the task history has assigned to our age and for which Marx’s philosophy of revolution in permanence is indispensable.

June 20, 2013

Brazil’s uprising

“We are not complaining about 20 cents, we complain about our stolen rights.”

What began as local protests against an increase in public transportation costs has grown—under the impact of vicious police attacks using tear gas, rubber bullets and batons—into massive protests in dozens of Brazilian cities with hundreds of thousands in the streets of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the largest demonstrations since protests against military rule in the 1980s. As we go to press, some 300,000 people took to the streets of Rio de Janeiro and hundreds of thousands more flooded other cities.

A “Free Fare Movement” that had organized against fare increases has now taken root across the country with demands and questions about Brazilian society and, in particular, about the ruling Workers Party government: Why will some \$26 billion of public money be spent on the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, while spending on housing, health care and education is frightfully lacking? Why did politicians arrogantly dismiss the protests, refusing to consider rolling back the fare increase until almost two weeks of protests overwhelmed them? Why do teachers have barely livable salaries while the politicians draw tens of thousands each month on top of wholesale corruption?

While a small increase in bus fare seemed like an unlikely spark for the protest, in truth the millions of *paulistanos* who earn minimum wage end up putting out some 25% of their monthly salary on a couple of bus rides a day, traveling two or more hours to work and back, on overcrowded, inefficient buses.

While unemployment is low in comparison to other South American countries, the inequality of life and labor is huge. Millions have been lifted out of extreme poverty in recent times, due to Brazil’s galloping capitalist development managed by the Workers Party (WP) leadership, but the reality of poverty and racism remains. Thus, Brazil has a huge number of domestic workers—6.5 million. Some 60% are Black and 90% are female. They get very few benefits, work unlimited hours and can be fired on a whim, though a recent law promises improvements if it is enforced.

A decade of Workers Party rule, first under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and now under Dilma Rousseff, has yielded contradictory results: lifting millions out of extreme poverty through anti-poverty programs, but leaving the capitalist structure completely intact. Far from instituting a socialist program, the WP has sought to and often succeeded in co-opting the powerful social movements that brought it to power. The question of the moment is whether this new stage of mass protest will signal a revival of social movements independent of the “progressive” government, and thus open a pathway of social transformation from below.

—Eugene Walker, June 20, 2013

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School's out! Where's my next job?

East Bay Area, Calif.—I am a public school teacher in California. The students' last day was Thursday and mine was Friday. People may imagine that teachers here hit the beach or kick up their heels poolside, sipping cocktails and working on a suntan. What is closer to the truth is that the first week or two is needed as a recovery period from a job that far exceeds 40 hours a week and regularly requires our labor during the envied off-periods of winter and spring breaks. For me and many other teachers, though, Monday will be the kickoff to the summer routine of registering for unemployment benefits and looking for work, as, once again, a year's contract has come to an end.

Teachers are one of the last unionized groups of laborers in the U.S. What that means is sometimes hard to qualitatively differentiate from not being represented.

In the 13 years I have worked as a California public school teacher, I have signed contracts that read: "I understand that I can be released for any reason and no reason." Teachers, on the other hand, are not allowed to break their contracts. If we do, the district will go after our credentials. Twice I have been hired in November, once in February. Districts save money by dragging their feet on hiring a "permanent," as opposed to substitute, teacher. The "permanent" teacher, if it is someone who has just been hired, is actually only a temporary employee who, like me, will be out of work come the end of the school year. Where teachers are itinerant and so

precariously employed, our children are cheated with understaffed schools, disrupted instruction, and unstable learning communities.

None of the above touches on actual working conditions. Class sizes, the myriad needs of students, and no limit to the number of preps (the different courses a teacher is assigned), are harrowing and not in the interest of students. Districts take a bottom-line approach to education, when it comes to students. It's all the neurosis of capitalism.

Teachers are coached to sell their subject matter. Administrators are treated as CEO's, receiving cushy salaries and being just about unaccountable for waste, incompetence, and out and out wrongdoing.

Many students and their families see education as a transaction, rather than a process. Where I've worked in poor communities, this attitude engenders a regard for education both as irrelevant and as a foreign imposition. What value, read as monetary value, does going to school have? The answer: None. There are no jobs. Where I've worked in affluent communities the attitude engenders a regard for education as an entitlement. The question here is a demand: Where are our A's and positive comments in the remarks columns?! And serve it up with a smile and any way we like, just like at Starbucks.

Revolution cannot come soon enough. Marx should be on everyone's summer reading list.

—California public school teacher

Devil's Tango, nuclear energy's dance with death

During the year following the Great Catastrophe in Fukushima Daiichi on March 11, 2011, Cecile Pineda wrote *Devil's Tango: How I Learned to Do the Fukushima Step by Step*. She weaves together voices from 70 years of nuclear experiments and explosions, adding her love of the earth, its people and its landscapes, confronting the mystery of humans who exploit and destroy our home.

Chicago teacher speaks

A high school teacher, member of the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU), spoke at the Left Forum about the 2012 strike. Below we print excerpts of her talk.

Two years before the strike we elected union leadership from CORE (Coalition of Rank-and-file Educators). They immediately cut their own salaries and created an organizing department and a research department in the union. The research department marshaled facts for our side, and we published "The Schools Our Students Deserve." We distributed it widely because it clearly described what we are for, and it helped parents and teachers know it too. We want to save our schools but make them better. We showed the educational apartheid within the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). CORE organized around school closings, taught younger members how to be delegates and supported the parents.

During those two years we constantly prepared. In May, 6,000 of us marched and disrupted traffic in Chicago's Loop, a sea of red T-shirts. We got a lot of public support.

We held mock strike votes. At my school, once people didn't feel alone and had something to vote for, 119 out of 120 teachers voted. The cafeteria workers, who are not even part of our union, marched down to the mock voting location and said "We authorize you to strike!"

Once the proposed contract was published, 100% of the teachers at my school and many others, met with each other and read every word of that contract—this had never happened before. We all knew the contract, including its shortcomings; like not adequately protecting support staff.

The new contract calls for a Professional Problems Committee in every school, made up of the school delegate [union representative] and elected members. It reports to the membership and meets with the administration to solve problems before they become grievances. In my school it has been union democracy in our day-to-day life.

We still face more testing, a new evaluation system, a longer school day and the closing of 54 schools, mostly in poor and working-class neighborhoods. Our funding has changed to per-pupil instead of being position-based, which results in about a 20% cut, so we expect layoffs. Parents, teachers and students have organized to save their schools. We had a three-day march which wound through the city in support of student organizing. CPS holds "parent hearings" on schools targeted for closing. It's ridiculous that we have to grovel before these hearing officers! Some of the premier special needs schools were on the list simply because of their location.

Nevertheless, the membership trusts the CORE leadership. We have changed the national debate on testing and school closings. It's not over—there could be occupations.

These 130 vignette-like pieces are each a work of art on the feelings, facts, tangential events, villains and angels connected to the Great Calamity. To the nuclear in-crowd, many of the world's people are not human in the same sense as they regard themselves. Scientists and politicians to this day escape responsibility for filling air, land and water with radioactive isotopes.

Pineda's artistry interweaves modern, urban Tokyo with the Bashkirs and Tartars who were devastated by the unreported and minimally evacuated nuclear explosion at Kyshtym in 1957.* And before them was the crew of the Lucky Dragon 5, one of whom died from radiation sickness in 1954 when the U.S. tried out a thermonuclear weapon in Eniwetok. And before them were the Marshall Islanders, who sickened and died from fallout when the U.S. tested weapons of mass destruction in 1946-48.

Pineda brings forth voices from 1986 Chernobyl, echoed and reinforced by 2011 Fukushima. She points out that all beings live in a fallout world. Pineda connects the Arab Spring to Occupy and to the U.S.'s out-of-control corporations. Climate change, genetic modification of food organisms, fracking, depleted uranium (DU) in bullet casings and tank bodies, nuclear disasters and non-medical use of radioactive or fissionable isotopes are of a piece. It all comes down to "sacrificable" zones and people, the guinea pigs who don't know they are experimental animals.

One sacrificable zone was in the Nevada desert when the U.S. was testing nuclear bombs. I lost friends who were "downwinders." There were rumors of whole flocks and herds of mysteriously dead animals in my 1950s Intermountain home. One rancher said, "Have you ever seen a young animal that was born completely rotten? I did... Have you ever seen a young animal that ... didn't have one speck of wool on their bodies? They were transparent and you could see their little heart a-beating until they died. I never seen anything like that from the time I was a little boy..." (p. 111).

A downwind father lamented: "When my boy was born ... his face was a massive hole and they had to put all these pieces of his face back together. I could see down his throat, everything was turned inside out and it was horrible. I wanted to die. I wanted him to die... I remember going outside the hospital, laying on the grass and just crying and sobbing over it" (p. 111).

The sacrificable zones are no longer isolated. The entire Northern Hemisphere is being impacted by this cataclysm. It is painful to watch corporations and states try to "take charge" of a situation way beyond their ken—a situation generated by neglect, exacerbated by secrecy, heightened by greed, and aggravated by fear of the 99%.

The winds and tides will visit the injuries of Kyshtym, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, Fukushima, Iraq's DU, etc. on the Southern Hemisphere just as in the 1940s and 1950s global processes brought outcomes from nuclear testing in the "remote" North Pacific to us.

The culture that pursues nuclear weapons of mass destruction is the same culture demanding taxpayer money to fund and insure nuclear power plants which routinely exude radioactive isotopes and produce fissionable material suitable for bombs.

—January

* The 1960 U-2 incident of the cold war was a reconnaissance mission trying to photograph Kyshtym. The USSR declassified the accident at the same time as it opened up information about Chernobyl in 1989.

Peoples' Board of Ed

New York—In early May, over 25 parents, teachers, retired teachers and community activists gathered to plan a campaign to restore control of our schools to the communities where they are located. Mayoral control of education is due to end in 2015 and the Coalition for Public Education (CPE) is mobilizing for a "Peoples' Board of Education."

Since Mayor Bloomberg was given total control over



Participants in a rally of the Coalition for Public Education.

the schools by the New York State Legislature in 2002, he has waged a ruthless campaign of shutting down schools in poor and working-class neighborhoods by: promoting elitist charter schools within existing school buildings; selling off schools and school property; using attrition to reduce the number of Black and Latino teachers; bringing in poorly trained "Teach for America" teachers, 65% of whom are white. Furthermore, he has "corporatized" the entire educational system with outside companies who push "Teaching to the Test" and a general right-wing offensive against public education. More and more their model seems to be New Orleans post-Katrina where public schools have been reopened as charters and over 75% of students attend charters.

Educational segregation in New York City is class- and race-based. It begins even before kindergarten. Parents are anxious to see that their children are in the so-called "Gifted and Talented" (G&T) schools, and companies charge \$1,500 for test prep for kindergarten level G&T schools. The test prep fee for the more exclusive high schools can be as high as \$2,500.

The more money you have, the better chance your child has of being put in a high academic fast track, while the children of the bottom 90% are relegated to public schools that produce illiterates with diplomas, only prepared to work at some fast food joint, deal drugs, or die in an overseas war.

The CPE wants to change all that. They are calling for an end to mayoral control of education, a position that not one Democratic Party candidate for Mayor has endorsed. Every candidate stands for the continuation of Bloomberg's failed policies.

How can we say failed? Because, after over a decade of his "reforms," the dropout rates are abysmally high. Many graduates are still not prepared to enter college or university. When confronted with this reality, the Bloomberg Education Department introduced even tougher 3rd and 8th grade evaluation tests whose stated goal is to promote a select few to higher education and careers in a deteriorating capitalist economy.

The CPE wants a "human rights based" public education system that challenges students. Community control means having an alternative vision of education, education as human liberation. The CPE has vowed to be present at the mayoral debates and hold the candidates' feet to the fire until they agree to end more than a decade of educational mismanagement.

—Michael Gilbert

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WORLD IN VIEW

by Eugene Walker

Rana Plaza, the building that collapsed in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 24, killing 1,127 workers—most of them young women—was constructed illegally. Bribes were paid to obtain building permits, and additional floors were added without permission.

The day before it collapsed, workers on the third floor heard an explosion caused by the building starting to crack and rushed outside. An engineer brought to the factory was horrified by the cracks and said the building should be abandoned. But the owner insisted that work continue.

Some may wish to call that event a horrendous accident. Bangladeshi garment workers—who have been protesting for years against slave wages, bosses cheating them out of hours worked, and abysmal working conditions—know that more was involved. Factory collapses like this, and murderous fires in other garment factories like one last November that killed 137 workers, recur with alarming regularity.

Tentacles of responsibility stretch far: to the building and garment factory owners; to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association,



Jalder Al Nahian flickr.com/photos/jalder/8732906266

Premeditated murder in Bangladesh

which complains about nationwide strikes known as hartals but does nothing about working conditions and wages; to the Bangladesh government and their “safety” inspectors who give factories and companies a pass time and time again; to the overseas companies like Tommy Hilfiger, Gap, Calvin Klein and H&M.

Then there are the mass retailers including Target and Wal-Mart who proclaim the need for workers’ safety, yet do not insist on better conditions and salaries for the hundreds of thousands of workers in these death-trap sweatshops.

For all these parties, it is the bottom line that is the determinant—and thus the call for production and more production under horrid, unsafe working conditions and the cheapest salaries globally.

The stakes are high. The Bangladesh garment industry, the second largest after China, is a \$19 billion

prize and is the country’s major income earner. There are 5,000 garment factories employing 4.5 million workers, the vast majority of them women. The wages paid are the lowest in the world—\$37 a month—up from \$21 after huge worker protests.

Worker resistance, a growing power, has been met with intimidation, strike-breaking, and outright murder of union organizers and activists. Unions, previously prohibited, are allowed now only on a limited basis; worker associations are allowed, but only in individual factories.

The Industrial Police, a new government law enforcement agency, was created in response to the growing labor militancy of strikes and mass demonstrations. It collects intelligence and prevents labor actions. The government set up a Crisis Management Cell to watch over the garment sector. The main domestic spying agency, the National Security Intelligence Agency, spends time repressing union organizing and worker solidarity efforts.

It is easy to show negligence and affix blame to this or that individual. But the greater truth lies within a system that is based on the most production at the lowest cost, with workers’ lives—and deaths—regarded as only one more cost of production.

Labor in China

- At least 120 workers died at the Jilin Baoyuanfeng Poultry Plant in Mishazi, near the city of Dehui in northeast China. Many could not escape ammonia fumes and a raging fire, because doors were locked to prevent workers from leaving the plant or “stealing.” In recent years a Communist Party official had called the factory “inspiring” for its production methods. Other officials gave the plant a “leading enterprise” label for its innovation in processing chickens.

- A system of “re-education through labor” penal colonies such as the Masanjia camp, is in operation where those who do not fit in—critics of the government, religious offenders such as adherents of Falun Gong, and “petty criminals”—are given sentences of up to four years without trial. Their prison labor is used to produce goods sold abroad as well as uniforms for the army. “Re-education classes” consist of reciting prison rules and singing patriotic songs.

- In the next dozen years some 250 million peasants will be pushed off the land and herded into new cities and towns, forced to become urban workers. The government, often without any consultation, is buying up the land and knocking down rural villages. As *The New York Times* noted on June 15, “Over the past decades, the Communist Party has flip-flopped on peasants’ rights to use land: giving small plots to farm during 1950s land reform, collectivizing a few years later, restoring rights at the start of the reform era and now trying to obliterate small landholders.” Are we entering a new phase of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward”?

Mugabe’s Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe’s wannabe President-for-life Robert Mugabe had called for quick elections on July 31 to preempt new rules for the media and election procedures in an attempt to continue his rule after more than three decades in power. Refusing to yield after the last fraudulent election, this time he got Zimbabwe’s highest court to agree to elections in just six weeks. Under pressure from regional African leaders he has now agreed to ask for a two-week delay, still leaving no time for full implementation of safeguards and reforming the police and army, who contributed greatly to the violence that accompanied the last election.

Greece: workers’ TV

Without a word of warning, the right-wing coalition government of Antonis Samaras decided to close down ERT, the Greek Public Radio and Television Network, and lay off its 2,700 workers. Three TV channels and four radio stations that broadcast countrywide, paid for by the Greek people, were shut down overnight. On the morning of June 12, Greece woke up without a public TV channel or public radio, while 2,700 ERT workers woke up unemployed.

Resistance was immediate. The fired workers occupied the station’s headquarters in Athens and have



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Day three of workers’ takeover of ERT

kept broadcasting through live-streaming. That makes ERT a public television network under workers’ control. Faced not only with the ERT worker resistance, but massive demonstrations by labor unions, the government claimed they would restart a “lean” public network soon.

These newest cutbacks were dictated by the European financial czars, who are demanding more and more cuts and austerity on the backs of the Greek citizens. This is occurring in a country with a 27% unemployment rate and with 62% of youth without work. All of Europe remains in Depression precisely because of the reactionary policies of its governments and their financial “wizards.”

Latin America in view

Bolivia’s Statism—The government of Evo Morales and Garcia Linera, while using anti-neoliberal words, and proclaiming themselves anti-capitalist and for socialism, are in fact practicing a state form of capitalism. Most recently they have acted against miners, teachers and healthcare workers who demonstrated for decent pensions for retiring workers. Earlier, the government attempted to force the building of a road through the lowlands of Bolivia against the wishes of the Indigenous peoples living there. A fierce resistance forced the project to be put on hold. This “Andean-Amazonian type of capitalism,” to use the words of Vice President Garcia Linera, substitutes the wishes and demands of the state for the self-activity of Indigenous workers and peasants.

Guatemala’s Genocide Trial in Disarray—Efraín Ríos Montt, the dictator who, as commander of the armed forces in the early 1980s, directed a civil war against all the Mayan Ixil people, was found guilty of genocide. But in a stunning reversal, the Guatemalan court declared the final part of the trial illegal, leaving the verdict in disarray. How matters will now proceed is unknown. Through the testimony of the Ixil people the bloody hand of Ríos Montt was decisively revealed. The U.S. under Ronald Reagan gave full cover to these horrendous events in the name of fighting “Communism.”

Honduras coup anniversary—This June marks the fourth anniversary of the military coup that toppled elected President Manuel Zelaya, which was then followed by the fraudulent presidential election of Porfirio Lobo. An ongoing resistance has faced politically motivated murders of resistance activists by the military and police and private armies employed by the largest landowners. Those killed include peasant cooperative leaders, lawyers and journalists as well as unionists, teachers, and LGBTQ activists.

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*.