

NEWS & LETTERS

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

Vol. 66 No. 5

September-October 2021

\$1

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Monopolies hurt prisoners

by Robert Taliaferro

Nothing defines capitalist greed more than the word “Monopoly.” We aren’t talking about the board game; we are talking about that singular concept and ideation that is a conscious decision to create a condition which, by its very nature, is prejudicial and immoral.

A monopoly enables a singular entity to corner the market on a population. This allows for predatory marketing and pricing practices to be promulgated against that population. By the removal of competition from the equation, the enabler of an allowed monopoly insures they will get a bigger slice of the pie on the kickbacks, especially if such a monopoly was allowed through a governmental bidding process.

MONOPOLIES PREY ON PRISONERS

As the prison industrial complex became more sophisticated and the locking up of prisoners became phenomenally lucrative, more vendors started popping up which catered solely to the captive prison market. Companies like Keefe/Access, Walkenhorst, J.L. Marcus and Union Supply Group (USG) became some of the better known corporate prostitutes when it came to soliciting contracts from governmental agencies in order to provide goods and services to prisoners.

Correctional contracts are such cash generators that the bidding process becomes a study in cutthroat dynamics. Companies found that if they undercut their competition on the front end, they could reap large rewards after the contracts were awarded, often by selling inferior products of their corporate knock-off brands for inflated prices to the prisoner market. To really reap the benefits, you have to convince a governmental entity that being the sole vendor is a good thing.

Actual society is not a society of equal competitors, but one in which certain competitors start with some kind of advantage or monopoly. Monopolies do not exist without the agreement of a governmental agency acting in collusion with another party.

WISCONSIN PRISONERS GET LIMITED CHOICES

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections has turned such collusive efforts into an art form. For decades Wisconsin allowed its prisoners to purchase approved goods—either through family and friends, or personally—on the open market. Even under the reign of Tommy Thompson, the Wisconsin governor who trashed most of what prisoners had gained over the years, prisoners still had options for things they purchased.

Ironically, it was during Republicrat Jim Doyle’s administration that some of the more obtuse policies started to take place, especially when it came to the use of authorized vendors. Even then prisoners and their families still had competitive options available to them when it came to some property items.

Surprisingly, the process stayed pretty stable under Scott Walker, except that companies became bolder when it came to pricing their items, and predatory pricing practices became more evident, especially with certain items purchased from companies like J.L. Marcus.

For several years, prisoners in Wisconsin received canteen and property from a number of vendors; though prices were high, there was at least a competitive choice. That process will change in October of this year. At that time the Union Supply Group (USG) out of California will become Wisconsin’s sole provider of both canteen and property for its prisoners, thus putting a lock on every aspect of prisoner purchases in the state.

USG has already been supplying canteen items to Wisconsin’s prisoners, often inferior house brands produced—as compared to the house brands of Keefe, for

continued on p. 3

ON THE INSIDE

- p. 4 **New beginnings in time of reaction**
- p. 2 **Afghan women pay for U.S. hubris**
- p. 3 **Rideshare, truck drivers fight bosses**
- p. 5 **Afghanistan turmoil challenges Left**
- p. 12 **Central Asia reconfigures imperialism**

ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 2021-2022

The dialectic of crises worldwide is testing liberation struggles

The world faces not one but multiple existential crises: the COVID-19 pandemic; climate disruption and intersecting ecological crises; the renewal of the nuclear arms race by the U.S., China and Russia, while proliferation continues; the pull to fascism and undermining of democracy; social isolation and a new wave of technology designed for mass surveillance, manipulation, and job deskilling or elimination; rotting economic foundations coupled with precarious housing and labor conditions.

It all adds up to the existential crisis of a global state-capitalist system shot through with racism, xenophobia, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and authoritarianism. That recognition in turn calls for the confluence of all the labor and liberation struggles—not by administrative means but through a unifying philosophy based explicitly in the dialectic of liberation in those movements in historic continuity with movements from practice for freedom.

Let us therefore be concrete about the crises and the movements, about the oppressive ideological onslaught and the ideas of freedom, including the Marxist-Humanist philosophy of revolution in permanence.

I. This Year’s Pandemic

As yet another wave of the COVID-19 pandemic swells, all too many people are feeling stuck in a recurring nightmare. That is, aside from the wealthy and powerful complacent about being insulated from disease, poverty and death, and aside from those in feverish denial. About 10,000 people are dying each day worldwide, and around 1,000 people in the U.S. alone. Nationally, new cases recorded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surged to 122,058 on Aug. 5—higher than at any time during this plague’s first nine months, and up from 11,606 just one month earlier—then to 170,278 on Aug. 18.

After the richest nations in the world passed up chance after chance to prepare for and possibly prevent such epidemics, their campaigns to control this one fumbled again and again, in many ways. With 215 million cases worldwide, well over 4.4 million have died—more than 600,000 in the U.S. alone and one million more in India and Brazil combined. These official statistics are widely acknowledged to be undercounts, and the true toll may be twice that.

Besides people killed directly by the disease, indirect casualties include people not receiving healthcare because of overwhelmed clinics, fear of contagion, or lockdowns. And they include the spike in violence in the context of lockdowns. In particular, violence has surged against women stuck at home with abusers.

In the midst of this carnage, the movement that has taken over the Republican Party is displaying its neo-fascist character not only by trying to destroy democracy but by embracing denialism about the pandemic. They are undermining vaccination and mask-wearing, even passing laws restricting the authority of local and state public health officials. Real-world effects are stark, as counties that voted for Trump in 2020 have significantly

Why we print the Draft Perspectives Thesis in News & Letters

With this special issue, News and Letters Committees is publishing the Draft Perspectives Thesis for our coming national gathering. We do it because our age is in such total crisis, facing a choice between absolute terror or absolute freedom, that a revolutionary organization can no longer allow any separation between theory and practice, philosophy and revolution, workers and intellectuals, “inside” and “outside.” We ask you to join in the discussion of these Perspectives with us. We are not presenting any “pat answers” to the question, “Where Do We Go From Here?” We are raising the questions that demand answers—and we ask you to help us in working them out.

lower vaccination rates and are now suffering more hospitalizations from COVID-19. Hospitals are overwhelmed in states like Florida, Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas and Alabama, hindering care for all illnesses and accidents. Coming on top of chronic corner-cutting and understaffing in both for-profit and non-profit hospitals and clinics, the horrendous conditions drove [nurses across the country to strike](#).

More than 700 nurses have been on strike at Saint Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass., for five months, primarily over staff shortages. Marlena Pellegrino said, “The respect for our profession was not evident by this employer and it’s been going on for a long time. I think the pandemic shined a spotlight on that. We worked through some very tumultuous times where our employer could have stepped up to assist us instead of being an obstacle in our way of trying to care for our patients. When there aren’t enough nurses at the bedside, bad things can happen to patients, so we were forced to take this step until they’re resolved.”

Some 30% of U.S. adults remain unvaccinated, whether

due to denialism, misinformation, long work hours with little sick leave, lack of childcare or lack of opportunity. The wealthy are more likely to be vaccinated, while poor people, renters, farmworkers and grocery store workers are significantly less likely.

VACCINE NATIONALISM, IMPERIALISM

In low-income countries, lacking vaccine supplies and in many cases lacking infrastructure for storing, distributing and administering the vaccines, only 1.1% of people have received at least one dose even at this late date—including most of Africa and South and Southeast Asia.

This is no accident. The same capitalist-imperialist relations under which the “advanced” countries brutally exploited other countries’ people and resources—paving the way for pandemics by disrupting habitats and traditional ways of life—also dictated the hoarding of vaccine supplies, technology and production systems by the same exploiting powers. (See [“Vaccine Rollout Inflames Global Inequalities,”](#) Jan.-Feb. 2021 *N&L*.)

Unmoved by their own spokespeople’s rhetoric that the virus doesn’t discriminate, so “we’re all in this together,” the imperialist states blocked the use of an emergency mechanism in trade agreements that would have suspended patents. All for the overflowing profits of the giant pharmaceutical corporations! At the same time they bought up



Some of the many nurses picketing Saint Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass., for five months, over staff shortages.

Massachusetts Nurses Association

continued on p. 7

WOMAN AS REASON

Afghan women pay price for U.S. hubris

by Terry Moon

In Afghanistan the Taliban are murdering men who helped the U.S., UK, and other forces who fought them; and murdering and beating women and girls who have made even marginally independent lives for themselves. They are threatening death to families of Afghan men who fought in the Afghan army or served

aspect of people's lives. They have already begun. In the most violent of ways, they never stopped in all the 20 years the U.S. was pursuing its own narrow interests in Afghanistan.

DONALD TRUMP LAID THE GROUND

Donald Trump's deliberately feckless "negotiations" with the Taliban were always a lie, as the [Taliban continued to murder hundreds of women with public lives](#) like reporters, lawyers, judges, policewomen and activists. While U.S. rulers lie some more about "waiting to see" what the Taliban will do—as if the whole world doesn't already know—Afghans are living in terror and dread. There is a reason that women and children make up about [80% of the people](#) fleeing into Kabul and other cities.

Yet, despite the terror, the beatings with rifle butts and clubs, the shootings into crowds and subsequent deaths, Afghans, including—or more accurately, especially—women continue to demonstrate against Taliban rule. In Kabul and other cities, people used Aug. 19, a day traditionally used to celebrate Afghanistan's 1919 independence from British control, to demonstrate against the Taliban. [Hundreds marched in Kabul to the presidential palace waving the Afghan national flag and shouting "our flag, our identity!"](#) The Taliban flag in Abdul Haq Square was torn down by a protester and the national flag was put in its place. Four women in Kabul stood on a busy street with [their protest signs for all to see](#). They chanted against the Taliban's deadly misogynistic interpretation of sharia, saying: ["Sharia law gives us the right to work and study and be educated!"](#)

Similar demonstrations took place in other parts of the country, [including in Asadabad in Konar province](#), in a demonstration that appeared to be led by women. The Taliban shot into the crowd, killing several protesters.

These are the protests that the press was able to report. There is no doubt that there have been many more. In fact, for 20 years and decades before, it has been Afghan women who have been the ones to fight for a freer reality. That is why [Kimberley Motley, a U.S. human rights lawyer](#) working in Afghanistan for 13 years, was outraged with President Biden's self-serving statement that Afghans are ["not willing to fight"](#) the Taliban. "That's so insulting to say, especially for women," she said, adding, "How dare anyone think that they're not willing to fight just because [they're] not going on a battlefield."

U.S. NEVER FOUGHT FOR AFGHANS' FREEDOM

The truth isn't so much that Afghan people aren't willing to fight for their freedom as it is that the U.S. in two decades never fought for the freedom of the people whose land they invaded. While on Nov. 16, 2001, President George W. Bush's wife, [Laura Bush, condemned in a radio address](#) to the nation, "the severe repression against women in Afghanistan," and said, "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women," that was *never* why the U.S. occupied the country. As Kim Berry wrote in her 2003 article, ["The Symbolic Use of Afghan Women in the War on Terror"](#): without a "critical analysis...we run the risk of using Afghan women as symbols and pawns in a geopolitical conflict, thereby muting their diverse needs and interests and foreclosing the possibility of contributing to the realization of their self-defined priorities and aspirations." Exactly.

The inhuman disregard that a succession of U.S. administrations, including the current one, held for the actual citizens of Afghanistan is revealed in how they refused to help Afghans who aided the U.S. forces, putting their lives and the lives of their families in danger. For years Afghan translators, drivers, cooks, cleaners and builders have been begging for visas to allow them to escape from Afghanistan and the death by the Taliban that awaits them if they stay. The U.S. made it as difficult as possible for them.

In the words of a young U.S. activist who visited Afghanistan: "For the last decade, the U.S. embassy has mainly preoccupied itself with being a visa rejection factory, including for people who directly helped the U.S. Today's turning of the cold shoulder is not a new feature. If the headache of gathering mountains of paperwork wasn't a sufficient obstacle, at the visa interview the embassy staff antagonize, yell and scream in summarily rejecting the visa. Others begin by saying they've already approved the visa, then deflate the person's dignity when revealing their own lie."

THE CATCH-22 OF THE VISA DEBACLE

In truth, the U.S. purposely created a catch-22 for those who helped the U.S. and are now trying to flee Afghanistan. As Melanne Vermeer and Tanya Henderson explain, writing for [The Washington Post](#): "Hundreds of women journalists, activists and judges [have been assassinated](#) in recent years. Unless evacuated, many more are poised to become Taliban victims....The State Department [announced](#) an expansion of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program on Aug. 2 through a Priority 2 (P-2) designation. The new category provides at-risk Afghans who are not eligible for Special Immigrant Visas an opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States.

"However, it remains almost impossible to access the Refugee Admissions Program....U.S.

refugee admissions guidelines require applicants and their eligible family members to [relocate to a third country](#)—at their own expense—before their cases can even begin to be processed. Visas are difficult for Afghan women activists to come by in the best of times. With the twin disasters of COVID-19 and war now raging across Afghanistan, most countries have ceased offering visas altogether."

Biden can pontificate about getting out "every American," but his inhumanity to the people of Afghanistan shows his true measure. What is clear now is that through over 40 years of war the Afghan people have shown a tremendous resiliency. Since they cannot expect any help from the U.S. government, the solidarity of all those in struggle and those of us in the U.S. in particular is more important than ever.

—Aug. 21, 2021

Review of: *They Didn't See Us Coming*

by Adele

They Didn't See Us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties by Lisa Levenstein is an important correction to mainstream media claims that feminism should be defined as a U.S. movement, mostly of white, middle-class women, that diminished in the 1990s.

Leaders of large, U.S. feminist organizations like the Ms. Foundation had their own misperceptions, including that the movement might fall apart if it splintered into too many groups outside of their centralized control. They sent feminists from other activist groups across the U.S. to the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, to present a united front and strengthen their foundation's national network. Instead of attending classes about the UN as planned, the attendees preferred workshops by feminists from other countries and learning about their issues.

CREATIVE ACTIVISM

As with similar conferences during the 1990s, the U.S. women, many of whom were women of color, learned from "the exposure to entirely new ways of thinking—frameworks and ideas shared by women from Latin America, Asia, and Africa." Loretta Ross, leader of SisterSong, stated, "The women globally offered us lessons and strategies that we simply did not know in the U.S. We had everything to gain from becoming a global activist as long as we understood that we had far less to teach than to learn."

Levenstein says they "outlined the effects on women of the spread of global capitalism," and U.S. women discovered that "the underlying logic of the policies they were pushing back against at home echoed what was happening in the Global South." These involved the policies of neoliberalism and structural adjustment. As one activist said, "the U.S. was actually enacting welfare reform all over the world."

Activists were also creative with activism. Women with disabilities from different countries united to attend each other's panels and to infiltrate workshops on all other issues, explaining how disability is part of every feminist issue. Similarly, feminists promoted awareness in social justice organizations and in the UN that women's liberation is part of every issue and how it's necessary for a thriving society.

A COMPLEX MOVEMENT

Levenstein discusses other resulting developments in feminist activism. Worldwide feminism flourished online after women taught each other how to use the internet. U.S. feminists joined the environmental justice movement and learned that women's labor and healthcare struggles are part of the struggle against environmental racism. International feminists also taught those in the U.S. that they have a common struggle against patriarchy.

With an increase of people hired by activist organizations, feminists discussed how funding from governments, corporations, and philanthropists reshapes the mission of an organization from social justice to preserving capitalism. Women of color in domestic violence and rape activism led the way in this analysis.

Levenstein hopes many more histories are written of feminism to show the complexity of the movement. This book explores how the feminism of today took shape. It also shows the importance of feminism as a radical, worldwide struggle against patriarchy and capitalism and as a network of relationships.



In northern Afghanistan's Balkh province on the border with Uzbekistan, the Taliban seized control and imposed severe restrictions on the people, including demanding that women wear the burqa as seen in this poster the Taliban posted.

U.S. and other forces if they don't turn themselves over to them. There can be no illusions about the Taliban, whose promise to rule by their draconian version of sharia law is a promise to impose a ruthless dictatorship over every

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In Canada, women were recently elected to several Indigenous leadership positions previously held only by men in modern times. Lynne Groulx, CEO of the Native Women's Association of Canada, says, "Communities are pushing, they want change. They're in crisis. We know that we have matriarchal societies, women were involved in leadership roles before." She says women bring "a different perspective" to crisis such as the legacy of residential schools, the lack of clean drinking water on reserves, and the epidemic of femicides of Indigenous women. The women plan to network with each other and protect their languages, cultures, lands, and traditional forms of governance. They want to involve young people in the decision-making process and help them start businesses.

* * *

Vancouver-based Métis lawyer Breen Ouellette stated in May that in the last decade social workers in British Columbia forced Indigenous girls under age ten to have IUDs inserted by doctors with no follow-up care. The reason given in one case was to prevent pregnancy because a girl was at risk of being raped in foster care. This continues the eugenics practice of forced sterilization of Indigenous women and violates provincial law and several UN treaties. Ouellette stated he could not provide victims' names without consent but would "try to find safe ways to help them speak." In August, after decades of work by feminists, the Czech Republic government announced it would award financial compensation to hundreds of Roma women illegally sterilized from 1966 to 2012.

* * *

In 2020, Ghaidaa Qudaih, Aseel Najjar, and Nadine Abu Rok graduated from university but were unable to find work in Gaza, where unemployment is 43% (and 60% for women) due to the effects of the Israeli blockade. The three young Palestinians formed the organic vegetable farming collective Green Girls with help from friends and local farmers. Advertising on social media, Qudaih states, "We have managed to spread the culture of land and agriculture. Lots of young men and women follow and consult us. Some started growing vegetables, and we went to help them and encourage them to take initiative."

* * *

In August, the British Medical Association's journal, *BMJ Global Health*, published a study warning that many countries' cultural preferences for boys will lead to men dramatically outnumbering women in over a third of the world's population, endangering long-term global stability. Prenatal sex selection has contributed to this trend in Southeast Europe, Southeast Asia, China, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and other countries. Lead author Dr. Fengqing Chao states, "Fewer than expected females in a population could result in elevated levels of antisocial behavior and violence, and may ultimately affect long-term stability and social sustainable development." Reducing sex-selection is a major part of UN sustainable development goals.

Rideshare & truck drivers fight bosses

by Buddy Bell

Rideshare drivers struck on July 21

Drivers and passengers for the ridesharing apps Uber and Lyft declined to use their apps for 24 hours on July 21. Earlier strikes were centered in California, but this one spread to a dozen other places: from Atlanta to Philadelphia, Chicago to Austin, Texas.

Many of the drivers and their supporters attended rallies in these cities to demand better compensation from the app-based employers and for the U.S. Senate to pass the Protect the Right to Organize Act.

In addition to facilitating the formation of unions among workers in all industries, the bill's passage should enable rideshare drivers to access benefits as employees, enforceable at the federal level.

RIDERS PAY WHILE DRIVERS LOSE

Over the summer, as the public became more comfortable congregating and traveling, they've returned to



Rideshare Drivers United SF Bay Area

using the apps, but the drivers not as much. Riders are paying exorbitant fares, while the portion of their payment that trickles down to drivers has not risen at all. On the contrary, drivers in Los Angeles, to take one example, saw their per-mile compensation fall from 60 cents to 32 cents.

The app companies brag that their drivers make \$20 an hour or more before costs, but only count the time driving a passenger, not the driving time to pick them up, nor time doing the required cleaning of the vehicle after each passenger, nor time spent in search of a public restroom, nor delayed dispatch time when they sit idle but are ready to work.

Esterphanie St. Juste of Los Angeles is a driver-organizer who stopped driving rideshare when the pandemic started. She told the *Los Angeles Times*: "You're worth 32 cents. That's what [Uber/Lyft] are saying. And I'm not in any rush to go work for a company like that."



Trucking bosses want robots behind the wheel

Large trucking companies are teaming up with Bridgestone, Locomotion and Kodiak Robotics to inaugurate test runs of "Autonomous Relay Convoys" (ARC). In an ARC, an autonomous truck is programmed to follow a human driving a leader truck.

Another human driver is expected to manually drive the follower truck from the depot to the highway, then log off and rest as the automated system takes over. During the tests, specialists will be riding along and monitoring the system.

These test runs will carry freight between Houston and Fort Worth, and between Pittsburgh and Chicago.

Although the overall volume of trucking freight has seen a relatively sluggish recovery this year when compared to rail, ship or pipeline, the cargo price still shot up to a record-breaking \$2.69 per mile in May. The American Trucking Association chalks this up to tight capacity—the lack of drivers. As old truck drivers retire, young ones are not attracted to the career. They are not attracted because of the declining, lousy wages offered.

As interstate commerce is usually exempt from state-level minimum wage laws, driver wages (often paid by the mile) have been known to dip to an effective rate as low as \$9.00 an hour. Raising the federal minimum wage significantly above that level could boost driver retention rate and attract new drivers, which could indirectly confer savings in freight cost to companies that need to ship products.

Trucking companies believe the success of automation will relieve driver shortages. However, these are often the same companies that don't want their own workers to get a raise. They'd rather invest in robots: dead labor, constant capital.

Nationwide walkout of Nabisco workers

Chicago—Workers in the Bakers, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers union at the Nabisco plant on the South Side of Chicago went on strike on Aug. 19, nine days after fellow workers walked out in Portland, Ore. With the strike joined by workers at Aurora, Colo., Richmond, Va., and Norcross, Ga., every BCTGM Local at Nabisco nationwide is on the picketline—while the company is vowing to maintain some scab production.

After workers had pulled shifts as long as 16 hours since the pandemic began to satisfy the surge in demand from homebound customers, Nabisco owner Mondelez had demanded even more: 12-hour rotating shifts that would not only claim every hour of a worker's week at different times, but would keep pay generally at straight time even on weekends. These unilateral demands were rejected despite the threat of moving production to Mexico hanging over negotiations—Mondelez gutted the workforce at the Chicago plant in 2016.

More than 30 years ago, the Reagan administration's manipulation of labor law opened the door for corporations to demand givebacks. Workers on picketlines described in *News & Letters* similar schemes of 12-hour rotating shifts. Workers at Staley in Decatur, Ill., fought that demand for more than a year while locked out of the plant. Now Nabisco workers have to fight the same battle all over again, while also demanding the return of their pension benefits. **BOYCOTT NABISCO.**

—Union warehouse worker

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

After Juneteenth

by Faruq

While I was working early in the morning on an atypical sunny warm day in San Francisco, a brother walked by me and said, "June 19 is now a federal holiday!" It stymied me. I had known about Juneteenth, but I had not spent a lot of time thinking about it. I have learned that no declaration from a politician can serve as a "beacon on the hill." The U.S. has never apologized, not even recognized slavery as an integral part of U.S. history.

President Joseph Biden appears to want to pacify the descendants of slaves with the recognition of the day when slaves in Texas learned of the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln.

SLAVES FORCED LINCOLN'S HAND

The Emancipation Proclamation was a political act forced on Lincoln by the slaves, whose fight for freedom gave a human content to the seemingly unending, unspeakable carnage in North/South battles over territory and Lincoln's constitutional cause to "save the union." The recurring slave revolts first inspired the Abolitionists and then Blacks demanded to join the army to fight in the Civil War. Their struggle for self-emancipation is worth delving into, and celebrating, not merely its reflection in politics.

One reason Juneteenth was significant was that, over the course of the war, a lot of slaves were brought to Texas. How did so many more slaves get to Texas? To finance the war with the North, the Confederacy demanded contributions in cash or, if that was not possible, in slaves. To avoid making such a "donation," slave owners in the South force-marched more than 150,000 slaves into Texas.

Think of what a rude awakening it was for those slaves who thought that they would actually be free men and women. Some of the newly freed slaves had great hopes for their future. Others were more skeptical. Perhaps unconsciously or consciously they knew better. They sensed there would be a struggle to be actually free. The politically promised freedom turned out to be false, because it was so short-lived. When the former chattel slaves experienced the reality of their "freedom," they discovered that their fate had not altered significantly in any concrete manner for their benefit.

Today's slave descendants don't have much information about the dashed hopes of the "freed" slaves who did not fully experience true freedom. It is not merely a tragedy that those ex-slaves lived under the horrendous conditions that equaled that of slavery, though under another name. Tenant farming, sharecropping, was another form of indentured servitude.

Laws were passed to allow patrollers to arrest Black people, the "justice" system convicted them of any number of transgressions, and plantation owners used prisoners as practically free labor, as though slavery was never abolished. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings and pogroms of entire towns—like the Tulsa massacre recently in the news on its 100th anniversary—all were the old society's response to a hope of Black freedom.

LIMITED FREEDOMS NOW IN JEOPARDY

Today's descendants of these slaves are asked to accept an interpretation of that history that centers on acts of the government, not on those of slaves asserting themselves in their lives. Biden's recognition of the day slaves "received" their freedom from the government, might help secure the African-American vote for the Democratic Party.

But even this limited freedom is under attack. Texas's Democratic legislators had to leave the state to try to prevent passage of laws that would gut voting rights for whole sections of the population. Malcolm X was right when he said, "If your master gives you something, he can take it back." There is a huge difference between civil rights and human rights. Civil rights can be taken away, your human rights you are born with.

As important as it is to defend our civil rights, being human means more than having rights. It means being recognized as fully human and free in one's everyday activity. This freedom is much more concrete than any political declaration.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

continued from p. 1

instance—for premium prices. Name-brand items are often sold at inflated prices, and then there are the ludicrous pricing practices that are a sign of things to come. One example is a 24-bottle case of water which retails for less than \$5 in the community but costs \$13.92 from USG on canteen.

Not a month goes by when we don't hear of some city, state or country challenging corporate monopolies, acting as the guardians of citizens' rights to avoid corporate abuses. It's unfortunate that such protections are qualified, allowing leeway to create subjective policies that allow for exceptions to be made for prisoners and their loved ones, exemplifying the ideological myth, by the state, of fairness.

Ocotlán residents defy criminal mine company

Oaxaca, Mexico—Community authorities and residents of the Ocotlán Valley, Oaxaca, are demanding that the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources not give in to pressure from Compañía Minera Cuzcatlán, a subsidiary of Canada's Fortuna Silver Mines, to expand their San José II mining project.

This is only the latest moment in more than a decade-long struggle of the Zapotec communities of Ocotlán to protect themselves from predatory mining activities, raising the banners FOR THE DEFENSE OF LIFE, OF OUR LAND AND TERRITORY and NO TO MINING DEATH IN OUR ZAPOTEC TERRITORIES. Below are translated excerpts from the communities' statement on their history of struggle and current demands:

POLICE VIOLENCE

"On May 6, 2009, more than 2,000 federal and state police and private security violently broke up a demonstration at the facilities of an old mine in San José del Progreso, Ocotlán, held by residents of Zapotec communities in the Ocotlán Valley. This mine and its facilities had been bought by the Compañía Minera Cuzcatlán.

"The eviction took place in the morning. Thousands of policemen beat people holding a peaceful sit-in on the outskirts of the mining facilities. There were 24 arbitrary arrests, and private homes in the neighboring community of Magdalena Ocotlán were illegally searched when the police pursued people fleeing the attacks.

"This is how the Mexican State forcibly installed the Cuzcatlán-Fortuna Silver Mines, and this began the ecocide, dispossession and destruction of our land, fields, territory and our people.

"During these 12 years, serious problems have gradually arisen due to environmental pollution: loss of flora and fauna, diseases and death of livestock, soil erosion and loss of crops, are some of the visible impacts. However, the deteriorating situation was exacerbated by a toxic spill of mining tailings that took place on Oct. 8, 2018.

"Over 1,516,000 liters of polluting mine tailings were dragged for several kilometers in the Coyote River channel, which runs through seven communities before joining the Atoyac River, whose mouth is the Pacific Ocean."

MINE EXPANSION BLOCKED

While the government exonerated the company of responsibility for the toxic spill, protests against "the mining criminal Cuzcatlán-Fortuna Silver Mines" by the communities have forced it to deny the company's request to expand their operations. The company has appealed the decision to deny that permit.

The communities' response is clear: "It is not enough to deny the extension permit. This negative is not an achievement of the institutions, of any government, or of any actor or actors outside our people. On the contrary, we see it as a consequence of a long resistance struggle by those affected and communities who see their land and territory die every day and their families get sick and die of serious and strange diseases.

"We will remain ALERT to the constant siege that the Minera Cuzcatlán company exercises towards our territory in search of minerals, since 31 concessions are still in force in our Zapotec Valley. Not a step back in defending our territory."
—Eugene Walker

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: The May 1987 essay excerpted here probes ways to make new beginnings in a period of reaction. It includes some of the themes of her work toward the book she had tentatively titled "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: 'The Party' and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity." Some significant footnotes have been omitted for reasons of space. It was published in full in *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in Permanence for Our Day* and in *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western Civilization.*

by Raya Dunayevskaya

III: Once Again, Marx—This Time with Focus on His Final Decade and on Our Age

The newness of our age was seen in the whole question of Humanism, of the relationship of party to spontaneity, of mass to leadership, of philosophy to reality.

On Oct. 23, 1956, a student youth demonstration in Budapest was fired upon. Far from dispersing the young students, these were soon joined by the workers from the factories in the outlying suburbs. The revolution had begun in earnest. During the following 13 days, ever-broader layers of the population revolted. From the very young to the very old, workers and intellectuals, women and children, even the police and the armed forces—truly the population to a man, woman and child—turned against the top Communist bureaucracy and the hated, sadistic AVO/AVH (secret police). The Communist Party with more than 800,000, and the trade unions allegedly representing the working population, just evaporated. In their place arose Workers' Councils, Revolutionary Committees of every sort—intellectuals, youth, the army—all moving away from the Single Party State.

Overnight there sprang up 45 newspapers and 40 different parties, but the decisive force of the revolution remained the Workers' Councils. When 13 days of armed resistance was bloodily crushed by the might of Russian totalitarianism, the new form of workers' organization—the factory councils—called a general strike. It was the first time in history that a general strike followed the collapse of the revolution. It held the foreign imperialist as well as the "new government" at bay for five long weeks.

Even János Kádár said he was listening to the demands of the Workers' Councils for control over production and the "possible" abrogation of the single-party rule.

What none but Marxist-Humanists saw as the transition point between the East German Revolt of 1953, the outright Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and its philosophy was revealed in two seemingly unconnected events in 1955: 1) the Montgomery Bus Boycott opened the Black Revolution in the U.S. and inspired a new stage of revolution in Africa as well; 2) in Russia, there suddenly appeared, in the main theoretical Russian journal, *Questions of Philosophy* (No. 3, 1955), an academic-sounding article entitled "Marx's Working Out of the Materialist Dialectics in the Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of the Year 1844." It was an attack on Marx's Humanist Essays, contending that the young Marx had not yet freed himself from Hegelian mysticism and its "negation of the negation." What the state-capitalist rulers calling themselves Communists had become oppressively aware of was the mass unrest, especially in East Europe. What they feared most was a new uprising.

Simply put, although the Russian theoreticians chose to shroud the philosophic phrase in mysticism, ever since Marx had materialistically "translated" the Hegelian dialectic of negativity as the philosophy of revolution, "negation of the negation" stood for an actual revolution. What the Russians fear most is exactly what erupted in Hungary in 1956. In all the changes since then, nothing truly fundamental has been altered. This is seen most clearly of all in the fact that it has always been the Single Party State that remained the all-dominant power. In this, China—Deng's China as well as Mao's China—has held to the same totalitarian principle.

This overriding fact makes it urgent to turn once again to Marx, this time not to the young Marx and his "new Humanism," nor to the mature Marx as a supposed economist, but to Marx in his last decade, when he discovered what we now call his "new moments" as he studied pre-capitalist societies, the peasantry, the women, forms of organization—the whole dialectic of human development.

Because politicalization has, in the hands of the Old Left, meant vanguardism and program-hatching, we have kept away from the very word. It is high time not to let the "vanguard party to lead" appropriate the word, politicalization. The return is to its original meaning in Marx's new continent of thought as the uprooting of the capital-

A Post-World War II View of Marx's Humanism, 1843-1883; Marxist Humanism, 1950s-1980s

ist state, its withering away, so that new humanist forms like the Paris Commune, 1871, emerge. Marx himself was so non-vanguardist that, although the First International had dissolved itself, he hailed the railroad strikes spreading throughout the U.S. and climaxed in the 1877 St. Louis General Strike, as both an elemental "post festum" to the First International Workingmen's Association, and the point of origin for a genuine workers' party.

For that matter, the whole question of pre-capitalist societies was taken up long before that last decade. In the 1850s, for example, what inspired Marx to return to the study of pre-capitalist formations and gave him a new appreciation of ancient society and its craftsmen was the Taiping Revolution. It opened so many doors to "history and its process" that Marx now concluded that, historically-materialistically speaking, a new stage of production, far from being a mere change in property form, be it "West" or "East," was such a change in production relations that it disclosed, in embryo, the dialectics of actual revolution.

What Marx, in the *Grundrisse*, had defined as "the absolute movement of becoming" had matured in the last decade of his life as new moments—a multilinear view of human development as well as a dialectic duality within each formation. From within each formation evolved both the end of the old and the beginning of the new. Whether Marx was studying the communal or the despotic form of property, it was the human resistance of the Subject that revealed the direction of resolving the contradictions. Marx transformed what, to Hegel, was the synthesis of the "Self-Thinking Idea" and the "Self-Bringing-Forth of Liberty" as the emergence of a new society. The many paths to get there were left open.

As against Marx's multilinear view which kept Marx from attempting any blueprint for future generations, Engels' unilinear view led him to mechanical positivism. By no accident whatever, such one-dimensionality kept him from seeing either the communal form under "Oriental despotism" or the duality in "primitive communism" in Morgan's *Ancient Society*. No wonder, although Engels had accepted Marx's view of the Asiatic mode of production as fundamental enough to constitute a fourth form of human development, he had left it out altogether from his analysis of primitive communism in the first book he wrote as a "bequest" of Marx—*Origin of the Family*. By then Engels had confined Marx's revolutionary dialectics and historical materialism to hardly more than Morgan's "materialism."

In Marx's revolutionary praxis, the germ of each of the "new moments" of his last decade was actually present in his first discovery. Take the question of the concept of Man/Woman, which he raised at the very moment when he spoke of the alienations of capitalist society and did not consider them ended with the overthrow of private property. This was seen most clearly in the way he worked during the Paris Commune, and in the motions he made to the First International. One such motion at the 1871 London conference recommended "the formation of female branches among the working class." The Minutes recorded:

Citizen Marx adds that it must be noted that the motion states "without exclusion of mixed sections." He believes it is necessary to create exclusively women's sections in those countries where a large number of women are employed (since) they prefer to meet by themselves to hold discussions. The women, he says, play an important role in life: they work in the factories, they take part in strikes, in the Commune, etc. . . . they have more ardor than the men. He adds a few words recalling the passionate participation of the women in the Paris Commune.

Nor was it only a question of the women. In a speech at this same London conference of the First International—Sept. 20, 1871—Marx said:

The trade unions are an aristocratic minority. Poor working people could not belong to them; the great mass of the workers who, because of economic development, are daily driven from the villages to the cities, long remain outside the trade unions, and the poorest among them would never belong. The same is true of the workers born in London's East End, where only one out of ten belongs to the trade union. The farmers, the day laborers, never belong to these trade unions.

Or take the whole question of human development. Marx definitely preferred the gens form of development, where, he concluded, the communal form—whether in an-

cient society, or in the Paris Commune, or in the future—is a higher form of human development. The point is that individual self-development does not separate itself from universal self-development. As Hegel put it: "individualism that lets nothing interfere with its universalism, i.e., freedom."

While Marx considered the gens a higher form of human life than class society, he showed that, in embryo, class relations actually started right there. Most important of all is that the multilinear human development demonstrates no straight line—that is, no fixed stages of development.

The difficulty is that post-Marx Marxists were raised not on Marx's Marxism, but on Engelsian Marxism—and that was by no means limited to Engels' *Origin of the Family*. Rather, Engels' unilinearism was organic—which is why we must start from the beginning.

Marx's Humanist Essays showed his multilinearism, his Promethean vision, whether on the concept of the Man/Woman relationship, or the question of idealism and materialism, or the opposition not only to private property capitalism but what he called "vulgar communism," which is why he called his philosophy "a new Humanism."

These motifs are the red thread through his final decade, as well. The Iroquois women, the Irish women before British imperialism, the Aborigines in Australia, the Arabs in Africa, Marx insisted in his *Ethnological Notebooks*,¹ have displayed greater intelligence, more equality between men and women, than the intellectuals from England, the U.S., Australia, France or Germany. Just as he had nothing but contempt for the British scholars, whom he called "rogues," "asses," and "blockheads," who were expounding "silliness," so he made a category of the intelligence of the Australian Aborigine, since the "intelligent black" would not accept the talk by a cleric about there being a soul without a body.

How could anyone consider the very limited quotations from Marx that Engels used in the *Origin of the Family* as any kind of summation of Marx's views? How could someone like David Ryazanov think that those *Ethnological Notebooks* dealt "mainly with landownership and feudalism"? In truth they contain nothing short of both a prehistory of humanity, including the emergence of class distinctions from within communal society, and a history of "civilization" that formed a complement to Marx's famous section in *Capital* on the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation, which was, as he wrote to Vera Zasulich, "only of Western civilization."

One Russian scholar, M. A. Vitkin (whose work, *The Orient in the Philosophic-Historic Conception of K. Marx and F. Engels*, was suddenly withdrawn from circulation), did try to bring the Marx-Engels thesis on the Asiatic Mode of Production, if not on Women's Liberation, into the framework of the 1970s. This original contribution had concluded that "it is as if Marx returned to the radicalism of the 1840s, however, on new ground." And the new ground, far from being any sort of retreat to "old age" and less creativity and less radicalism, revealed "principled new moments of his (Marx's) philosophic-historic conceptions."

It was in his last decade, as he finished the French edition of *Capital*, that Marx wrote his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, on which Lenin's profound revolutionary analysis of the need to break up the state was based. Lenin failed, however, to say a word about what in Marx's critique of the Gotha Program is the foundation of a principled proletarian organization, which led Marx to separate himself from the unity of the Eisenachists (who were considered to be Marxists) and the Lassalleans. Nor was there any reference by Lenin to his own critique of *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin's main organizational document.² He thus disregarded the twelve years of self-criticism during which he insisted that *What Is To Be Done?* was not a universal, but a tactical question for revolutionaries working in tsarist Russia. Instead, it was made into a universal after the revolution. This set the ground for a Stalin—that is to say, for the problem that remains the burning question of our day: What comes after the conquest of power?

It gives even greater significance to the question that Rosa Luxemburg raised both before the 1917 Russian Revolution and directly after.³ "The revolution,"

continued on p. 10

1. Lawrence Krader transcribed Marx's Notebooks, which were published as *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972). For my analysis, see my *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982).

2. Lenin's many critiques of the concept of vanguardism and centralism during the development of Marxism in Russia were published in Russia as a pamphlet entitled *Twelve Years*. See his "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*," in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), pp. 94-113.

3. Lenin's philosophic ambivalence had become so crucial for our age that I wrote a chapter with that as its title for my work, *Philosophy and Revolution*; the chapter, indeed, was published separately even before the book itself was published. Its timeliness in the year 1970 opened many new doors for Marxist Humanism. Thus, I spoke to such widely different audiences as the Hegel Society of America and the first conference of the young radical philosophers of *Telos*. The chapter was also published by



Mass march in Budapest as part of the Hungarian Revolution, Oct. 25, 1956.

Taliban reconquest shakes alliances, challenges Left

by Franklin Dmitryev for the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees

The Taliban's reconquest of Afghanistan—which anyone could see coming but whose speed still took many by surprise, including the Biden administration—has shaken world politics and challenged the Left to respond in a revolutionary way.

This is not an end, but only a new chapter in the suffering of the people of Afghanistan. That was made clear by immediate resistance, including demonstrations against the Taliban in multiple cities and women demonstrating in the streets and even yelling at Taliban soldiers.

It has been equally shown by the Taliban's repression, including shooting at demonstrators, beating people at checkpoints, torturing and killing members of the Hazara ethnic group, searching door to door in Kabul for enemies—like human rights activists and journalists. Their spokesmen's honeyed words about peace and reconciliation cannot hide their long track record of harsh oppression of women and ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities and their violent suppression of those who challenge their dominance.

U.S. DISDAIN FOR AFGHAN PEOPLE

That, however, was not a consideration for the U.S., despite its rhetoric about democracy and women's rights at the time of its invasion in 2001. President Joe Biden made that clear once again in his Aug. 16 address to the nation. In that callous 18-minute speech, he had not one word to say about the suffering of the Afghan people, whether caused by U.S. and NATO forces or by the Taliban, Al Qaeda or Daesh (Islamic State).

Not one word about the quarter of a million people killed directly in the war, thousands of whom were civilians, about whom the U.S. often lied that they were fighters. Not one word about the 360,000 more people indirectly killed by disease, hunger or other consequences of the war. Not one word about women's oppression under both the Taliban and the U.S.-installed government and allied warlords.

Aside from a promise “to evacuate our Afghan allies and vulnerable Afghans to safety outside of Afghanistan”—which was belied by the systematic rejection of visas for those vulnerable people who have been trying to flee for years and by the lack of advance evacuation plans of the Biden administration—Biden had nothing to say about the Afghan people. Rather he passed the buck to them by complaining: “We gave them every tool they could need. We paid their salaries!...We gave them every chance to determine their own future.”

The Biden administration's disinterest in these evacuations was in total continuity with the Trump administration's disdain for Afghanistan and any other country of brown-skinned people he termed a “shithole.” But the U.S. betrayal of the Afghan people did not begin with the Trump-Biden plans for withdrawal, or for that matter the Obama surge that Biden now pretends he did not support. From the beginning of George W. Bush's military conquest of the country in 2001, the U.S. deliberately armed and empowered warlords and undermined Afghan women, the Left, or anyone who desired a social transformation independent of U.S. domination. (See “Afghan women pay the price for U.S. hubris,” p. 2.)

ROOTS OF AFGHAN TRAGEDY

Even before that, beginning in 1979 the U.S., Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China were arming the most reactionary Islamist fighters against the Communists, especially after the bloody Russian invasion. Some of these Islamists went on to start Al Qaeda. The U.S. lost

interest in the country after Gorbachev withdrew. It was in the chaos of warlords battling each other after Russia's withdrawal that the Taliban rose as a supposed unifying alternative to the corrupt factional fighting.

The tragedy of Afghanistan began really with the incompleteness of its revolution in the 1970s, which was taken over by its Communist party, which initiated the counter-revolution from within the revolution that sparked the Russian invasion in 1979.

The U.S. did regain interest in Afghanistan after Al Qaeda's Sept. 11, 2001, destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City. The subsequent U.S. takeover of the country was justified as a “war on terror,” but also a supposed rescue of women.

It soon became part of a “crusade,” whose Islamophobia was alternately signaled and denied by the Bush administration.

That crusade wallowed in imperial illusions fueled by the collapse of the USSR, which left the U.S. as the sole superpower. The whole world would be remade in the image of the U.S.—or rather in the image of exploited client states of the U.S., compliant with Washington foreign policy, and whose labor and resources would be open to exploitation by U.S. and multinational corporations.

This project, sometimes labeled “nation-building,” quickly set its sights on assimilating Iraq. The vast enrichment of military contractors in the process was a welcome side benefit, just as the impoverishment and death of hundreds of thousands of human beings was mere “collateral damage.”

The lightning collapse of the client regime in Kabul pronounced a harsh judgment on the 20 years of this imperial project that never cared about self-determination of the people. After all this nation-building, the majority of people live in poverty, most city dwellers live in slums, unemployment is around 20% (47% for young women), access to healthcare is low, one-third do not have food security, with agriculture endangered by projected droughts from climate change, and half of women have experienced violence—even before the Taliban takeover. One thing the U.S. has left to the country is a vast array of weaponry, which will now fuel violence in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

CALLOUS ‘ANTI-IMPERIALIST’ RHETORIC

It is easy to point out the defeat of the U.S. and how it was weakened by its imperial overreach with the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and “nation-building.” Unfortunately, too much of the “anti-imperialist Left” can go no further. All they see is the defeat of imperialism; therefore they whitewash the Taliban as a “national liberation” movement. They have nothing to say about the resistance and rebellion by Afghan women over the past four decades that continues today.

Unmoved by the scenes of fleeing Afghans falling off airplanes flying out of Kabul, they express no more sympathy for the people's actual lives than did Biden, comforting themselves with the exaggeration that “the Taliban have a lot of support in Afghanistan” (Aug. 16 statement by the United National Antiwar Coalition).

Monthly Review showed its Stalinist-Maoist inclinations by reposting on mronline.org “[U.S. defeat in Afghanistan—A contrast with the Soviet experience](#)”—an article from the vilely Assadist *Consortium News*. The article labeled the USSR's war and occupation in Afghanistan a “progressive project” that deserved the same kind of international Left support as the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s, which the author, As'ad AbuKhalil, fails to note was sabotaged from within by the Stalinists.



Taliban fighters patrolling Kabul, Aug. 17. This Humvee is one small part of a mountain of military hardware abandoned to the Taliban by the U.S.

The article has nothing bad to say about the Taliban and on women only mocks “Western media” that “be-moaned the status of women after the American departure.” Although the latest issue of *Monthly Review* is devoted to “The New Cold War against China,” both *MR* and AbuKhalil also forget to mention that China supported the same reactionary forces in Afghanistan that the U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia did.

NO BANNER OF LIBERATION

In fact, the Taliban's swift victory was won through a series of deals with side-switching warlords without regard to the people's wishes. This lack of any concept of revolution or humanism, this void on the “Left” of a truly liberatory banner of a new human society, threatens to turn the defeat of U.S. imperialism into an opportunity for the most reactionary forces.

The weakening of the U.S. superpower creates a vacuum. What is needed to fill it are truly liberatory revolutionary movements, refusing to separate revolt from a philosophy of revolution. In their absence, what looms is not only a reinvigoration of fundamentalist political and military movements but the reactionary, even genocidal, maneuvering by Russia and China (who have flaunted war exercises in Central Asia with each other and with the region's authoritarian regimes), xenophobic refugee-scapegoating parties in Europe and North America, and repression of social movements on the model of Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Burma's Tatmadaw—all of which have been flourishing under the U.S. permanent “war on terror.”

—Aug. 21, 2021

#BlackLivesMatter

The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart, Alicia Garza, One World Press, 2020.

Alicia Garza is proudly Black, Queer, feminist, and a long-time community organizer best known as a co-founder of #BlackLivesMatter. Her book relates her experiences to important milestones in the 21st-Century movements for Black freedom.

In the first half of *The Purpose of Power*, Garza narrates her development as a Queer Black feminist community organizer. In 2013, hearing the shocking “not guilty” verdict for the vigilante killer of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, Garza emailed activist friends Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi: “I can't breathe. NOT GUILTY?????????”

“Where those folks at saying we have moved past race and that black folks in particular need to get over it?... We GOTTA get it together y'all...This verdict will create many more George Zimmermans...#blacklivesmatter.”

‘THE TRUTH OF BLACK LIFE’

By the next day, “everything was exploding”: protests were called nationwide and the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag was circulating on social media. Just three days later, on July 16, 2013, Garza wrote: “#Blacklivesmatter asserts the truth of Black life that collective action builds collective power for collective transformation.” The hashtag had become a vehicle for “activism, organizing, and analysis.”

In 2014, #BlackLivesMatter became an organization supporting the rebellion in Ferguson, Mo., after Michael Brown was shot six times by Police Officer Darren Wilson. Yet Garza cautions, “Hashtags don't build movements. People do. Now we have to learn how to build movements for the 21st Century.”

In the second half of the book, “Notes on the Next Movement,” Garza asks, “After protests die down...where do people go to take sustained action?” The movement had grown way beyond its origins and led Garza to wrestle with its developments and contradictions in relation to building power. The power she describes is both visionary and practical: “the ability to make decisions that affect your own [and others'] lives...the ability to reward and punish and decide how resources are distributed.”

AFTER THE GEORGE FLOYD MURDER

Black youth-led worldwide mass protests after the 2020 murder of George Floyd drew in white support. Now questions of unity and solidarity, identity and intersectionality, leadership and co-optation had to be revisited to ensure sustainability of principles.

In the last chapter, “In the End: Power,” Garza writes that Black power can be transformed to “unlock a new democracy, a new civil society, and a new economy in the United States.” Yet, I am reminded of Audre Lorde's comment, “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.”

American history, as caught in *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*, reveals that “at each historic turning point of development in the U.S., it was the Black masses in motion who proved to be the vanguard.” Frantz Fanon had written of the 1960s revolutions in Black Africa in *Wretched of the Earth*: “for Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism.”

Is it possible to radically transform the politics of a capitalist USA? Garza points out this will not be easy. Her experience, questions, vision, and rootedness in the Black freedom movements make this book necessary for all who want to sustain Black Lives Matter movements.

—Susan Van Gelder

—Marxist-Humanism's writings on Afghanistan—

To understand the events of today and tomorrow,

we invite you to read *News & Letters'* coverage of Afghanistan, including:

- * “Afghanistan's Revolution Devours Itself,” a section in “Carter's Drive to War,” by Raya Dunayevskaya, [March 1980 N&L](#)
- * “A review of ‘Tragedy of Afghanistan,’” by Ali Atesh, [Jan.-Feb. 1989 N&L](#)
- * “War, Terror, and Humanism Collide in Afghanistan,” by Gerard Emmett, [Dec. 2001 N&L](#)
- * “Afghan women speak for themselves,” by Tahmeena Faryal, [Dec. 2001 N&L](#)
- * “Essay: Solidarity with women of Afghanistan,” by Terry Moon, [Aug.-Sept. 2003 N&L](#)
- * “Afghan lives and freedom sucked into U.S. quagmire,” by Terry Moon, [Oct.-Nov. 2009 N&L](#)
- * “[U.S.'s Endless War in Afghanistan](#),” Editorial in July-August 2010 *N&L*
- * “[Never-ending U.S. wars](#),” Editorial in Jan.-Feb. 2015 *N&L*
- * “[Women bearing the brunt of reaction lead the resistance](#),” by Terry Moon, March-April 2019 *N&L*
- * “[U.S. in Afghanistan: 20 years of betrayal](#),” by Terry Moon, May-June 2021 *N&L*

All the readings can be found at www.newsandletters.org

or write us for copies at 228. S. Wabash Ave., Room 230, Chicago, IL 60604

SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIANS

I do not completely agree with Gerry Emmett's analysis of the continuing violence and suffering between the Palestinians and the Israeli government and its military machine ("[Solidarity with Palestinians Needed as State Powers Scheme](#)," July-Aug. 2021 *N&L*). He has not specifically named the U.S. as a principal supporter of Israel's horrible and unending oppression of the Palestinian people. He called attention to Israel's connection with the capitalists of Russia, China and India, which he calls the "Eurasian capitalist order." However, as far as I know, it is the U.S. capitalists who are the most dependable and committed group to support Israel's unending violence and exploitation of the Palestinians. It was President Trump's bold move to back ever greater reactionary forces and actions in Israel that may play a role in the latest outbreak of violence unleashed on the Palestinians, who once again suffer many times more than the Israeli people.

Rama Kumar
Fairfax, Calif.

ATTACKS ON DEMOCRACY

I'm struck with the editorial "[Republicans savage democracy and history](#)" in the July-Aug. *N&L*. That should be developed internationally. For example, we cannot understand Middle East without understanding that democracy was always a lie in Israel. Also democracy was never the central intention of the U.S. ruling class, but it expanded throughout our history as a result of deep freedom struggles from below, which was the only real gift that the U.S. gave the world. Now there is a new stage of anti-democratic Republicans attempting to roll history back 150 years. They need to be called out on that.

Steve
Detroit

The fight against democracy is not new. Under the 1965 Voting Rights Act, certain states and counties had to get pre-clearance to change voting laws. Those provisions of the Act were struck down a few years ago by the U.S. Supreme Court. This affects mostly Southern states which had poll taxes and literacy requirements. Gerrymandering to exclude Blacks was being done then too. Now the Department of Justice is suing Georgia under the Civil Rights Act on the grounds that their new laws restricting voting access are discriminating.

Dan
Flint, Mich.

IRANIAN REVOLT

On July 20 it was reported that three Iranian protesters were killed during demonstrations against the water crisis in Iran's southwest region after four nights of protests over access to clean drinking water. Many more have fallen since. The situation is dire, yet people are fearless. During the peak hours, women in the Tehran Metro were chanting: "Death to Islam-

ED NEGRON IN MEMORIAM

Ed Negrón, Chicago activist for Latinx, LGBTQ+ and especially Bisexual rights, died suddenly at age 50. Ed was an out and proud Bisexual man and was inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame. He co-founded the Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago and counseled people through their journeys out of alcohol and substance addiction. Ed took many photographs during his professional, freelance career, many of which were of Chicago LGBTQ+ and Latinx events, and the annual International Mr. Leather convention. He was among the panelists several years ago at a News and Letters Committees meeting about racism at Boystown (now renamed Northalsted). Ed loved his family and especially treasured being an uncle. I am already missing the warm-heartedness, mentorship, generosity, leadership and creativity of my friend, Ed.

Elise
Chicago

READERS' VIEWS

ic Republic!" Combined with the oil and gas workers whose strike was supported by sugar cane workers and transportation workers, the situation is potentially explosive. What's new with the Left is that unlike with Syria, no one is taking sides by blaming Saudi Arabia for infiltrating the Sunni Arabs of Iran. We shall see.

Iranian exile
East Bay, Calif.

MUSICIANS' LABOR

I cherish my Local 802 union card despite the fact that my work has been wiped out and now most of my work is non-union, though I try. What automation has done to labor you now see being done in orchestras who have, for example, automated the harp. The work has become degrading as the worker is forced to keep time to the machine. When the harp is synthesized, the violinist has to go with automated harp. It's a metaphor of society. The Paul Taylor Dance Co. used recordings instead of live musicians. Recordings are a paradox of society. Radio stations had combos. Records can be a beautiful performance, but also can be used to keep live music from developing. The music world has been shaken up by the pandemic too. For example, now rehearsal time is set by the need to pay the bill; not by the needs of the music or the musician.

Musicians
New York

DAMAGE TO HOMELESS

I was homeless from 1983 to 1986, and I still meet new homeless people almost every day. A certain number of people become homeless because they were first emotionally unstable. However, it is more often the case that the experience of homelessness is so psychologically damaging that the emotional breakdown often seen in homeless people comes as a RESULT of being homeless, not the other way around. Living for an extended period on the mean city streets and going day after day without adequate food, sleep, medical care and continually facing the angry judgements of society is so painful that even the strongest would gradually start showing symptoms of emotional distress and breakdown. The only hope of actually ending this growing national crisis demands more than some special psychiatric beds. We need enough low-cost housing units available to the entire population of homeless people plus free counseling and medical services.

Formerly homeless
Northern California

COVID-19 KILLERS

The headline in the July 24 *Battle Creek Enquirer* said, "Most unvaccinated U.S. adults don't want shots." These people are still under the spell of Trumpism and its lies. A research study carried out months ago concluded that 40% of U.S. deaths from COVID-19 could have been prevented if someone other than little Donnie had been in charge. At the time, U.S. deaths stood at 500,000, meaning that Trumpy has the blood of over 200,000 U.S. citizens and nationals on his hands. In the coming weeks and months, as the Delta variant takes hold in unvaccinated areas, perhaps hundreds of thousands of preventable COVID deaths will be added to that grim toll—the legacy of Donald Trump, traitor.

Curtis
Battle Creek, Mich.

The bogus Republicans hold bogus press conferences complaining about refu-

gees carrying diseases, while they discredit science and ignore recommendations and common sense about the COVID-19 virus and vaccines.

Sharon
Chicago

TRUMP AND TALIBAN

Trump's direct actions to ink an agreement to leave Afghanistan, and to brag about it until a week ago, show a connection, and a basis for negotiation, between misogynist would-be totalitarianisms, Trumpism and the Taliban. It parallels the discovery by millions of people in August 1939 that Nazism and Stalinism in the name of Marxism were not opposites. Not that many, unlike Raya Dunayevskaya, reorganized their thinking—even Trotsky. Trump bragged also that what his agreements altered, even post-election—including release of Abdul Ghani Baradar and 5,000 imprisoned Taliban fighters—prevented Biden from undoing the concrete details of Trump's negotiations. But Biden gets his share of grief for obstructing Afghan refugees, to avoid added confrontation over resettlement on top of Fox News orchestrating rage over refugees at the southern border.

Bob McGuire
Chicago

FAR RIGHT IN PORTLAND

The violent far-Right protest in Portland on Aug. 22, confronted by anti-fascist counter-protesters, made an extra big mess, considering the mayor and his ding-dong friends thought it would be a good idea to hold a press conference the day before to urge people to "choose love." This while a majority of the violence occurred in one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city, which was then overrun by the white supremacists. Not that I was under the illusion of the mayor doing anything.

Liz
Portland

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

My mother was born in Italy, my dad was born in Japan, so my line of thought is always influenced from an immigrant Italian/Irish or Japanese influence. I've always had difficulty totally understanding the racial divide between Black and white Americans. But I've never read a more informative article than "[Targeting Anti-Racism](#)" (July-Aug. 2021 *N&L*). It helped me understand critical race theory and white privilege. Your newspaper has abolitionist views that support abortion rights, prisoners, Native Americans, underpaid workers, etc. I wish more people would read what you print with eyes wide open, and not shaded with political, capitalist or racist glasses.

Prisoner
Corcoran, Calif.

It's wonderful to see the widespread resistance to the attacks on critical race theory (CRT) in so many school districts. Those opposed to CRT mean to make these attacks only the beginning. They want the U.S. to be like Hong Kong or Myanmar, where people are arrested, jailed and killed for criticizing the government in any manner. The use of the concept of "not making any [white] child feel uncomfortable about his/her history" is included so it will be easy for them to initiate punishment for the teacher, or even lawsuits, if just one kid complains (or is groomed to complain). But the masses of Black children who already are routinely made uncomfortable by learning about Greenwood, Rosewood, or their own enslaved ancestors could also initiate complaints and lawsuits, class action suits, etc. It's ridiculous that it could come to this.

Susan Van Gelder
Detroit

PRISONERS UNDER FIRE

An inmate at High Desert prison, which is right in the middle of a huge fire right now that is jumping containment lines, told us that the guards locked everyone in and mostly left. The roads are closed, fire all around, electricity cut off, smoke very thick in the prison already. All we can find out from the news is that the state corrections department is in "constant communication" with fire and emergency services, and evidently the air is so bad that officials claim they gave out N95 masks to prisoners and staff. A spokeswoman for the California Department of Corrections and rehabilitation refused to give any information on plans for prisoner evacuation.

Prisoner rights advocates
San Francisco Bay Area

VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS

I've been blessed to receive *N&L* for four years now and I'd like to thank you and all of the donors for your kindness and unselfishness.



N&L has been so informative and has educated me on so many things in these past four years. I love the paper because y'all are

unapologetically REAL and are not going to be politically correct and water down y'all's work. Everything is raw and 100%, unlike the whitewashed mainstream papers. There's a reason ameriKKKa wants to silence and get rid of powerful voices like *N&L*. I appreciate the love and valuable knowledge you spread. I always stand with *N&L* in unity and love. I will be released from slavery (prison) in October and I would like to keep my subscription to *N&L* and also help out in any way I can. Thank you once again for being a part of my political and revolutionary maturation.

Prisoner
USA

The heavy hand of government censorship has come down on me. Last year, the North Central Unit's mailroom claimed that the book *They Can't Kill Us All* promoted racial violence. It is a book written from an African-American point of view. A previous head of the mailroom allowed an inmate to have the book, but I was denied. Now our mailroom workers claim that the May-June 2021 issue of *N&L* promotes violence. This is not the only crazy thing done by them in recent months. I get *Our Daily Bread* every other month. The address card contains a Bible verse and full color landscape picture on the other side. With the new mailroom coordinator in place, I have not been getting the card. Newsletters from places like Titus House Ministries, a religious group, are now photocopied instead of coming in with their color intact. The prepaid envelope for my Salvation Army Bible study group was declared contraband and destroyed. Another inmate had his copy of *The Watchtower* denied. They photocopied the front cover and sent it to him. Then they shredded his religious material. Our mailroom morons need to be fired!

Prisoner
Calico Rock, Ark.

*Only the dialectic can save us.
Deep within our physical frame
is the claim of human liberation.
We go beyond good and evil,
We criticize, we split the atom
that is
the human heart, go beyond the
laws of this heart, the source, the
reason, the core of coeur, to the
absolutes that are the beacon
lights, that transcend the wanton
particularities
guiding us in the discipline of our
freedom.*

Paul Geist
New York

World crises are testing liberation struggles

continued from p. 1

the lion's share of vaccines for themselves, while failing to deliver what they promised to the COVAX program to supply low- and middle-income countries. (India's out-of-control surge of the Delta variant also hurt COVAX when 400 million promised doses were needed at home.)

As a result of this healthcare inequality both within and between countries, as well as the subordination of healthcare in general to the fetish of production and therefore the nattering demand to "reopen the economy," COVID-19 was allowed to proliferate and evolve even more dangerous new variants—which continues.

Many governments across the globe seized the opportunity to clamp down on protests and strikes and exploit hunger to stifle revolt. In Burma, anti-coup demonstrators are still fully masked, though the military is trying to kill them anyway. With one hand China and Russia are burnishing their diplomacy by furnishing vaccines to countries stiffed by the U.S. and Europe. At the same time, China has stepped up its suppression of Hong Kong and genocidal exploitation of the Uyghurs. China and Russia have not stopped supporting the murderous suppression of revolt in Burma and Syria.

PRISONS AND NURSING HOMES

Virtually every aspect of 21st-century capitalism has been revealed in all its viciousness since the pandemic began in late 2019. From the outset, prisons, jails and immigrant detention centers coldly exposed incarcerated people. Because of the systemic racism of the criminal justice system, the toll fell most heavily on people of color. Institutions hid the suffering and death from official reports and statistics, while U.S. politicians and pundits bloviated about the Chinese government's coverup. Disgraced former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's coverup of nursing home deaths was as serious as his other crimes.

What is certain is that the statistics are significant undercounts. Prisons, jails and detention centers often avoided giving coronavirus tests, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons even "[had a policy of removing cases and deaths from its reports.](#)" But, as of Aug. 13, the [COVID Prison Project reports 414,500 COVID-19 cases among prisoners, with 2,556 deaths; and 102,565 cases among staff, with 173 deaths. Both prisoners and staff have a much higher rate of infection than the general population.](#)

Part of the problem is that, "in the majority of states that report this data, [fewer than half of prison staff have gotten a shot.](#)" They have not ignored the pandemic, however. They used it as an excuse to impose lockdowns and to ban or limit family visits, recreation and educational activities.

In U.S. nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, [at least 184,000 residents and staff were killed by COVID-19 through June.](#) That accounts for nearly one-third of U.S. deaths from the disease. Nursing homes with [more Black or Hispanic patients had higher rates of deaths and more severe cases.](#) It was especially horrendous in the first few months of 2020. As [we wrote last April:](#)

"Existing institutions—nursing homes, homeless shelters, jails, prisons, concentration camps for immigrants—became centers of contagion, just by maintaining the same exploitative conditions as before. Many private nursing homes are perennially understaffed and poorly run, pleading poverty to justify poverty wages, while raking in profits that are siphoned off by owners and their crony contractors."

Far more frequent pandemics are one expected result of the climate and ecological crisis. The world response to COVID-19 presents a grave warning about how future pandemics will be mishandled, and how the climate and ecological crisis itself will be handled, as long as the capitalist system is in the driver's seat. We will not take the space here to elaborate on the systematic lies and coverups, the false solutions that do little more than line a few pockets, the extraordinary steps taken to protect the wealthy and powerful, the largesse showered upon capitalists and their businesses to cushion them from the economic shock while millions of workers were thrown out of work or forced to work in dangerous conditions, the exploitation of each crisis to perpetuate capitalism. (Much of this was detailed in last year's [Draft Perspectives Thesis](#) and other articles in *News & Letters*.) Let us only point out that all of these things are already happening in response to the climate crisis.

II. Climate disaster now

The heat wave that struck western Canada, Washington and Oregon in June shocked even the climatologists. Longer and hotter heat waves and broken records were expected, but climate models did not suggest anything as extreme as the repeated breaking of records by multiple degrees in many localities from Portland, Ore., to Lytton, B.C., killing several hundred people and sparking wildfires. Three days in a row, Lytton set a new heat record for all of Canada, ending up at 121 degrees F, an astonishing eight degrees higher than the previous record. And then 90% of Lytton was burned up.

On Aug. 9—unintentionally marking International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and the anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Na-

gasaki, Japan—the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its starkest report yet, titled "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis." It found that human activity has changed the climate in "unprecedented" ways and that deadly extreme weather fueled by global warming is already affecting every part of the Earth—however, it's not too late to act to keep the climate disruption from getting far worse. **IF, that is, drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are made rapidly. It's not a matter of all or nothing, because every half degree of additional global warming would make an immense, harmful difference. Over the last several years, report after report has stressed the need for deep social changes. Each one gets mostly lip service.**

This summer has also seen startling floods in India, Bangladesh, China, Germany, Uganda and Nigeria, as well as in the U.S. from Arizona to Nebraska, from Tennessee to New York. Wildfires have devastated the Mediterranean from Spain to Lebanon and Algeria; Siberia, where smoke reached the North Pole in a historic first; and the U.S., including the second biggest in California history. Millions of people have been forced to confront the reality that the climate crisis is already wreaking havoc—including an estimated [30 million people displaced in 2020](#) by extreme weather and drought.

However, this is not so new for everyone. Hurricane Katrina should have made it clear in the U.S. 16 years ago (see "New Orleans: The human cost of capitalism's brutality," by Kevin Michaels and Jim Mills, [Sept.-Oct. 2005 N&L](#)), but the climate denials, better termed climate obstructionists, helped bury the reality. Even earlier, Hurricane Mitch showed it in 1998 (see "Hurricane's Unnatural Rage," [Dec. 1998 N&L](#)) through its devastation of Central America, which today is suffering from a long drought drying up people's means of subsistence and fueling mass emigration. Countries like the Philippines and Mozambique have been hit by unprecedented cyclones. South Asia's monsoons have become more irregular and less reliable, disrupting agriculture as well as bringing deadly floods. The drought in Madagascar has put it on the brink of the first "[climate change famine](#)"—unlike food crises partly caused by conflict, as in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Somalia—according to the United Nations. "Famine-like conditions" are also hitting four more African countries and Yemen.

In many cases, the climate crisis compounds the devastation of war. "The total collapse of water and food production for millions of Syrians and Iraqis is imminent," [according to Carsten Hansen of the Norwegian Refugee Council.](#) "With hundreds of thousands of Iraqis still displaced and many more still fleeing for their lives in Syria, the unfolding water crisis will soon become an unprecedented catastrophe pushing more into displacement."

Extreme weather is not the only marker of climate change. We are only seeing the beginning of the sapping of agriculture. It has already suffered in many countries, including in the U.S., where last year's floods in the Midwest seriously hurt production. Some island nations have been losing land and potable water to rising seas.

The climate crisis exacerbates oppressions—from racism to exclusion of people with disabilities—and at the same time stokes the quest for universality on the part of forces of revolt. As Ugandan youth climate activist [Vanessa Nakate put it:](#)

"Young women are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, especially in communities where I come from, where society has given specific gender roles for men and women. These roles find women in places where disasters occur. Women are working in the farms where the destruction of crops takes place. The drying of streams and wells [means they] have to walk long distances to collect water for their families....Women realize that they are at the front lines and that existing inequalities are only being exacerbated by climate change. They know that if they don't speak up, then they won't see change. As a woman, I know that it's my responsibility to speak up, not just for myself, but for the millions of women across the world who have already lost everything, even their lives."

It is often noted that many of the countries that are suffering the most from climate change, like Madagascar, contributed almost nothing to its causes. What is too often left unsaid is how this embodies the imperialist relationships between the countries that grew rich exploiting

resources and labor and the countries that were and are exploited and were driven into certain paths of "development."

Capitalist exploitation and competition go a long way toward explaining the rulers' climate inaction.

At the 1992 Earth Summit, world leaders signed a treaty in which they solemnly committed to the "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." That level had already been passed and each year since it has receded further into the rearview mirror.

We have reached the point where the danger is manifesting itself all around us—killing thousands

every year; raising sea levels and destroying homes; facilitating the spread of diseases, even pandemics; worsening the mass extinction of species among all animal and plant groups, caused by habitat destruction and globalized, automated, advanced capitalist production; contributing to famines; displacing millions of people from their home regions, and thus providing more fuel to anti-immigrant nationalism and fascist politics.

What are the capitalist system and its nation-states doing in the face of the climate emergency unfolding at a breathtaking pace? "Pretending to wage war against fossil fuels,

while opening up brand new coal mines and oil fields and pipelines," in the words of Greta Thunberg at the Austrian World Summit on July 1.

John Kerry, Biden's special envoy on climate, said that the new IPCC report "underscores the overwhelming urgency of this moment. The world must come together before the ability to limit global warming to 1.5C is out of reach....[The UN COP26 climate meeting this year in] Glasgow must be a turning point in this crisis."

But much of what is being put forward by governments like Kerry's depends on sham solutions like carbon capture and storage, nuclear power, burning wood pellets, and carbon offsets. The "green recovery" or Build Back Better is in danger of largely being reduced to a bipartisan bill that locks in carbon-intensive infrastructure without much being done about climate. The infrastructure bill

- [exempts oil and gas pipelines](#) on federal land from environmental assessments, especially endangering low-income and racialized communities;
- [allocates \\$15 billion to carbon capture projects,](#) against the advice of Biden's own Environmental Justice Advisory Council;
- [allocates \\$8 billion to the creation of four new regional hubs for producing hydrogen,](#) which is largely produced using climate busting natural gas;
- [allocates \\$1.6 billion to logging industry subsidies;](#)
- [would, together with the budget reconciliation package, grant up to \\$50 billion to subsidize aging nuclear reactors.](#)

Rather than rapidly ending fossil fuel extraction and use, it is designed to lock in fossil dependency for decades, just as the oil companies who sponsor "moderate" Democrats and Republicans desire.

And we must not forget that the administration, [which has approved more than 2,000 permits](#) for fracking and drilling on federal land, refused to pull the plug on both [Line 3](#) and the [Dakota Access Pipeline.](#) Biden talks a good game about environmental justice but is actually obstructing the movement fighting for it and against climate chaos.

CLIMATE OBSTRUCTION

The new climate obstructionism does still include a lot of climate denial but also the efforts by the Right to exploit fears of climate refugees to stoke xenophobic nationalism. Another part of climate obstructionism has already started putting out the message that "we have to learn to live with" climate disruption, just as we are supposed to "live with" the pandemic.

However, the problem is not only the climate obstructionists. The system has a momentum of its own that guides even those in government, business and NGOs who are trying to deal with climate change and its myriad effects.

As long as class society persists, workers will have to continue to fight to minimize the class-skewed effects, while some capitalists are making

continued on p. 8



Ugandan participants in Rise Up Movement Africa expressing their truth.

World crises are testing liberation struggles

continued from p. 7

money off of the crisis. Most of the green jobs Biden promises turn out to be non-union jobs that often do not pay a living wage. Indigenous, Black and Latinx communities still confront mining and other polluting projects.

When it comes to the jobs that the transition to clean energy is already reducing, the owners of coal companies—including Democratic Senator Joe Manchin—proclaim the need to maintain their industry, supposedly for the sake of the miners but really for the sake of the owners. Politicians often repeat these claims, yet are silent about the companies' union-busting and undermining of wages, safety measures and health insurance. Even now, [coal miners on strike in Alabama](#) are getting no support from Biden, although he managed to say earlier that [Amazon workers in nearby Bessemer, Ala.](#), had a right to organize.

ADAPTATION—FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?

Adaptation to climate change is needed and is already happening, but the way it is being carried out protects the rich and powerful most of all and largely leaves the oppressed in the dust, both nationally and internationally. The most serious climate adaptation project underway—for many years now—is protecting military bases and preparing for military intervention in climate-fueled conflicts and against climate migrants. Oil companies have been preparing deep-sea drilling platforms for rising seas and intensifying hurricanes at the very time they were promoting climate denial.

A human way of adapting to and mitigating climate change is possible, a way of transforming society so that most people's lives become better, not worse; but it requires throwing off the chains of capital, not just state intervention, not just democracy, but revolutionary liberation. The administrative mentality of our age, which would make climate plans for the masses, is a barrier to liberation. As Raya Dunayevskaya pointed out in *Marxism and Freedom*:

“Our age is the age of state-capitalism, national revolutions and workers' revolts. Unless one is ready to base himself on the masses who alone can initiate a truly new social order, one has no place to go but to state-capitalism.”

The private space race of billionaires holds an ominous warning of the time when billionaires, corporations or a nation-state acting against international consensus may take matters into their own hands and carry out their own geoengineering schemes, regardless of the consequences for billions of people who have no say in it.

The way the system's momentum plays out illuminates the fatal flaws of reforms aimed to save or in some cases transform capitalism. This is seen in the Integrated Assessment Models used by UN scientists and economists to model pathways to limiting global warming. They conclude that we need “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.” Yet their pathway models all assume a continuation of capitalist economy with needed continuous GDP growth. They want revolution without revolution, or fixing the paralyzed political system when they know we need deep transformation.

III. Economic contradictions

Both the pandemic and the climate and ecological crisis struck at a time when the world capitalist system had shown its inability to extricate itself from a prolonged economic slump. They deepened it. Despite the happy face that government and corporate economists keep trying to paint with statistics, the opposite story is told by what is happening economically in people's lives:

- The staggering inequality, with billionaires not just jet-setting but rocketing to space, while even before the pandemic [40% of U.S. households](#) had expenses bigger than income.

- As of July, 8.7 million people in the U.S. were [officially counted as unemployed](#), 3.4 million of them longer than six months, plus 6.5 million more not counted although they want jobs and 4.5 million working part-time unwillingly. Black unemployment was 8.2%.

- Most people do not get paid a living wage, which varies by location. A living wage for two adults, both working, with two children in San Francisco would be \$36.58/hour. [Almost half of U.S. workers between ages 18 to 64 have low-wage jobs](#), and [19.2% of Latinx workers are paid poverty-level wages, as are 14.3% of Black workers](#). Low-wage workers (the majority are women) were most likely to lose jobs during the pandemic, just as they were the bulk of those forced to work in unsafe conditions.

- Worldwide, 2 billion people, [more than 61% of the world's employed population, work in the informal economy](#), lacking most or all legally established rights.

- Life expectancy, which had risen steadily for decades until 2014, [fell steeply last year](#) by 1.5 years, but twice as much for Latinx and Black Americans.

- Rents keep going up, so that [nearly half of U.S. workers cannot afford to rent](#) a one-bedroom apartment on the income from one job. [The Supreme Court just struck down the latest eviction moratorium, and 10 million renters are behind on rent](#).

Dominique Walker of Moms 4 Housing pointed out what should be obvious: “The true crime lies in this society we live in that can normalize people

living in the street. Shelter is a human right.”

- 18% of the U.S. population are being harassed by collection agencies for [\\$140 billion in medical debt](#)—especially in Republican governed states that rejected Medicaid expansion.

- The pandemic has worsened global hunger, so that [270 million people may face life-threatening food shortages](#) this year, especially in Africa, Central America, Afghanistan and North Korea, but the wealthy U.S. is not exempt, where one out of five Black families face food insecurity.

One measure of the U.S. economy is that its [largest employers are Walmart, Amazon, and McDonald's](#) together with its franchisees. Amazon has famously exploitative conditions, which is why it faced strikes during the pandemic and several union organizing drives going on now. It brags about paying a few dollars more than neighboring companies—still far short of a living wage—while it drives workers so hard that it breaks down their bodies and its [turnover rate among hourly workers is about 150%](#) a year.

Just as Amazon pushes workers to work at [speeds and hours](#) beyond their physical limits, long work hours are a global pandemic. In 2016, 488 million people had to work 55 or more hours a week, leading to 745,194 excess deaths and many shortened lives, according to a [scientific study in *Environment International*](#).

At the same time an *International Labor Organization report* found that many workers, predominantly women, get short hours, “with a movement away from the standard workweek consisting of fixed working hours each day for a fixed number of days and towards various forms of ‘flexible’ working time arrangements...along with demands for extended and even 24/7 availability....[New technologies such as smartphones] have resulted in a blurring of the boundaries between paid working time and both the times and spaces that are normally reserved for personal life.”

These pressure-cooker conditions as well as low wages have sparked what may be the beginning of a strike wave. (See “Rideshare & truck drivers fight bosses,” p. 3.)

All this at a time when capitalists are crying about a labor shortage and, rather than raising wages enough to attract workers, are extending hours and looking to [hire prisoners](#) and [undocumented immigrants](#) at sub-minimum wages, or making people work what Frito-Lay workers striking in July in Kansas called “[suicide shifts](#)”! A similar issue is involved in the Nabisco strike. (See “Nationwide walkout of Nabisco workers,” p. 3.)

Yet another aspect of labor revolt is revealed by the bosses' laments that the unemployed are not flocking back to jobs, especially low-wage service jobs. Akin to China's “lying flat” movement (see “[Chinese youth, labor and Marxism](#),” July-Aug. 2021 N&L), U.S. workers—white collar as well as blue and pink—are expressing discontent with the jobs and careers they had been putting up with before the pandemic and spurning the idea of returning to normal. (See “[We Weren't Happy Before the Pandemic, Either](#),” Aug. 21 *The New York Times*.)

Underlying the intensification of exploitation and unemployment is the long-term weakening of global capitalism's economic foundations. There has been no full recovery of the rate of profit since the mid-1970s crisis. Since the 2008 crisis, stagnation has reigned, despite the spectacular mass of profits of the tech monopolies.

Those high-flying corporations have accumulated cash, but 15-20% of companies are “zombies” that make barely enough—or not enough—profit to cover their debt service. Productive capital investment remains at low rates.

The inflation of prices of assets like stocks is no reflection of economic strength but rather the diversion of money from productive investment to speculation. That is augmented by the Fed's near-zero-interest and quantitative easing policies that help the rich and leave working people facing higher housing costs.

Internationally, U.S. hegemony was weakened by decrepit economic foundations. That was compounded by imperial overreach, especially in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, fueled by illusions after the fall of the USSR that overwhelming military capability would guarantee total domination. This weakness underlay Trump's vacillating foreign policy, which was a symptom as well as accelerant of the disintegration of the previous regime of multilateral relations. The trend was most recently seen in the U.S. defeat in Afghanistan. (See “Taliban reconquest shakes alliances, challenges Left,” p. 5.)

IV. The reach for fascism

Fascism is enabled by the rulers in response both to capitalism's weakness—economically, as well as the disarray in international relations—and to the strength of revolt. In addition to the massive Black-led revolt of the past year in the U.S. that spread internationally (see [coverage in N&L](#)), many strikes erupted over unsafe conditions, speedups and very long and/or uncertain hours during the pandemic.

The revolt sparked by police killings expressed a revolutionary reach for a totally new human society, as seen in many [declarations like one from Aislinn Pulley](#)



One of the many demonstrations protesting the police murder of George Floyd, this one in Washington, D.C., on June 6, 2020.

of Black Lives Matter Chicago: “This is how the system operates. It's not broken. When we fight for Breonna Taylor, we fight to destroy the system and create a new one.”

Revolts keep breaking out across the globe, from Cuba to Lebanon, from Iran to India, from South Africa to Colombia. (See “Latin America Notes,” p. 11.) Even where the confusion of a great part of the Left hinders the needed solidarity—especially in countries like Cuba and Syria where oppressors pretend to be anti-imperialists and point to the reactionary elements that always jump on the bandwagon and try to misdirect revolts—the rulers are well aware of the instability of their dominance.

Therefore, they have been trying out various kinds of sticks and carrots to quash unrest. One is fascism, to which sectors of the capitalist class have given funding, organizing help and media support over the last two decades in many countries. It would be a mistake to stick to narrow definitions of fascism, as if it can only be a copy of what arose in Italy and Germany after World War I. Its essence is highly authoritarian, militaristic counter-revolution that fuses the state, party and capitalist economy (even when pretending to be anti-capitalist), and tries to rope in masses, including from the middle and working classes, by exploiting nationalism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, xenophobia, propagandistic big lies and ideological delusions. It plays on the uncertainties inherent in disintegrating social relations and anxieties about precarious economic, political and cultural situations.

This retrogression feeds and feeds off of the epidemic of violence against people of color—especially Asians in the past year—Jews, immigrants, LGBTQ people and women. The killing of six people in Plymouth, UK—including a little girl, the shooter's mother, and himself—was the latest violence from the woman-hating “incel” movement that sprang into view with the 2014 Isla Vista murders fueled by misogyny. The everyday violence of this society—from “honor killings” to Queer-bashing, from racist shootings to brutality by police and military, including UN peacekeepers—are part of the soil from which fascism grows.

This type of counter-revolutionary movement has been cultivated by rulers fearing revolution and enabled by the normalization by the U.S. and international institutions of genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda and Congo, and Syria. Just as crucially, its growth was paved by the philosophical void on the Left, a substantial part of which is still accepted as “Left” despite its ideological confusion that aligned it with genocides in Syria and Bosnia.

FROM BOSNIA TO SYRIA

The fall of Communism in East Europe and the USSR at the beginning of the 1990s occurred in the context of a profound philosophical void on the Left. Far from birthing a new era of freedom, it led to the ascendancy in those countries of neoliberal free-market devastation, narrow nationalism, and/or authoritarianism. Amid the ideological retrogression, the collapse of Yugoslavia descended into the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S., with NATO support, corralled the Bosnians into a settlement that enshrined ethnic cleansing in the very structure of the still-existing divided Bosnian government. (Joe Biden advocated a similar ethnic partition of Iraq in 2006.)

News and Letters Committees declared this to be a test of world politics that called for filling the philosophical void, beginning with the projection

continued on p. 9

World crises are testing liberation struggles

continued from p. 8

of the liberatory banner of revolution and a new human society, the negation of the negation, rather than stopping at the first negation of either state-capitalist Communism or private capitalism. (See our pamphlet *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western 'Civilization.'*) The Left largely failed this test, almost universally disregarding the positive dimension coming from the struggle of Bosnians against genocide and reaching for a new multiethnic society. Instead, many Leftists openly supported the Serbian nationalism of Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, which they hailed as “anti-imperialist” or even “socialist.” All too many others equivocated but did not object to participating in coalitions with these reactionary would-be Leftists. It was the beginning of the return of Red-Brown alliances between elements of the Left and the far Right.

The Rwanda genocide of 1994 occurred during the same period, with the complicity of France. The inaction of other European and North American countries paved the way for the 1996-2003 “African World Wars” centered in Congo but drawing in Rwanda, Uganda and other neighboring countries, with outbreaks of violence still continuing to this day.

The normalization of genocide—by both the imperialist nation-states and much of the Left—intensified the reactionary trend in world politics. The deflation of hopes for the possibility of a transformed, multiethnic society, and the strengthening of narrow nationalism, were expressed in everything from the democratic backsliding in the U.S. led by Newt Gingrich to the 1996 election of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel soon after the Clinton administration imposed the Dayton Accords on Bosnia.

When the revolutionary wave of the Arab Spring broke out in 2010-2011, the Barack Obama administration first tried to co-opt and limit it

by giving verbal support, and briefly intervening militarily in Libya. But in practice it was more inclined to learn to live with the most vicious counter-revolutions than to support the upsurges from below. This became a blinding green light to fascism after Bashar al-Assad's regime rained chemical weapons on East Ghouta, Syria, in 2013, killing over 1,000 civilians. What

the Obama administration actually did in response to Assad crossing Obama's “red line for us” was to back off threatened military action in a “deal” that opened the door to Russia's intervention in support of Assad. That became a turning point, not only for the state powers, but for some of the Left. As we put it in our Nov.-Dec. 2013 Lead on “[The Syrian Revolution as the Test of World Politics](#)” by Gerry Emmett:

“At the moment that it seemed like the U.S. might actually launch some extremely limited strike on Assad's forces, there was a rush by many ‘peace’ activists to scream ‘Hands off Syria!’ without acknowledging that the Syrian people are fighting a revolution against a genocidal fascist state. Such one-dimensional politics have deadly consequences....”

“At its worst, this attitude led some to align with the Tea Party and other reactionaries as if the radical Right was an anti-war option, rather than the seed of future genocidal imperialist world wars....”

“Failure to understand the fundamental hostility of imperialism to revolution indicates a failure to understand the nature of reality. ‘Revolutionaries’ who take this path will become reactionary misleaders of future generations.”

When the far Right during their rally in Charlottesville, Va., in August 2017 raised the slogan, “Assad did nothing wrong,” they could equally claim to have learned it from Obama or from “Left anti-imperialists” who devour Russia's RT network news/propaganda.

The normalization of genocide and fascism from Bosnia to Syria poisoned the world's political atmosphere, fertilizing the ground for the growth of fascism in Europe and North America as well.

TREND TOWARD FASCISM IN U.S.

Fascism is aided by increasing isolation, crumbling of community and its replacement by online algorithmically manipulated and often sham community, and scientifically honed, systematic manipulation of human beings, the foundation upon which vehicles of advertising and propaganda such as social media and cable news networks are built.

The descent of the Republican Party and the capitulation of the Democrats must be taken seriously. The fossil fuel industry, desperate to fight back proposed climate action that would restrict their business, is one of the major funders of the most fascist Republican politicians who are under-

cutting democracy and propagating feverish delusions that combine climate denial, COVID denial, election lies and conspiracy theories that scapegoat immigrants, Trans people, uppity women and Blacks. By no accident, Democratic Senator Joe Manchin is also a favorite of the fossil fuel industry and is himself a millionaire from owning a coal brokerage. Manchin is an obstinate supporter of the filibuster.

It is no exaggeration to say that a large part of the Republican Party aims for single-party rule. Some elements, which have risen in influence within the party, openly advocate theocratic totalitarianism. One such, William Barr, even rose to one of the most powerful positions in the federal government, the U.S. Attorney General.

The laws dictating brainwashing of both students and adults reveal how deep the totalitarian streak has become, as do the laws trying to control elections and the party's embrace of denialism about the pandemic.

V. Ideology vs. Reason

In the face of revolt such as has fermented throughout the world since the 2008 economic crisis, at times underground and at times openly, ideology is a crucial weapon of the system.

Ideology—false consciousness, as Karl Marx explained it—is always operative in class societies. The ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. In “normal” times, these ideas operate under cover in plain sight through their seeming naturalness, as he revealed in the section on “The Fetishism of the Commodity” in *Capital*.

The commodity appears as if it has a life of its own, driven by the need for value and more value—so that it appears normal that tons of food are plowed under during a pandemic while millions are going hungry. In a dialectical inversion, the objects—money and commodities, including machines

in the workplace—appear as the subject dominating the actual subject, the living human being who does the work. These alienated social relations appear so natural that, as is often said, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.

In a moment like today, the status quo's seeming naturalness becomes discredited in many minds. Es-

pecially among the youth, there is a growing rejection of capitalism and reach for socialism—which is why we published our new booklet *What Is Socialism?* At such times ideology jumps into the spotlight, propagating the most absurd delusions, demanding obeisance to them, and calling for harsh repression against opposing ideas, not shrinking from calling for the death of their proponents. All of this can be seen today.

There is nothing new about propaganda and manipulation per se. They are rampant in internet-enabled capitalism, so much so that lies in advertising, public relations and politics are considered normal.

But mass delusion has reached such a fever pitch that many of its spokespeople, from Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on down, have flaunted their spurning of safety measures, even at the risk of their own lives. Bolsonaro, like Trump and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, had the kind of healthcare after getting COVID-19 that most people could not afford, including many of their followers, some of whom experienced hospital-bed conversions and started advocating vaccination.

Social media algorithms, which are designed to mimic addiction, favor “engagement,” which puts a premium on stoking fear and anger and downgrades Reason, let alone “the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative” that is needed to overcome oppression and fight reactionary movements. And yet social media have become the primary source of news for a growing number of people. That “news” is selected algorithmically but slanted by human intervention behind the scenes. Facebook, for example, allows false posts from oil companies and their shills about climate change, since they are labeled “opinion,” but has frequently banned fact-checking of those posts by climate scientists. The right wing plays victim when some of the most outrageous white supremacist groups are banned, but in fact left-wing sites such as Gabriel Levy's People and Nature blog are unaccountably blocked with no explanation.

Propaganda and ideology are not the same, but they are working together in a particularly lethal way because of capitalism's crisis. Ideology cannot be reduced to the play of material interests alone, but its worldview must be fought without separating it from its material underpinnings. As [Marx pointed out](#), these kinds of false conceptions are rooted in “a state of affairs which needs illusions” and the point is not simply to expose the illusions

“so that humanity shall wear the unadorned, bleak chain” but to simultaneously revolutionize the oppressive state of affairs and “shake off the chain.”

ATTITUDES TO REASON AND THOUGHT

There is no simple solution to the ideological onslaught and the mass delusion that opens the door to fascism. Plenty of leftists have realized that there are times that call for fighting and not just debates—particularly when dealing with reactionary mass movements—just as strikes are not won by reasoning with the boss. Still, fighting alone cannot solve the problem.

What is needed is to shake off the chain, and that requires masses in motion and a unifying philosophy that does not stop with the first negation of fighting what we are against but keeps bringing out the negation of the negation, so that the positive in the negative can become the foundation of a new human society, with totally new human relations.

The battle of ideas is therefore crucial. Far-Right ideas are extremely dangerous but are not the only ones that need to be opposed. The liberal wing of the ruling class like the Biden administration and the leaders of the Democratic Party speak out and criticize the far Right, but at the same time they twist and turn to avoid recognizing how those politics flow from capitalism in crisis. Their opposition to Trumpism is a defense of the status quo and a wish to “return to normal,” as if normal isn't what got us into this mess. The key point is not that Biden and his ilk are always searching for a compromise with the Republicans, even as the latter nakedly grasp for one-party rule. For the Democratic Party it is imperative to limit the horizon of thought to the perpetuation of “normal” capitalism.

Joe Biden's July 13 speech in Philadelphia railed against the raft of laws Republicans have passed subverting elections:

“There is an unfolding assault taking place in America today—an attempt to suppress and subvert the right to vote in fair and free elections, an assault on democracy, an assault on liberty, an assault on who we are as Americans.... threatening the very foundation of our country.”

He called it “the 21st century Jim Crow assault,” and even connected it to the Jan. 6 coup attempt: “In 2020, democracy was put to a test—first by the pandemic; then by a desperate attempt to deny the reality and the results of the election; and then by a violent and deadly insurrection on the Capitol, the citadel of our democracy.”

So what did he tout as a response? The two voting rights bills passed by the House of Representatives, although they are dead in the water in the Senate because of the filibuster. Biden, along with key Democratic Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, wants to keep the filibuster because it is favored by corporate titans to prevent mildly social-democratic reforms from passing. Historically it was favored by defenders of white supremacy, including Jim Crow laws, and today the filibuster is championed behind the scenes, particularly by billionaires and by oil companies desperate to stave off serious climate change mitigation.

Democratic liberals like Biden are more opposed to Jim Crow and corporate domination in rhetoric than reality. Because of this anti-revolutionary standpoint, they seek compromise and indulge in illusions that pointing out the facts of climate change, for example, can defeat climate denial, or exposing Trump's lies about the election and what really happened on Jan. 6 will convince his followers. Facts and science are important, but you cannot simply reason away lies and delusions.

CONTRADICTIONS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

As far removed as it is in history, liberals and the social-democratic Left are repeating contradictions of an earlier incarnation of bourgeois ideology, that of the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries. As Europe's feudal order was decaying and the capitalist class was consolidating, the Enlightenment arose to champion knowledge—philosophy and science—against oppressive traditional hierarchy and the dogmas that supported it. The progress of knowledge and education would enable social progress.

This genuine reach for emancipation, however, was refracted into ideology since it was tied to the advance of capitalism and colonialism. Its universals disguised the universalization of the particular interests of an aspiring ruling class. As [Marx put it](#), “Only in the name of the general rights of society can a particular class vindicate for itself general domination.” Thus the liberation of the bourgeoisie “appears as general self-liberation.”

That is the ground from which all the contradictions of the Enlightenment grew—including its sexism, racism, and participation by some of its most prominent proponents like John Locke in colonialism and slavery. That same ground remains the basis of liberal thought in a very different context today, though with modernized ideas and more woke language, and it is unwittingly assimilated by non-revolutionary “socialists” (and some who do advocate revolution).

It is not that Enlightenment philosophy is truly alive today. It is that its ground of progress defined by accumulation of knowledge circumscribed by capitalist alienation has been absorbed by the administrative mentality char-

continued on p. 10



World crises are testing liberation struggles

continued from p. 9

acteristic of state-capitalism. One of its characteristic 21st-century examples is Silicon Valley's many-voiced paean to "connecting" people through technology and making life better by accumulating mountains of information, while glossing over *who* controls the technology and information, *how*, and *to what end*.

Yet another facet is the mania of part of the Left for making plans for the masses, whether to reform capitalism or replace it. One shape that takes is the belief that the masses will not move until they are shown the proof of a viable alternative to capitalism, with a scheme for equalizing payments per hour of labor.

The critique of Enlightenment is germane not only because it is not the absolute opposite of counter-revolution and therefore not the solution, but because its contemporary descendant is seen in the liberal wing of the ruling class, especially in the anti-revolutionary quest for a return to normal. That too must be battled in ideas and movements.

The ground of that battle is crucial. Universal emancipation, revolution, must not be thrown out just because the universals of the Enlightenment's emancipatory project were confined within the revolutions of the bourgeoisie. One line of misdirected critique can be traced to the ground of the counter-revolutions of the era of the Depression and World War II. Those included the counter-revolutions from within revolutions, as in Russia 1917 and Spain 1936, which called forth—for some revolutionaries—new questions and a new plunge into Marx's Humanism and its roots in Hegel's dialectic.

At the same time, however, the new stage of state-capitalism overwhelmed Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, two theorists of the Frankfurt School, and they took the ground of defeats of revolution in their critique of Enlightenment. "Enlightenment is totalitarian," they caustically declared in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, disparaging universals, totality and absolutes. They attacked Hegel's dialectic of negation:

"However, by finally postulating the known result of the whole process of negation, totality in the system and in history, as the absolute, he violated the prohibition and himself succumbed to mythology."

In the wake of the defeats of near-revolution in the 1960s, postmodernism recapitulated the rejection of universals, undermining the theoretical ground for revolution and total social transformation.

Hegel, on the other hand, recognized the contradictory nature of the Enlightenment's achievement of using science to dismantle superstitions that upheld the old social order, and yet still building its culture on the foundations of an alienated social reality. The very nature of the Enlightenment cuts through old thought but presents a barrier to thought's further self-liberation. The same is true of scientific institutions and the liberal press today, and the way science and facts are used to counter the mass delusions fostered by Trumpism.

Daraa and Free Syria

In Daraa, the birthplace of the Syrian Revolution, resistance has continued. Fifty Syrian revolutionaries and their families were forced to leave the city on Aug. 26 under a Russian-brokered truce, in the face of a brutal siege by elite Iranian troops. It illustrates once again the truth of the saying, "We thought we were fighting Assad, then realized we were fighting the world."

The Assad regime itself has been reduced to a mark of shame, branding world imperialism as hopelessly murderous and inhuman. Yet against all odds, the spirit of freedom and revolution continues in Syria. The displaced will join other revolutionaries in the Free Syrian enclave in the northwest.

It may be true that Idlib and northwest Syria have been turned into a kind of prison camp for revolutionaries. It is miraculous that demonstrations could continue in Daraa under the most brutal, fascist occupation. But history tells us that it is in prison, or under occupation, or defying enslavement that the idea of freedom is most real. It is there it becomes a determinant for the future.

When a better, more humane world comes to be, humanity will recognize that Free Syria is one of the principal reasons that world has a right to exist. It is no mere stratospheric utopia, or intellectual's scheme, but the reality of human suffering and transcendence.

—Gerry Emmett



The Weimar Courtyard of the Muses, iconic 1860 painting by Theobald von Oer, representing the German Enlightenment. Schiller reading poetry to the court in Weimar. Among the audience are Herder (second from left, seated), Wieland (center, seated with cap) and Goethe (in front of the pillar, right).

Even some in the climate movement advocate above all, "Listen to the science." As crucial as that is, it is not adequate to solving the social crises that undermine and misdirect scientific and technological solutions, and channel both mitigation and adaptation efforts into directions geared to perpetuating capitalist relations. As Dunayevskaya pointed out (quoting Hegel in her letter to Erich Fromm relating Marx's critique of fetishism to Hegel's critique of Enlightenment, *Feb.-March 2008 N&L*, p. 4):

"Despite its great fight against superstition, despite its great achievement—'Enlightenment upsets the household arrangements, which spirit carries out in the house

of faith, by bringing in the goods and furnishings belonging to the world of the Here and Now...'—it remains 'an alienated type of mind':

"Enlightenment itself, however, which reminds belief of the opposite of its various separate moments, is just as little enlightened regarding its own nature. It takes up a purely negative attitude to belief..."

"In a word, because no new universal—Marx too speaks that only true negativity can produce the 'quest for universal' and hence a new society—was born to counterpose to superstition or the unhappy

consciousness, we remain within the narrow confines of 'the discipline of culture'—and this even when Enlightenment has found its truth in Materialism, or Agnosticism, or Utilitarianism. For unless it has found it in freedom, there is no movement forward either of humanity or 'the spirit.'"

The delusions and propaganda that recall the spirit of fascism cannot be defeated simply by countering them with facts implicitly grounded in a different type of capitalist ideology. The new universal required must be grounded in the movements from below, their actions and ideas, their reach for a totally new future, and the philosophy of liberation that roots itself in those movements both of today and historically. (See *"Lies, Facts and Ground,"* May-June 2017 *N&L*.) What is needed is to begin, not from the particular facts, but from the Absolute of the projected new society. Anything less ends in capitulation. Our world on the precipice of interacting disasters cannot afford to get mired in more compromise and capitulation.

THE ABSOLUTE OPPOSITE OF UNREASON

What is crucial in defeating fascist unreason is the Reason of masses in motion for freedom, as manifested both in movements from practice and in the historic continuity of freedom struggles, which are concentrated as Ideas in theories and philosophies of liberation. In other words, the absolute opposite to this unreason is the philosophy of revolution in permanence, grounded in and always returning to and interrelating and exchanging with movements from practice.

As Dunayevskaya remarks in her *Notes on Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind*, the incompleteness of Enlightenment's attempt to battle alienation set the stage for retrogression. "To go forward," she says, "Substance had to become Subject. This is where Hegel comes in. The last three pages of the *Phenomenology* are an outpouring of 'simple mediating activity in thinking' where the whole process releases itself, History and Science, Nature and Spirit are 'born anew from the womb of knowledge—the new state of existence, a new world and a new embodiment of spirit.'"

"This new world, which Hegel calls Absolute Knowledge, is the unity of the real world and the notions about it, the organization of thought and activity, which merge into the new, the whole truth of the past and the present, which anticipates the future."

It is this grounding in freedom, this quest for universality, the transformation of Substance into Subject and the releasing of the new world latent in the old one that we aim to help come to pass by projecting the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism as we participate in social movements and battles of ideas.

NEWS & LETTERS
VOL. 66/NO. 5 September-October 2021

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more copies, 25c each) from News & Letters, 228 S. Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Phone 312-431-8242. Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, IL. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to News & Letters, 228 S. Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to "News & Letters." **Raya Dunayevskaya**, Chairwoman, National Editorial Board (1955-1987). **Charles Denby**, Editor (1955-1983). **Franklin Dmitryev**, National Organizer, News and Letters Committees. **Terry Moon**, Managing Editor. **Felix Martin**, Labor Editor (1983-1999). **Olga Domanski**, National Organizer (1958-2015). **John Alan**, National Editorial Board Member Emeritus (2008-2011).

News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

VI. Tasks

The urgency of crises underscores the urgency of projecting Marxist-Humanism. We have always held that what is foremost in enabling this projection is the continued activity and growth of the Marxist-Humanist organization, News and Letters Committees. The magnitude of the simple-sounding task of truly functioning as an organization of Marxist-Humanist people and at the same time of thought, which neither we nor anyone else has fully mastered, is underscored by the fact that organization appears at the apex of Hegel's *Absolute Knowledge*:

"the recollection of spiritual forms as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their spiritual kingdom. Their conservation, looked at from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History; looked at from the side of their [philosophically] comprehended organization, it is the Science of the ways in which knowledge appears. Both together, or History intellectually comprehended, form at once the recollection and the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit..."

Dunayevskaya saw this as ground for "our concept of the relationship both of spontaneity and the party and its inseparability from organization of thought....The two types of organization Hegel has in mind are, first, as 'free existence' in its varying 'historic forms,' what we would call the movement from practice at historic turning points. Secondly, Hegel is defining 'intellectually comprehended' organization and concludes, 'the two together, or History intellectually comprehended, form at once recollection and the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit.'"

One of our central organizational activities has always been publishing the only Marxist-Humanist newspaper, *News & Letters*, which entails writing for it, eliciting articles from others for it, editing it, distributing it and discussing it. In recent years our website and newspaper have functioned jointly. Just as important as eliciting Readers' Views and activity articles is writing theoretical-philosophical essays based on our individual following up of questions that need to be answered both for ourselves and for the movements and battles of ideas.

That individual theoretical work also implies collectivity, including correspondence as part of the process of development, and it is not meant to be the province of a select few. Projecting Marxist-Humanism has not one but many forms. It can take the form of writing articles, engaging in dialogues during a march or correspondence with contacts, raising questions, writing poems or finding pathways to liberation through artistic composition or events.

At the same time, we need to keep finding new ways of arranging meetings and sharing our experiences participating in events. The circumstances of the past year and a half underscore the need to experiment more with online meetings and study groups.

The increasing authoritarianism and political repression in the world—from which the U.S. is by no means immune—reminds us that no individual or organization can be assured of safety and continuing activity, so that now is the time to reinvigorate our efforts to preserve the Archives of Marxist-Humanism and expand their availability to the public.

All our tasks are Marxist-Humanist tasks to the extent that we fulfill them in ways that center our relationship to both philosophy and the movements from practice—and those relationships are what underlie our collectivity.

We need to consciously work all of these out as ways of intervening, of projecting Marxist-Humanism, which to us has always meant concretizing, developing the philosophy. After all, the point of this organization is the goal of Marxist-Humanism—to establish a new society on totally human foundations.

—The Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees, Aug. 26, 2021

How to contact NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES

CHICAGO
228 South Wabash, #230
Chicago, IL 60604
Phone 312-431-8242
MEETINGS Call for Info

OAKLAND
P.O. Box 3345
Oakland, CA 94609
banandl@yahoo.com

MEETINGS
Sundays, 6:30 PM
Email for info about meetings

SF BAY AREA YOUTH COMMITTEE
bayareanyouth@gmail.com

LOS ANGELES MEETINGS
Alternate Sundays, 3:30 PM
Call or email for information about virtual meetings
Lanewsandletters@gmail.com
213-627-7086

DETROIT
detroitnewsandletters@gmail.com
MEETINGS
Sundays, 2:00 PM
Write for information

FLINT, MI
PO Box 7676, Flint, MI 48507

INTERNET

EMAIL
arise@newsandletters.org

WORLDWIDE WEB
www.newsandletters.org

YOUTH IN ACTION

On Aug. 12, Herat residents went to their rooftops to yell “*Allahu Akbar*” (God is great) while the Afghanistan National Army battled the renewed military offensive of the Taliban. The army had recaptured the city from the Talibs earlier. The reclaiming of the phrase from the Taliban is also a return to its origin as a rallying cry against Soviet troops. Others took to rooftops in Bamiyan, Kunar, and Nangarhar. By Aug. 15, the Taliban had regained control of Herat and all other major cities in the country, where they removed the national flag (adopted in 2001) and replaced it with their own. On Aug. 18, youth in Jalalabad reinstalled the national flag on the top of a tower overlooking a city square, while others marched below. Their protest was scrambled when Taliban soldiers fired into the crowd. Similar actions occurred in Khost and the national capital Kabul. On Aug. 19, the anniversary of Afghan independence from Britain, a Kabul street march of youth waving the Afghanistan national flag was threatened by Taliban soldiers waving guns, but the protesters were eventually allowed to pass. Some Talibs proclaimed that Kabul has only 20 more days of free speech.

* * *

In Colombia, union organizers and Indigenous people continue a general strike against a tax reform, proposed in April but so far forestalled, which would balance the national budget on the backs of poor people by adding a surcharge to foodstuffs. Ever since the 1960s civil war, Colombians who demonstrate, march and speak out have been preyed upon by police and private militia—attacked, killed or disappeared. A group of young activists called “First Liners” have begun to throw rocks, volley back tear gas canisters, or otherwise battle with police in the streets. The idea (which started last year in Chile) is to command the attention of police officers who would otherwise be used to disperse protests. In Colombia, the choice to become a First Liner is a choice to leave home, first to prevent being kidnapped in a night raid, second to avoid having their families identified and targeted.

* * *

Dozens of high school students marched through downtown Los Gatos, Calif., blocking traffic on Aug. 9 to protest their school district’s policies and negligence regarding sexual abuse and harassment. A particular grievance was the series of decisions over the past 14 years to allow a Los Gatos High School girls’ track and field coach to remain employed. Student Abbi Berry told the *San Jose Mercury News*: “We should not have to rally and beg to be protected.” In a similar action, students in Ninnekah, Okla., walked out of classes on Aug. 20. They were denouncing a basketball coach accused of sexual misconduct and the school’s unwillingness to listen to the survivors. As they walked through the small town, students held signs saying: “Do you hear us now?”

To build a new society

Xalapa, Veracruz—For the past nine months, I lived in a cabin in the misty mountain of Xico. I worked the land and grew lettuce, tomato and spinach; got water from a spring; and made my own yogurt. Now that experience came to an end. This is what I can say about it.

DEPENDENCE ON GREEN CAPITALISM

I couldn’t solve the contradiction between this relative autonomy and my dependence on the market. I could barely pay the high rent of a cabin or produce all my means of consumption, which forced me to hike three kilometers down the mountain to town and back. I couldn’t create economic alliances with other people in the area.

I was in touch with individuals and groups that exchanged vegetables or yogurt for products, but it didn’t have the frequency or the diversity required for building a strong economic network.

I also met small companies and collectives who sell organic food (see “[Agroecology in Xico](#),” May-June 2021 *N&L*) and build houses with ecological materials. Their production was too small to make ends meet and their aim was the market. The *content* of their production is nature-friendly and meets human needs, but the *form* is capitalistic, implying exploitation of labor, and their prices make their products luxuries. These projects are a form of green capitalism.

PRACTICE AND THEORY

Now I live in a small room in Xalapa, capital city of Veracruz. Can what I learned in the mountain be recreated here? I have begun growing tomato and lettuce. Can I share this with people so they produce their own vegetables, or exchange what they may have already produced? Could this be a step towards a network of food autonomy?

Can this be done from the perspective of solving human needs, and not market-oriented? Is it possible to boost grassroots projects with a critical political view?

How can practice be open to theory so that it becomes a practice leading to a different kind of future? Can theory not present itself as something external to practice, but as something that flows out from it, building from the diversity and wholeness of Life?

I don’t have the answers to any of those questions yet. I just know that I want to integrate with all that I am to my new neighborhood, and from there build with others actions and ideas that can help us all to live in a new, truly human world.

—Biking Snail

Medicare for all!

A high-school junior from San Jose read her poem about health insurance at a Medicare For All (M4A) Rally in San Francisco on July 24. The author is chair of the South Bay chapter of Students for a National Health Program in Northern California.

The Deal Is Done

by Meriam Ahmad

My heart stops
When I look at the bill in my hand
I was feeling ill. Isn’t it your job to cover it?
I don’t understand.

I thought we had a deal. A mutual transaction
I pay you regularly,
You help me occasionally.
What’s with your inaction?

Tell me, what exactly
Am I now supposed to do?
Tell me, how exactly
Do you spend what I pay you?

It’s almost medieval. My pain, you profit off of it
It should be illegal. My pain, do you get off on it?

Suits applaud, they camouflage the vile truth of your
pursuits
Empty words, these worlds of hurt rot a nation at its
roots.

We had a deal. But the deal is done
You can leave now. Your time has come
My friends and I, we know what you do

And we know our nation has no room for you.

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

In this COVID-19 age, Celebrate Pride events around the world were held in-person and online. **Pride Afrique** was online for the second year in a row. There was storytelling and there were performances by well-known LGBTQ+ activists and artists which were also posted on YouTube.

LGBTQ+ people and their supporters in the thousands participated in **Budapest’s Pride March** protesting Hungary’s law that bans teaching and broadcasting about homosexuality and Transgenderism to youth



Pride Afrique facebook page

younger than 18. Brave teachers will defy the law, and a poll found that 46% of Hungarians approve of same-sex marriage.

Equality Pride in Warsaw, the largest Pride parade ever held in Poland, included activist Bart Staszewski carrying the Hungarian flag to tell the EU to defend LGBTQ+ people more strongly. Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski led the parade, a gutsy move in a country where LGBTQ+ people are legally and societally oppressed.

Sulong Vklash, roughly translated, means dismantling the system that oppresses the LGBTQ+ community and other minority groups. It was held online by **Metro Manila Pride**. Discussions about Queer issues, celebrations of Queer creatives and teach-ins on art were broadcast in the Philippines, where there is no national recognition of LGBTQ+ human rights, but where many local governments enacted various protective ordinances.

A 200-meter-long Pride flag and artist Sandra Marcela’s painting of the flag on a staircase, where many Pride participants had their photographs taken, were highlights in **Bogota, Colombia’s, 25th annual Pride Parade**. The **Resiste Bebida** festival in Lima was the largest Pride march in Peru, where there were also a number of decentralized marches.

Boston Pride/BP, one of the U.S.’s oldest LGBTQ+ organizations, recognized Pride and the need for change by suddenly closing its doors. Membership was dwindling amidst many complaints that BP wasn’t representing Trans people and people of color. A new future is hoped for by forging alliances among groups including **Trans Resistance, Dyke March and Boston Black Pride**.

In Chicago, Ill., **Drag March for Change, Pride Without Prejudice and West Side Pride** were held, in large part, to combat racism within Chicago’s LGBTQ+ community. All three marches were more radical, and less commercial, than Chicago’s annual Pride Parade—which is scheduled for October—and were reminiscent of the rallies and marches in the post-Stonewall Era.

LATIN AMERICA NOTES

by Eugene Walker

Cubans in revolt

The mass demonstrations of July 11 began in San Antonio de los Baños outside of Havana and spread like wildfire through more than 40 cities and towns, including Havana. The causes were food and medicine shortages in the midst of the country’s COVID-19 crisis, with thousands infected and hundreds dying. As well there were long-standing grievances in relation to the economy and human rights. The gatherings were generally peaceful; however, the government response was often not.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel went to San Antonio de los Baños, didn’t like how he was greeted, and issued a “call to combat.” Soon police broke up many demonstrations. Over 700 have been arrested, and summary trials have taken place.

After more than six decades of the U.S. blockade—which is contributing to COVID-19 deaths, due to shortages of syringes and materials for the Cuban-made vaccine—U.S. government pontification about “freedom” for Cuba is hypocrisy. President Biden continues to apply Trump’s intensification of sanctions against Cuba. Meanwhile the narrow anti-U.S. imperialism of much of the global Left has closed them to any objective examination of the meaning of the July 11 events.

The student magazine *Alma Mater* interviewed several students who participated in the July 11 revolt (<https://medium.com/revista-alma-mater/11j-7b492db-c4ec0>). They shed light on the reasons for the uprising:

Denis Matienzo Alonso—*For true change to occur, there must be a change in the system. The inclusion of all voices in the construction of a new Cuba is necessary. The intellect and creativity of Cubans is well known. So why not demonstrate it in our country? I can only find one answer: hindrance by the Cuban rulers subject to an ideology from another century, which stimulates the flight of talent, since we do not find development and the freedom to grow.*

Carolina Garcia Salas—*The inhabitants of the most vulnerable territories and communities in the country took to the streets. I see in many of these actions a legitimate gesture of rebellion, despair, defiance. Socialism cannot postpone the democracy it has promised. I think it has already been put off too long.*

The origins of the July revolt reside within the greatness and contradictions of the 1959 Cuban Revolution finally winning independence from under the boot-heel of U.S. imperialism. “What Happens After the Revolution?”—that is, the construction of the new, authentic socialism—is key. It is where the contradictions arose under Fidel Castro, with his determination that there be only one leader and one party, and alignment with Russian state-capitalism claiming to be Marxism.

State-capitalist direction began early following the Revolution. There have been many important achievements in Cuba since the Revolution. But they occurred within the economic-political-social framework of a state-capitalism which put severe limits on the Cuban masses and repressed their self-determination and their drive for the freedom of an authentic socialism.



Latin America and global warming

Latin America is projected as one of the regions of the world where the impact of climate change—such as heat waves, decreased crop yields, forest fires, the depletion of coral reefs, extreme weather events, rising sea level—will all be more intense.

That future is already here. The worst drought in 50 years in southern Amazonia and the record number of hurricanes and floods in Central America during 2020 are the new normal for Latin America, according to a report on “Climate in Latin America and the Caribbean 2020” by the World Meteorological Organization, a UN agency.

The research indicates that Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the world’s regions most affected by climate change and external meteorological phenomena that are causing serious damage to health, life, food, water, energy and the socio-economic development of the region.

The report highlights that 2020 was one of the three warmest years in Central America and the Caribbean, and the second warmest year in South America. Thus:

- *The Amazon River basin*, which stretches across nine South American countries and stores 73 billion tons of carbon, experienced increased deforestation in the past four years due to logging to create pasture for livestock and degradation from fires. While still a net carbon sink, the Amazon is reeling and could become a carbon source if forest loss continues at the current rate.

- *In Central America* extreme weather events affected more than eight million people, exacerbating food shortages in countries already crippled by economic crises, COVID-19 restrictions and conflict. In Guatemala, for example, climatic conditions have contributed to the loss of close to 80% of the corn crop.

- *In Mexico* the municipality of Cerritos suffered a 50% drop in crops due to drought. Sorghum, sunflower and corn were among the most affected crops.

WORLD VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

The chaos at Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport, as the U.S. military withdrew from Afghanistan, carried eerie historical echoes. The bodies of young Afghan men falling from planes, as they tried to escape Taliban rule, were as horrible as the images of workers falling to their deaths attempting to escape the burning twin towers on Sept. 11, 2001.

The brutal, nihilistic suicide bombing carried out by Daesh (the "Islamic State Khorasan Province") on Aug. 26 also recalled that al-Qaeda atrocity of Sept. 11. This bombing took the lives of at least 170 Afghan civilians, along with hundreds more wounded, and killed 13 U.S. service members. A BBC report from the scene indicates that many of the civilians might have been shot, in the ensuing confusion and panic, by U.S. troops.

It is important to note this difference: while al-Qaeda functioned as a kind of colonial power in Afghanistan in 2001, Daesh recruited from educated, middle-class Afghan youth—the same class that the U.S. occupation was attempting to recruit for the now-fallen government of deposed President Ashraf Ghani. Ghani was a star of U.S. academia, known for his book on "fixing failed states" before fleeing with millions of dollars from the Afghan treasury.

Tunisia put to the test

The Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in December 2010 shook the world. In opposition to that historic freedom movement, the old order threw up degenerate monsters like Syria's Assad, Egypt's al-Sisi, and their imperialist patrons in Russia, Iran, and the U.S.

Because Tunisia's politics haven't been entirely defined by violence—although there has been enough of that—the country provides a test case of the need for the philosophy of revolution in permanence to become a political determinant.

This is clear as President Kais Saied on Aug. 23 unconstitutionally extended the suspension of parliament first declared July 25. Saied has suspended some civil liberties, such as the right to a fair trial, and countenanced (if not ordered) an attack on the offices of Al Jazeera by dozens of armed, plainclothes police. He has placed a number of opposition politicians under house arrest.

ROBOCOP AND BOURGEOIS SPHINX

Saied was able to do this owing to the unpopularity of the existing government, which earlier this year had beaten and arrested thousands of young protestors. The public's disdain for the existing political parties had already been shown by a record lack of voter participation in recent elections.

A lack of affect, and formal speaking style, had given Saied the nickname "Robocop." He was also deliberately vague about his views, and as far as he was untainted by political corruption and socially conservative, was able to gain support from both Left and Right voters. Many came out in support of his suspension of parliament.

It is unclear what he intends next. It is apparent that this constitutional lawyer—this was his previous occupation—would like to write his own constitution. But only this bourgeois sphinx knows what that might be like.

OVERCOMING CONTRADICTIONS

Since 2011, the opposition between a largely secular "Left" and a more religious "Right" has delimited bourgeois democratic politics. This could have been the starting point for a revolutionary politics, as it was for Marx in 1843. But the Tunisian Left has been unable to transcend this Enlightenment contradiction, despite the vital working-class participation in the 2011 revolution.

In February, Left demonstrations remembered the 2013 murders of Marxist politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi, which many blame on the Islamist Ennahda Party. Whatever the truth, the killings benefited the existing capitalist order.

This has been seen in regard to the test of world politics, the Syrian Revolution. While Tunisia broke off relations with Assad's genocidal regime in 2012, it re-established them in 2016. This was allegedly in response to the many Tunisian youth who had gone to Iraq and Syria to join Daesh (the "Islamic State," or ISIS).

More recently Tunisia joined Saudi Arabia and Egypt in calling to restore the Syrian regime's membership in the Arab League. It is a political catastrophe prefigured by the Left—when Assad supporters attacked Free Syria activists at the 2015 World Social Forum in Tunis.

President Saied can only bridge this contradiction through silence, ambiguity, and arbitrary authority for so long. The disaffected masses will be thinking their own thoughts. The myth of the mindless and faceless "Arab street" died in Tunisia ten years ago. The workers, women, youth, national minorities and non-bureaucratic thinkers, for whom the philosophy of revolution in permanence exists, will yet have their say.

Central Asia reconfigures imperialism

CLASS, RELIGION, STATE POWER

When Daesh was in danger of being defeated by the rival, peasant-based Taliban in Jawzjan in 2018, Ghani's forces airlifted them to safety. This class collaboration is one reason that Hazara residents of Kabul's Dashte Barchi neighborhood blamed Ghani and Daesh for the May 8 bombing that killed 90 and wounded 240 at Sayed al-Shuhada school for girls. One said the government leaders were "busy with their own wheeling and dealing, they're not concerned with the Afghan people, only their status."

The continuing struggle for Afghanistan is not about "tribalism," or the past—it is an up-to-date product of world capitalism. It is about state power and wealth. This is true whether we consider the remaining influence of Ghani's Islamic State, which did raise

the educational level, and sometimes status, of women; or the continuing threat of Daesh, with its "Caliphate's" appeal to disturbed and nihilistic urban youth; or the prospect of rule by the Taliban's Emirate with new diplomatic recognition from China, Russia, and Iran.

It is impossible to view this situation apart from the vast changes that have taken place in world capitalism since the Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001. The changes in Central Asia, in particular, have been profound.

'GOOD COP, BAD COP' DIPLOMACY

Whereas in 2001 the Northern Alliance, a group of anti-Taliban militias made up of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Pashtuns, were able to receive military aid from regional powers, today the Central Asian states are more willing to deal with whoever is in power in Afghanistan. The discovery of trillions of dollars in mineral wealth changed the equation. This includes millions of tons of copper (leased by Chinese companies); iron ore; gold, aluminum, tin, lead, and zinc. The country also has large deposits of lithium and rare earth metals needed in high-tech military and consumer electronic products, along with some oil and natural gas deposits.

The "Afghan Resistance" that has appeared under Ahmad Massoud in largely Tajik Panjshir province has appealed for support to the government of neighboring Tajikistan. Yet Tajikistan is under Russian influence, and unlikely to provide more than words—as Russia and China have declared their interest in a stable Afghanistan to further the



The nations of Central Asia and their neighbors.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

continued from p. 4

Luxemburg wrote,

*is not an open-field maneuver of the proletariat, even if the proletariat with social democracy at its head plays the leading role, but is a struggle in the middle of incessant movement, the creaking, crumbling and displacement of all social foundations. In short, the element of spontaneity plays such a supreme role in the mass strikes in Russia, not because the Russian proletariat is "unschooled," but rather because revolutions are not subject to schoolmastering.*⁴

The dialectic of organization, as of philosophy, goes to the root of not only the question of the relationship of spontaneity to party, but the relationship of multilinearism to unilinearism. Put simply, it is a question of human development, be it capitalism, pre-capitalism or post-capitalism. The fact that Stalin could transform so great a revolution as the Russian Revolution of 1917 into a state bureaucracy tells more than just the isolation of a proletarian revolution in a single country.

The whole question of the indispensability of spontaneity not only as something that is in the revolution, but that must continue its development after; the question of the different cultures, as well as self-development, as well as having a non-state form of collectivity—makes the task much more difficult and impossible to anticipate in advance.

The self-development of ideas cannot take second place to the self-bringing-forth of liberty, because both the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and the development of theory as philosophy, are more than just saying philosophy is action. There is surely one thing on which we should not try to improve on Marx—and that is trying to have a blueprint for the future.

Aut Aut in Italy and by *Praxis* in Yugoslavia. The opening to so many different international forums was in great part due to the fact that, because 1970 was both the 200th anniversary of Hegel's birth and the 100th of Lenin's, there were all sorts of criss-crossings of those two events.

4. Quoted in my *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, p. 18, where the whole question of Luxemburg as a revolutionary, as a theoretician, as an unknown feminist, is developed.

Belt and Road Initiative and Eurasian project.

This led an Uzbekistan newspaper to describe the situation as good cop (Tajikistan), bad cop (Russia) diplomacy. Russia, however, has hedged its bets, also recently holding military exercises with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan aimed at applying the "lessons" learned from its genocidal role in Syria to any possible turmoil in Afghanistan.

China has an interest in seeing that a Taliban Emirate would observe the same obsequious silence toward its genocidal oppression of the Muslim Uyghurs of its Central Asian Xinjiang province that has been observed by the Islamist toadies in Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It has granted early diplomatic recognition with this understanding, which will be emphasized by China's ally Pakistan, long-time patrons of the Taliban.

THE GREAT POWERS REPOSITION

When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001, Vladimir Putin had just been elected to his first full term as Russian president. He had yet to consolidate power. The Chinese economy was only a fraction of its current size. The Central Asian states were in various stages of hangover from the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

For a decade the U.S. imperialist project was defined by its occupation of Afghanistan, and its subsequent war in Iraq. During Obama's administration, this began to change to a focus on confronting imperialist rival China in the Pacific—a move continued under Trump and Biden. Like Afghanistan after Sept. 11, this is presented as being defensive, but under capitalism and imperialism it will end as badly—or infinitely worse.

In the end, U.S. imperialism has only succeeded in creating a new imperialist alliance between Russia and China, at the cost of countless lives and much treasure. China's economic penetration of Central Asia, Russia's military alliances, and the incorporation of reactionary Pakistan and Iran's genocidal regime are all morbid symptoms. The current bloody debacle in Afghanistan should be a death certificate for the current world order.

But only world revolution can sign that document.

'Trip to Hyden'

The late country music singer-songwriter Tom T. Hall, who passed away Aug. 20, wrote a lot of famous songs. One of his best is a plainspoken tale of a rural community where a mining disaster had recently taken place.

It captures the stoicism, the pain beneath it, and the thinking of a working-class person that cuts even deeper than the pain.

*On the way we talked about the 40 miners
Of the 39 who died and one who lived to tell the tale
...Some lady said, "They worth more money now than
when they's a livin'"*

And I'll leave it there 'cause I suppose she told it pretty well

—Tom T. Hall, storyteller (1936-2021)

Assassination in Haiti

The labyrinthine conspiracy surrounding the July 7 assassination of Haiti's controversial President Jovenel Moise embodies the retrogression and violence of bourgeois democratic politics. Moise was killed—shot multiple times in his home—by a group of 28 foreign mercenaries, including former members of the Colombian armed forces and two Haitian-Americans.

It is alleged the murder was part of a coup, planned by would-be Haitian "leaders" in Florida. Among the odd figures and organizations implicated are a number of former U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration informants and U.S.-based security companies. The killers were recorded announcing themselves as DEA agents.

It is to be hoped the full truth will come out. What is obvious is that the coup was made more feasible by the total disarray in Haiti's governance.

A GOVERNMENT IN RUINS

Since Moise assumed office in 2017, political protest and violence had been common. There were widespread protests in February demanding he step down, and he claimed to have foiled a coup attempt at that time. Opposition leaders said his term should have ended then, but the U.S. supported his claim to rule until 2022.

Haiti has been without a functioning parliament since 2019, with Moise ruling by decree. Before his death, he was planning a referendum on a new constitution that many feared would strengthen his grip on government. In his five-year rule he had appointed seven prime ministers.

There is massive discontent in Haiti. Whether done by indigenous coup plotters, or some even more shadowy agency, the Haitian people have once again been denied the right to revolution.

THE EARTHQUAKE AND AFTERMATH

As if this wasn't enough, on Aug. 14, the country was struck by a magnitude 7.2 earthquake. More than 130,000 buildings were wrecked, including hospitals, schools and homes, and over 2,200 people killed. Aftershocks continue as of Aug. 26, with reports of a magnitude 4.5 quake.

The tragedy was worsened by torrential rainfall from tropical storm Grace that created mudslides in the barren, over-exploited hillsides and hindered rescue efforts.