

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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## WORKSHOPTALKS

### Losing nurses and patients for profit

by Htun Lin

Recently, two nurses were killed on the job by patients at state healthcare facilities in California's Bay Area. Contrary to management's attitude, these are not isolated incidents. More than 50% of emergency room nurses, for example, experience violence by patients on the job. For many years, like nurses all across the country, the staff at those healthcare facilities have been complaining of chronic staffing shortages which endanger patients and workers alike.

I work at the largest HMO in California. In spite of our best ever quarterly profit report, management is conditioned to protect the budget at all costs, patient care be damned, and never mind the workers. The prime directive to nursing supervisors now is "just-in-time" staffing, which often is not "just-in-time," but too late.

Management falsely blames chronic understaffing on a nursing shortage. But many nursing school graduates tell me their job applications have been rejected by one employer after another. Hospital administrators have been repeating this mantra of a "nursing shortage" for almost a decade, while we see them use plenty of traveler nurses from out of state.

They insist on using temp agencies to supply health workers. They don't want to make a commitment to hiring permanent workers, because they prize the ability to get rid of workers at a moment's notice. A nurse supervisor's prime duty these days is to constantly

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## BLACK/REDVIEW

### Harriet Tubman and the Civil War

by John Alan

*Editor's note: We commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War with excerpts from John Alan on Harriet Tubman from the April 2004 News & Letters.*

Since the 1960s there has been a growing interest in Harriet Tubman. Catherine Clinton in *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (Little, Brown, 2004), lets her reader know immediately that the life of a slave was a process of dehumanization from birth to death. Thus, when Harriet Tubman was born in Dorchester County, Maryland, in 1820 or 1822, she was just another commodity to be bought and sold.

Slaves rarely knew the actual year of their birth. But as children they "learned the twin maxims of slavery by harsh experience: their labor is not their own, and they could be deprived of kin. Although African Americans toiling in the field might be seen as the quintessential image of slavery, the more potent symbol of the system was the auction block."

Families were destroyed on the auction blocks. Mothers and fathers were sold to one slave buyer and their children to another slave buyer. Harriet Tubman wanted her family to escape this vile fate.

Harriet Tubman was to challenge this ruthless economic system that lived by the brutal exploitation of Black slave labor. Clinton points out that both the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 and the prohibition of the importation of Black slaves from Africa and the

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## European revolts confront economic and political crises

by Ron Kelch

In one of the biggest demonstrations in Ireland since its revolutionary birth in 1916, 100,000 marched in Dublin on Nov. 27 against the terms of an 85 billion euro loan package put together by the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The marchers were outraged over the Irish government agreeing to new taxes on workers, huge spending cuts in public sector services, as well as a 1 euro decrease in the hourly minimum wage, which will drive wages down for all workers.

### NO SWEATSHOP FOR 'MY TODDLER!'

As one marching mother put it: "It's not the short-term, immediate pain that worries me...I don't want my toddler to end up in a sweatshop." The Irish economy, which has already shrunk 15% since 2008 with unemployment stuck at over 13%, now faces the specter of a more protracted downward spiral, accelerated by the "rescue" loan, which will have to be repaid at a crushing 6.7% interest.

A prominent sign at the demonstration read in German "6.7% Nein Danke!" (No Thanks) because Germany has insisted on punitive terms for rescuing Eurozone countries who were the victims of speculative finance capitalists. Ireland had no substantial problems with public debt or deficit spending. Indeed, with a public debt of just 12% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2007, it was more fiscally prudent than even Germany, whose debt was 50% of GDP. Ireland ran up a huge debt with a \$70 billion bailout of its banks, in hock to mostly foreign bondholders who were facing huge losses after the 2008 collapse of their speculative real-estate bubble. Foreign bondholders repaid Ireland by betting against the government's ability to pay its debt, driving up interest rates and precipitating the present crisis.

The impact of the kind of economic hole into which the Irish are being forced to dig themselves is already

## Bloody reality of reactionary ideas

How predictable was the Jan. 8 massacre in Tucson, Arizona? So much so that shooter Jared Loughner's primary target, Democratic Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, had this to say last year: "We're on Sarah Palin's target list, but the thing is, that the way she has it depicted has the crosshairs of a gun sight over our district. When people do that, they have to realize that there are consequences to that action."

The furious effort by right-wingers and Tea Party figures to distance themselves from the shooting of Giffords and 19 others (six people died, including a nine-year-old girl) is unconvincing and ominous. Palin's use of targets in her campaign endorsements is just one telling aspect of the eliminationist rhetoric that has permeated the Tea Party Right in this country, in which even the most moderate political opponents are vilified as "traitors," monsters, to be destroyed.

### HEALTHCARE REFORM BRINGS THREATS

Rep. Giffords had been threatened with real violence before. Her campaign office was vandalized by right-wingers who objected to her support of healthcare reform, and at an earlier public meeting one Tea Party protester had a gun fall from his pocket. Sickeningly, playing off Palin's imagery, Giffords' opponent in the mid-term elections posed with an M-16 stuck in his crotch, inviting supporters to take Giffords out.

Loughner is the perfect assassin for the Tea Party era. His mind was filled with the same paranoia and

being felt in Greece, where workers staged a seventh general strike on Dec. 15 against draconian austerity measures still going into effect after their "rescue loan" in May. After Ireland and Greece, bond dealers are now eyeing Portugal, Spain, Belgium and even Italy. The only alternative for these countries may be

default on their national debt and the breakup of the Eurozone. In any case there will be an even deeper economic contraction in Europe that will impact the feeble global economic recovery.

European economic integration, including the eventual introduction of a single currency, was promulgated after World War II to foster "human solidarity" and put an end to Europe's plague of bloody nationalism and permanent war. The

revolution that led to Irish independence was against their British imperial overlords then thoroughly embroiled in World War I. It helped to inspire the anti-capitalist revolts in Russia and the rest of Europe. Will a new internationalism and genuine human solidarity emerge now that Irish workers, along with their Greek counterparts, are again leading the fight for autonomy and self-determination—this time against global finance capital?

### POLITICAL UPHEAVAL NOT ENOUGH

In an expected Irish election this year, there is an impending political upheaval against Fianna Fail, the party that kowtowed to transnational finance capital and, under the banner of preserving national sovereignty, has dominated Ireland for most of its existence as an independent state. However, only part of the opposition coalition that is expected to win is even raising the issue of renegotiating the terms of the EU loan.

In neighboring England, which is outside the Eurozone and not subject to its rules, tens of thousands of students marched on Parliament on Dec. 9, the culmination of a nationwide student movement

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Tens of thousands marched in Dublin, Ireland, protesting the austerity program.

## EDITORIAL

conspiracy theories that have been called up from the underworld of history by today's Right: anti-Semitic conspiracies about the "New World Order" that actually trace back hundreds of years, revived for mass consumption by Glenn Beck and the John Birch Society; and newer "9/11" conspiracies as set out by internet figures like Alex Jones. As bizarre as some of Loughner's internet postings were, they are no further from reality than those who raise questions

about Pres. Obama's birth certificate, "death panels," or any number of other far right-wing "talking points."

The horrific events in Tucson build upon a now familiar pattern, as seen in the murderous attacks on abortion providers, most recently the killing of Dr. George Tiller. Anti-choice fanatics demonize their targets, declaring them to be murderers who deserve to be destroyed. They amp up their rhetoric until someone in their movement decides to act. Then after the crime is committed, "respectable" leaders like Randall Terry of Operation Rescue wring their hands and declare that no one could have imagined such a terrible thing.

The Tea Party Right is playing this game now, on an even larger scale. Dick Arme of so-called Freedom-Works has both decried the shootings and called upon his Tea Party supporters to "redouble" their attacks on the mild healthcare reform that Rep. Giffords was so demonized for supporting. They are also trying to deny having influenced Loughner at all. They are consciously trying to overcome the Oklahoma Syndrome—the

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## WOMAN AS REASON Condoms & corruption

by Terry Moon

The Pope made quite a splash a few months ago with his comments in Peter Seewald's book *Light of the World*, where he grudgingly accepted the use of condoms in extremely limited situations: "there may be a basis in the case of some individuals, as perhaps when a male prostitute uses a condom, where this can be a first step in the direction of a moralization, a first assumption of responsibility." So ridiculous was the limiting of condom use to male prostitutes, that that language was abandoned. Some AIDS activists reportedly were "thrilled" with the Pope's comments, while the right wing of the Church reacted with dismay.

Why issue this pusillanimous statement on condoms now? Has the Pope finally understood that to win the struggle against AIDS, activists need every resource available to them, especially condoms, which, despite endless comments from Church spokesmen as well as the Pope, are 80% effective when always used in preventing its spread? Considering that this has been the well-known proven truth for well over two decades, it seems unlikely that the reality of the tragedy of AIDS prompted the Pope's comments.

### POPE PRACTICES DAMAGE CONTROL

Rather, the condemnation of the Church for its inhuman stand against condoms in the struggle against AIDS, along with the latest revelations of the widespread sexual abuse of children by Catholic clerics in Ireland, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, has compelled Pope Benedict XVI to attempt damage control, to try to paint a human face on an inhuman, punitive, sexist, racist and deeply homophobic institution.

The deep hole the Church is in because of its corruption, its legions of pedophile priests, the decades-long cover-up of their activity, and its inhuman position on condoms and AIDS—and for that matter birth control—can be measured by the Pope's turnaround. In 2000, as Cardinal Ratzinger, he despised an article in the Jesuit weekly *America*, which revealed the "moral consensus" among Catholic theologians that it was OK to use condoms in the fight against AIDS. When he became Pope in 2005, he helped force the resignation of

the editor. In 2009 on his way to Cameroon he opined that condom use "aggravates the problem" of AIDS.

### THE REVOLT IS FROM WITHIN

Had the condemnation, ridicule and revolt against his statements only come from outside the Church, he might have felt he could continue his hypocritical ban on condoms while at the same time pontificating about the so-called "culture of life." But the revolt is also from within, as hundreds of thousands leave the Church in Europe because of pedophile priests and the cover-up that continues to this day. Who can believe it when those in the Church act surprised, or when the Pope says that the abuse scandal reached a "degree we could not have imagined..."? How could they not "imagine" it when the Church was the entity not only covering it up, but enabling it by moving around the abusing clergy instead of removing them and turning them over to secular authority? The Pope has been labeled a "serious global public health problem" and Catholics for Choice started a Condoms4Life campaign against his stance.

Furthermore, those on the ground, especially in Africa, have seen the devastation caused by condemning condom use, making them difficult to obtain, and by demonizing sex workers, most of whom are poor women who work to keep from starving and to feed their children. There has been widespread, albeit quiet, disobedience, with some church workers involved in AIDS work using whatever means are helpful, including condoms.

### PEPFAR EXACERBATES PROBLEMS

But that quiet work cannot undo the billions of dollars the Bush Administration threw at the AIDS problem through PEPFAR (President's Emergency Provision for AIDS Relief), key to which was the insistence that a third of the money be used for abstinence-only education. So desperate were some organizations for funds that they abandoned programs that worked in order to get PEPFAR funding. Billions flowed to hard-line religious organizations who would toe the Bush Administration's ideological line, but had little knowledge of what to do to stop the spread of AIDS.

The Pope's comments on condoms are not a cause for celebration, although one can hope that those who actually care about human beings will take his remarks at much more than their face value and run with the idea that condoms make sense, not only as a barrier against disease, but as an effective form of birth control that even the Church can't accuse of being an abortifacient.

## WOMENWORLDWIDE



by Artemis

On Dec. 17, 2010, the Eighth International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers was observed in 15 cities in the U.S., seven cities in Canada and six cities in other countries. In candlelight vigils, the names were read of 60 sex workers murdered in 2010. The speeches, discussions and video showings made statements on how violence towards sex workers should not be socially acceptable, as well as statements about the harm done by keeping sex work illegal.

In the past five years, single women's organizations have spread throughout India. They have a membership of over 58,000 women and represent over 36 million who are single (unmarried, divorced, widowed or deserted). On a local level, they use creative means to change social attitudes, and on a national level they work to get single women the rights to inherit property, to work, to participate in family rituals and to receive a pension and land from the government.

Jan. 1 was the first working day of a new UN agency, UN Women, which will partner with UN member states to develop and promote standards for gender equality. Its goals also include fostering women's equality, reducing violence against women, and empowering and providing greater opportunities for women worldwide.

Luleki Sizwe is a Cape Town, South Africa, organization working to change negative perceptions of LBT women. Although South Africa has led the world in providing many legal rights for LGBT people, more than 10 lesbians a week in Cape Town are raped by men saying they want to "correct" the women's sexual orientation. Luleki Sizwe has provided shelter and services to the victims and rallied 125,000 people from 163 countries to petition the government to make rape a hate crime with a minimum 25-year sentence.

## Women transforming the Middle East

*Paradise Beneath Her Feet: How Women are Transforming the Middle East*, by Isobel Coleman (Random House, 2010)

Many people in the Western world observe the fundamentalism, terrorism and oppression of women in Middle Eastern countries and assume Islam is the problem. In fact, many in the Middle East look upon women's rights as a threat to their culture, not only because of indigenous male chauvinism, poverty and ignorance, but also because European colonizers and, in Afghanistan, the Soviets, attempted to force it on them in the name of modernization. Of course, women in Afghanistan were struggling for their freedom long before the Russian invasion.

Coleman, however, states that the sacred texts of Islam, the Quran (considered to be the word of God) and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), have been interpreted in different ways. She describes how, since the 1800s, both male and female Islamic feminist scholars have argued that these scriptures had given women more rights than they had previously. They argued that the fundamentalism and misogyny of Islam's past 1,400 years are heresies that completely changed the original religion.

Today, even some secular feminists are beginning to think there is a necessity to work within the philosophical and legal framework of Islam and work with its religious leaders to avoid cultural backlash and to change the lives of rural women, many of whom are religious themselves.

### THE NECESSITY OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Coleman explains why women's liberation must be part of the modernization of Middle Eastern countries if they are to survive economically and become part of the global society. The education of women and their inclusion in government and business in all economic classes leads to improvement in public health, including a decrease in maternal and infant mortality and in the birth rate. Women also tend to spend the money they earn on their families and community projects. When women participate in the public sphere as equals with men, that becomes an important means of fighting the terrorism and political tyranny that comes with fundamentalism.

Coleman describes in depth the activities of individuals and groups, both local and international, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Some rural mullahs are beginning to allow girls and women to use mosques as classrooms and governments are sponsoring higher education for women who want to run businesses and go into professions such as journalism to change their countries.

Schools emphasize the importance of girls learning to form their own opinions. Women and religious leaders appear on new television talk shows to discuss controversial issues, including sexuality, and to show that women's rights have religious justification. Women risk their lives to run for office and become judges. They have the support of some religious leaders and scholars in reforming laws, usually sharia laws based in Islam, to make them humane towards women. Some women become religious leaders and are asked to counsel youth who are at risk for becoming terrorists.

### 'ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK'

Coleman does not gloss over the fact that changing the intensely patriarchal and misogynist culture in the Middle East is extremely difficult and slow, that women are always making "one step forward and two steps back" and that progress or backlash often depends upon which ruler or type of government is in power. Women often have to make compromises and pick their battles, such as focusing on the right to be educated over the right not to wear a headscarf or veil. However, the internet and the ability to network internationally are important new tools in what Coleman sees as a movement that "has the potential to be as transformative in this century as the Christian Reformation was in the sixteenth century." This movement includes both feminism and the ability of the average person to reevaluate the scriptures and to think for themselves.

This book is important because Westerners often have a vague idea of what is going on in the Middle East, and Coleman describes some of its history of constant dynamic struggle, not only between different forms of government but between forces of progress and fundamentalism. She explains that its culture, like any culture, is never really unchanging because there are always people willing to risk their lives to struggle for change. She has confidence that these small changes can add up to a larger cultural change.

—Adele

## Hegel on the Church

[T]he...corruption of the Church...was not an accidental phenomenon; it was not the mere abuse of power and dominion. A corrupt state of things is very frequently represented as an "abuse"; it is taken for granted that the foundation was good – the system, the institution itself faultless – but that the...arbitrary volition of men has made use of that which in itself was good to further its own selfish ends, and that all that is required to be done is to remove these adventitious elements... But when accidental abuse of a good thing really occurs, it is limited to particularity. A great and general corruption affecting a body of such large and comprehensive scope as a Church, is quite another thing. – The corruption of the Church was a native growth...

—G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*

## Muslims protect Coptic Christians

The Egyptian story of the human shield shone forth in January amid all the mayhem and murder that captured the news. Thousands of Muslims from all over Egypt stood guard as Coptic Christians worshipped during their Christmas mass or held candlelight vigils for the 21 Christians killed a week before by religious extremists. One Muslim student expressed it this way,

"This is not about us and them. We are one. This was an attack on Egypt as a whole, and I am standing with the Copts because the only way things will change in this country is if we come together."

Some very well-known actors, politicians and businessmen and at least one televangelist stood beside their unknown comrades at churches all across the country. It was a strong statement of solidarity with those who want Egypt's recent, very violent, past to be just that: past.

The arts dealer Mohamed el-Sawy came up with the human shield idea and the slogan "We either live together or we die together." It's such an inspiring story when the majority of the population uses their own bodies to protect a 10% minority.

Ordinary Facebook profiles all over Egypt were exchanged for the symbol of a cross within a crescent—a modern way to express and "share" an old idea.

For more information and political analysis go to <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/3365.aspx>. —Jan

# Mine owners and Congress desecrate 29 miners' graves

**Detroit**—Following the coal mine explosion that killed 29 miners at the Massey Coal Company's Upper Big Branch mine last April, Congressional hearings disclosed the horrendous safety violations at that mine and produced a lot of breast beating and outraged outcries vowing to pass mine safety legislation that would "never allow this to happen again."

At that time I wrote that legislation to increase mine safety law enforcement, close existing safety avoidance loopholes and hire more mine investigators would result in the 100 coal lobbyists and lawyers working overtime to make sure that the legislation would contain many loopholes for coal operators to sleaze through. That was then, when everyone thought that such legislation would certainly be enacted.

Since then, there has been such a regressive political shift to the right, fueled by both a Supreme Court decision that gave a green light to unfettered corporate political contributions and the dismal failures of the Obama administration, that the unbelievable a few months ago is now menacingly looming in all of society. One of the victims of this frightening threat was the coal safety legislation.

**The coal company lobbyists, along with their Chamber of Commerce and other financial and corporate allies, were so effective that the safety legislation in the House of Representatives fell short under lame-duck session rules, while in the Senate the proposed legislation didn't even get to the floor to debate due to the Republican minority's filibustering to block legislation.**



A recent *New York Times* editorial stated that the failure to pass this much-needed legislation is an insult to the memory of the 29 miners who were killed in the Big Branch mine explosion. But it is much more than that, and much more than being the moral and ethical thing to do.

It means that the existing woefully inadequate mine safety laws—laws that permit coal operators to escape punishment for their negligent safety practices that lead to the injury and death of miners, to delay and avoid payment of fines levied against them for their infractions and to allow them to continue to harass, intimidate and fire any miner who dares to complain about mine safety violations—all remain in effect.

Unfortunately, prospects for mine safety legislation are at best very dim. With the Republicans in new positions of power in Washington, and with President Obama's continuing shift to the right, coal safety legislation is at best on the back burner.

There is, however, one bright spot in the aftermath of the Massey coal miners' deaths, and that is the res-

## Musician solidarity

**Detroit**—At the Detroit Symphony Orchestra strike, Oct. 4, 2010, I dreamed I saw Clifford Odets alive; I heard the clarion call. In 1935 I was an eight-year-old innocent barely able to play "Chopsticks." The older folks went gaga over a Group Theater production. I caught the bug. We were all "Waiting for Lefty."

Now it all comes back. My fellow musicians are waking up. On the surface it's just toast and butter unionism on the part of Local 5 of the American Federation of Musicians: NO to a 33% wage cut and a 42% cut for new orchestra members. NO to changes in the work rules that would reduce the status of the players. Hardly class struggle commitment, but it's a start.

There is support and solidarity from the community of musicians. On Oct. 24, 17 members of the Cleveland Orchestra came to Detroit to play a strike benefit concert. Money pours in from members of the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra and other orchestras.

We're not ready to Rock the Cradle or to "Awake and Sing," but give us time.

—Local 802 Member, American Federation of Musicians

## Mexico: Betrayal in electrical workers union

**Mexico City**—In October 2009, Mexican President Felipe Calderón ordered the destruction of the publicly owned City Light and Power Company, and with it the destruction of the union. The union members, men and women, were informed only by watching television, where we heard that troops would stealthily be occupying our workplaces.

I had been working with City Light and Power—a company with a 150-year history—for about 15 years, before Calderón destroyed it. I had previously worked 12 years as a service worker with the Mexican Electricians Union (Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, SME), so together I've worked in the industry about 27 years as a union worker.

There was a highly contested election in the union. In our statutes it says that every worker has the right to join with other workers to form groups to discuss internal union politics, and that is what we did. There was a split between the union president Martín Esparza and Alejandro Muñoz, who tapped most into the feelings of those of us who were fed up with corruption. We rank-and-file workers said, "Enough is enough," and went with Muñoz.

We went before the governmental Board of Conciliation and Arbitration to question the legality and transparency of the union election. We used legal means, and the government took advantage of this in their coup of Oct. 11 when they took over City Light and Power.

Some of the women workers got together the next day at the union hall as soon as we heard, and we were there all day and night. There were meetings and assemblies, with the leaders of both currents of the split debating the way forward. During this internal struggle, Muñoz—who had always said, "When our jobs and our union are at risk, we have to form a united front"—went back on his word.

The two leaders went their separate ways. The way I see it, Muñoz ended up driving about half of the members to accept a severance deal with the government. It's not just by chance that about 15,000 workers took the deal within the first month.

Now there are only about 12,000 of us, down from 45,000. About three-fourths of us are gone. Some of this is purely because we lost our jobs so quickly. One day

ignation of Don Blankenship, the owner of the Massey coal empire in Appalachia, beginning the first of this year. The negative publicity he generated for his abusive and dictatorial practices, his violent opposition to unions and environmentalism and his contempt toward anyone who disagreed with him, all swelled to engulf him and threaten the profitability of his coal empire.

Even his brutish and barbaric practices could not withstand the turmoil he created. He had to go—and while his departure was certainly unwilling, it was inevitable.

—Andy Phillips

## Teachers mock boss

**New York City**—The following statement along with others was delivered at a press conference called by the NYC Green Party on Nov. 30 at 11:00 AM at Hearst Headquarters, 8th Ave. and 57th Street:

I am applying to head the Magazine division of Hearst Publications, a position vacated by Cathie Black [to become Schools Chancellor]. Although I have no experience either in business or in publications, I welcome the opportunity that Mayor Bloomberg, a leading figure in the mass media, has given to those with no prior experience in that field to head an agency.

As the mayor pointed out, he feels that Mrs. Black is eminently qualified to head the public school system because her experience in business will fit into his plan to organize public education into a top-down business model.

Likewise, I believe that businesses like Hearst Publications would benefit greatly by having a person like me who believes in a bottom-up democratic model. I would urge Hearst publications to democratize its operation by giving its workers the right to elect their supervisors, including the company's top management.

This would put Hearst in touch with the needs of the majority of the U.S. people. Hearst would expose the corruption of our economic and political system and give a voice to the voiceless.

Hearst would put forth the programs of independent parties such as the Greens, which are frozen out of the mass media but who advocate solving the economic crisis by bailing out Main Street, not Wall Street, and by getting off dirty fossil fuels in favor of clean solar and wind energy.

Hearst would become a beacon challenging the entrenched power of the corporate/financial oligarchy by giving the people information to change a society based upon greed into a society based upon social justice and environmental wisdom.

—Tom Siracuse, retired public school teacher

## WORKSHOPTALKS

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monitor each floor for "overstaffing," or they are called on the carpet. They even send nurses home mid-shift.

What they call overstaffing, we call safety. They say budget overruns are a danger to the survival of the hospital. But they are killing patients and workers in the process in the name of improving efficiency and productivity. Often nurses will get into arguments with their supervisors over staff assignments because of their concern over safety.

### JUST-TOO-LATE

Just-in-time staffing in healthcare is counterproductive because management's budget obsession doesn't allow room for a spike in patients showing up in the emergency room. Often these patients need intensive care. They cannot be moved into the ICU until other patients are moved out. But they do not have enough nurses to make other rooms available. We are trapped in a Catch-22.

This chronic crisis condition is really a crisis in thinking that goes with capitalism. What I see in my shop is a cadre of highly talented veteran nurses with decades of experience, whose primary function as supervisors has been reduced from that of a nurse to an accountant, constantly made to monitor not the quality of care but the company bottom line. Made to obsess over labor time, that is, any excess nurse-minutes, they behave like production foremen in an assembly line.

This total inversion of thought and reality, that is, treating units of labor-time as real instead of treating concrete labor like providing healthcare as real, is the animating delusion that runs through the whole economy. It's the delusion behind all the draconian budget cuts that will, in California, for example, cut millions from the state's Medi-Cal program. California's new Governor Jerry Brown said: "It's better to take our medicine now and get the state on a balanced footing." That medicine is deadly for patients and workers.

### WHO PAYS THE PIPER?

There is a constant effort in the workplace to force workers to internalize this inhuman thinking. At labor-management team meetings we are told to be mindful of the customer. By "customer" they mean the corporate and state bureaucrats who hold the purse strings to employer-sponsored healthcare for their employees.

Their conventional wisdom tells us to believe that what's objective is the economy "out there" and their budget battles are what's real. They want us to believe that there is no alternative and that these nurses' deaths are just the way it is.

We workers know better. Through our concrete labor, we know the essential economy is in our daily interactions with each other as human beings. The bureaucrats are right to say that there is "no alternative" to these recurring crises under capitalism. For us workers then, there is no alternative to abolishing capitalism.

—Woman electrical worker, SME  
(Translated by Brown Douglass)

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

**Editor's note:** 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the start of the U.S. Civil War. The piece excerpted here, originally titled "Marxism and Freedom: From the Industrial Revolution to Automation—An Outline of a Book in Preparation," shows the profound impact of the war on Marx's thought. It can be found in the Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #11786.

### INTRODUCTION

The **todayness** of Marx's thinking is seen in this: Not only are the problems he posed one hundred years ago battled out today as concrete problems **in the factory** in this stage of automation, but also as fundamental questions **in society** on a world scale. "Can human power bring freedom to man out of totalitarianism and under threat of H-bomb rule?" is asked by everyone from the man on the street to the philosopher in his ivory tower.

What is little known of the development of Marx's thinking is the impact the Civil War in the United States had on the structure of his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*. It was not a mere exchange of letters between President Lincoln and Marx as the general secretary of the First International.<sup>1</sup> What Marx stated in the introduction to *Capital* is well-known: that just as the American Revolution sounded the tocsin for the French Revolution, so the Civil War sounded the tocsin for the Paris Commune. What is not known is that under the impact of the Civil War Marx scrapped entirely his first draft of *Capital* and re-wrote it entirely. Not only did he thus develop the new structure for his work—which we now have—but his correspondence shows that he was collecting data from America which would do for Volumes II and III what the English and American struggles for the shortening of the working day did for Volume I.

Marx's fundamental critique of political economy is the basis for his answer to the various tendencies in political economy. Unlike the representatives of these other tendencies, he saw that capitalist crises arose, not accidentally and not because of a deficiency of effective demand, but out of the very vitals of the economic system—the contradiction between the productive forces and the production relations. He held that the **mode** of labor under capitalism was the underlying cause of crises because:

1) It was not merely the product the laborer produced that was alienated from him. "In the alienation of the object of labor is only crystallized the alienation, the renunciation in the activity of labor itself."

2) The domination of the capitalist over the worker was in reality "the mastery of dead over living labor."

3) Hence, the ultimate development of capital accumulation in any given society "in the hands of one single capitalist or...one single corporation," or the stratification of production, would not abolish the capitalist antagonism but only drive it to the extreme.

However, the alienation of the laborer creates a striving for universality on his part. Under capitalist production man is degraded by the accumulation of the productive forces. At the same time, faced "with the intellectual potencies of the material process of production as the property of another and as a ruling power," man feels the need of appropriating the mass of accumulated labor for his own development. Marx saw that such an achievement of universality on the part of the laborer, the chief productive force in society, would become an economic necessity. The only solution to capitalist crises lay in the abolition of the alien mode of labor.

Until the development of the totalitarian State, this philosophical foundation of Marx was not fully

<sup>1</sup> The letter to Lincoln from the Central Council of the International Workingmen's Association, Nov. 29, 1864, was written by Marx and signed, Corresponding Secretary for Germany.—Ed.

## Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 until Today

by Raya Dunayevskaya

"...as Marx's new continent of thought develops and deepens, it is clear that the great historic events like the Civil War in the U.S. ... exercised so strong an impact on Marx as to change the structure of his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*."



To order see p. 7

# Marxism and the U.S. Civil War

understood even by Marxists. It is only today that it is possible fully to comprehend that Marx's analysis of alienated labor was not a nineteenth-century humanitarian adjunct to his scientific theory. Far from being a vulgar materialist, Marx based his perspectives of the inevitable collapse of capitalism and its transformation into socialism on a realization that labor would seek universality and completeness in its actual material life as a producer.

Marx foresaw the present trend toward state capitalism, not because he was a prophet, but because of his dialectical method of tracing through all trends of economic development to their end. It is impossible to understand Marx's major theoretical work if one begins by thinking that the particular method, Hegelian dialectics, is an absurdity. The absurdity would be if the method were the proof. The proof can only be in practice, in the development of society itself.

### THE MARXIST METHOD Dialectics and the New Humanism

Marxism is wrongly considered to be a "new political economy." In truth, it is a critique of the very foundations of political economy, which Marx considered to be the bourgeois mode of thought corresponding to the bourgeois mode of production.

Marx was concerned with the freedom of humanity and the inevitable waste of human life, which is "the absolute general law" of the constant growth of machinery and the constant degradation of the laborer.

Marx saw capitalism as an historical social order, the negation of a previous social order, feudal society. The modern society consists of two opposites, capital and labor. Marx set himself the task of laying bare the law of motion of this modern society. To discern this law, he applied dialectics, which he considered to be "the science of the general laws of motion both of the external world and of human thought," to the material development of capitalist society. "In the **method** of treatment," he wrote Friedrich Engels [Jan. 16, 1858], "the fact that by mere accident I have glanced through Hegel's *Logic* has been of great service to me..." And again: "Hegel's dialectic is the basic form of all dialectic, but only after it has been stripped of its mystical form and it is precisely this which distinguishes my method." [Marx to Kugelmann, Mar. 6, 1868.]

He accused the Young Hegelians of dehumanizing the Idea as if ideas were not the thoughts of **human** beings. Human freedom is the principle towards which he worked. His whole philosophy, which he called dialectical materialism,<sup>2</sup> is a new humanism.

Marx took the bare laws of the dialectic: 1) the transformation of quantity into quality; 2) the interpenetration of opposites; and 3) the negation of the negation. With the help of these laws he tried to penetrate the mechanism of the capitalist mode of production and show the "new passions and forces" for a new social order.

Marx begins with the discovery of classical political economy that labor, or the activity of man, is the source of all value. He states, however, that it is insufficient to reduce wealth to labor in general. You must see the contradictory form in which labor appears in capitalist society: 1) abstract labor which creates value, and 2) concrete labor which creates use-values. Marx considers this his original contribution and the pivot upon which all political economy turns. The use-value and value of a commodity contain, in germ, all the contradictions of capitalist society precisely because this dual nature of commodities arises from the dual character of labor.

The growth of capital is seen to be not merely a quantitative but a qualitative relationship. Along with the concentration and centralization of capital, there is the socialization of labor. Along with the degradation of the worker to "an appendage of a machine," there is the discipline and growing revolt prepared by the very mechanism of production. The contradictions are seen to rend the system apart and make it impossible for it to continue. The negation of the negation is seen to contain a new affirmation: the socialization of labor and the development, instead of alienation, of the activity of man as the basis of the new society. Marxism thus incorporates into the science of economics the subjective element, the laborer, the gravedigger of bourgeois society.

Marx's application of the laws of the dialectic to economic development revolutionized the whole study of economics. This had dealt with economic categories,

<sup>2</sup> In *Philosophy and Revolution* Dunayevskaya notes that it was Plekhanov, not Marx, who invented the term "dialectical materialism." See p. 302, n. 106.—Ed.

such as wages, profits, money, as if they were **things**, instead of expressions of production **relations**. For Marx, all economic categories are social categories. The relations between persons in a commodity-producing society, he said, are of course attached to things and **appear** as things. But this appearance belies, instead of manifests, the underlying essence: the relationship between capital and labor. This relationship dominates the whole of capitalist society and hence the whole of *Capital*, including *Theories of Surplus Value*:

In Volume I, it appears as the relationship between constant and variable capital (c/v).

In Volume II, it appears as the relationship between the two main departments of social production: that of means of production and means of consumption (mp/mc).

In Volume III, it appears as the relationship between surplus value and total capital (s/c+v).

In *Theories of Surplus Value*, it is analyzed in the various theories as they appeared historically and reflected partial or distorted aspects of reality. The reality that Marx described, beginning with the struggle for the shortening of the working day, brought with it a new philosophy: "In place of the pompous catalogue of the 'inalienable rights of man,' comes the modest Magna Carta of a legally limited working day which shall make clear 'when the time which the worker sells is ended and when his own begins.'

*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*" [*Capital*, ch. 10.]

From then on Marx's concept of freedom was always solidly based on "the fundamental prerequisite: The shortening of the working day."

### THE STRUCTURE OF CAPITAL

#### The Impact of the American Civil War and the Paris Commune on Marx's Greatest Work

Marx had begun the study of political economy at the time of his break with the bourgeois world and with the Young Hegelians (1843). At the end of 16 years, he published his *Critique of Political Economy*. It was no sooner out than he decided not to continue with that structure. The quietude that had descended upon the working-class movement after the defeat of the 1848 revolutions put a limitation to Marx's own creativity. He returned to his theoretical studies, including the re-reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, of which he wrote:

"I have thrown over the whole doctrine of profit as it has existed up to now. In the **method** of treatment the fact that by mere accident I have again glanced through Hegel's *Logic* has been of great service to me."

Nevertheless, the logic of a theoretical work and the logic of the actual class struggle were pulling at him in different directions. Once the revolutionary movement came to life again, he broke with the concept of theory as a matter of debate between theoreticians. Where his *Critique of Political Economy*, in 1859, was a mere application of dialectics to political economy, his *Capital*, in 1867, created a new dialectic out of the struggles of living people.

Marx wrote enthusiastically to his friend and collaborator, Engels, that a new era of European as well as American history had opened with John Brown's revolt. As he was to put it in the preface to his first edition of *Capital*,

"As in the 18th century, the American war of independence sounded the tocsin for the European middle-class, so in the 19th century, the American civil war sounded it for the European working-class."

Under the impact of the Civil War in the United States, the mass of economic material, on which Marx had worked for nearly a quarter of a century, finally assumed shape in the form in which we know it. There has been no appreciation of that fact in America just as the European scholars have failed to see the direct impact of the Paris Commune on the French edition of *Capital* (1873). The French edition was the first to contain the famous passage about the concentration of capital in any given society in the hands of "a single capitalist corporation," or "a single capitalist," which was later to be developed into the theory of state capitalism.

It was only in 1943, when the Russian Communists proposed a revision in the Marxian theory of value and a break with the dialectical structure of *Capital*, that it first became clear that Marx's most abstract concepts had come to life and that the Russian theoreticians could no longer associate with Marx and hold to their revisions. One or the other had to go.



Fifth Massachusetts Colored Regiment charging Fort Wagner, South Carolina, July 18, 1863. Marx wrote Engels on Aug. 7, 1862, "In my view, all of this is going to take another turn. One single Negro regiment would have a remarkable effect on Southern nerves..."

# ESSAY Philosophy and Iran's revolution: Where to now?

by Raha

Recollecting Raya at the end of the Dunayevskaya Centenary is intertwined with the Iranian Revolution at its 1979 high point and as it suffered through three decades of counter-revolution, and now, as it searches for a new beginning.

One year ago, the unprecedented turnout of millions throughout Iran on the 31st anniversary of the 1979 Revolution revealed something new that has not yet been brought to light: the deep desire to reclaim that Revolution as one that belongs to the people as its true creators (see "Iranian workers enter the fray," March-April, 2010 *N&L*). Thereby the instrumental use of the Revolution by the Islamic Republic as but a means to terrorize people into submission became undermined. While the oppressive state has unleashed an ongoing absolute terror to suppress what it calls a "velvet revolution," it has, at best, only managed to drive it underground. Nevertheless, what the year-long sustained mass mobilizations brought to center stage is the historic divide between continuity and discontinuity with that 1979 Revolution, its unfulfilled goals, and its meaning for today. It is here that Dunayevskaya's theoretic contributions become indispensable.

## THE LEFT IN 1979

Let's admit it: the Left completely screwed up in 1979. We were shattered. In 1979 I went back to Iran having encountered the Marxist-Humanist ideas of Raya Dunayevskaya and having met her on my way there. I became active with unemployed workers.

It was a massive movement, given the factory shutdowns, departure of capitalists, etc. Those who took control of the movement were all Left intellectuals, but were wearing working-class clothing and acting as if they were the workers. One day, at the end of a march, we gathered at the Ministry of Justice. The workers heard speeches, then were divided up into committees to write up demands to be presented to the provisional government. I got involved with one of those committees. Workers themselves were open-minded and were attentively listening, discussing different points of view. I spoke about workers' control, that you need to shape your own destiny through workers' councils. Here then comes this Fedayee (a Communist group) intellectual who grabs me by my collar and says intellectuals are not allowed among the workers! He threw me out.

Dunayevskaya singled out "new passions and new forces" within the Iranian Revolution that no one else had seen. She was the only Marxist who comprehended at the time the significance of women on March 8, 1979, as opening a new chapter of the revolution (see "Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, Revolution," March 25, 1979, included in *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*). Moreover, she singled out these forces as also Reason. She had immersed herself in Iran's history, not as an "historian," but history as ongoing and future. This history recollected, revealed also the world context, i.e., the two Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. The 1917 Revolution leading to the Gilan Republic<sup>1</sup>—a truly forgotten page in Iran's revolutionary history—and women's *Anjumans* (committees) as the extension and deepening of the *soviets*.

As she intervened in the 1978-79 Iranian revolution, Dunayevskaya projected a recreation of Hegel's Absolute Method, which is not an external reflection of objective reality, but is immanent within reality. This internal development revealed in an ongoing revolution what Lenin meant by his aphorism: "Cognition not only reflects the world but creates it." Here Idea is Power in the concrete because it is not "applied" but recreates dialectics for that particular situation.

## WHAT IS CONCRETE POST-1979?

Thus, at the outset of the Iraq-Iran war, when some even within the Iranian Marxist-Humanist tendency wanted to apply Lenin's slogan "turn the imperialist war into civil war," Dunayevskaya warned against skipping history and its process. The concrete, she showed, in the Hegelian sense of the concrete and total, would reveal that Iraq's attack on Iran in 1981 was, in essence, an attack on the revolution. Therefore, revolutionaries should fight it on that ground even as

<sup>1</sup> The Socialist Republic of Gilan, the Iranian province, lasted from June 1920 until September 1921. See Dunayevskaya's Political-Philosophic Letter "Iran's Revolutionary Past—and Present," Nov. 13, 1978. Several of those Letters are available from News and Letters as *Iran: Revolution and Counter-revolution*.

the grave contradictions within the revolution reached a counter-revolutionary turn. **Never did she lose her confidence in the masses** who had achieved that revolution against the Shah and U.S. imperialism, and who had made revolution, not oil, what defines the Middle East.

I recently re-read Dunayevskaya's Introduction to the Farsi edition of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*<sup>2</sup> with which she armed young Iranian Marxist-Humanists during the revolutionary upheaval. I find it, as well as her Introduction to the series of "Political-Philosophic Letters" she wrote on Iran, of great value for today as a summation of the revolution and of Marx. Absolute Method, as practiced by her, allowed for no divide between philosophic mediation and the new self-mediating forms of social solidarity, the workers' councils.

The point for today is that we cannot reappear on the scene with the same symbols, banners, language and political sloganeering and pass it off as "radicalism." Islamists proved to be more "radical" in pursuit of their fundamentalist demands. They were even more "anti- this and that" than the Left.

To me, the present moment in Iran bears out in life the indispensability of Dunayevskaya's path-breaking approach: projecting what Hegel called the Self-Thinking Idea as what immanently unfolds within the revolutionary movement. She "translated" this Self-Thinking Idea as Marx's revolution in permanence. This speaks loudly, at least in my view, to the dialectics of action in Iran now, when the masses seem to have gained self-confidence in the actuality of their power and the non-actuality of the existing reality. The immanence of the Idea can no longer be left at the level of abstraction Lenin reached when he said "Notion = Man." We need to go further by trying to grasp the Notion in-and-for-itself in order to appreciate how it is the concrete in an actual revolution. Otherwise, "the day after revolution" we will, yet again, remain stuck with the objective, material restructuring alone and not the free release of human creativity and totally new human relationships.

## LABOR AND THE DIALECTIC OF REVOLUTION

"Labor" is such a distorted and misunderstood category, especially among those who shout the loudest about labor in the context of today's mass movement in Iran. Yet Raya makes one so "smart" when it comes to opposing other Left tendencies that one can easily harbor the illusion that "I know all there is to know," without actually knowing! Imagine a 23-year-old like myself, who had translated Marx's essay on "Alienated Labor" in the midst of the Iranian Revolution in 1978, and done the same with Georg Lukacs' "What is Orthodox Marxism?" and yet **kept labor and dialectics in two separate compartments**. That's precisely the point, because by the time Dunayevskaya wrote her Introduction to the Farsi edition of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, addressing revolutionaries in an ongoing revolution, I had already become too "familiar" with Marxist-Humanism and too involved with practice to really grapple with the "negation of the negation" as the meaning of the challenge issued by Dunayevskaya in that Introduction.

When it comes to labor, the vanguard parties deify labor and mythologize it in their "revolutionary art" and symbolism, even calling it the "Universal Class," while in truth they regard it as but a Force in need of a consciousness **injected from the outside**. Lukacs, despite his Hegelianism, actually elevated the concept of the vanguard to a philosophic level. He made a categorical opposition between the class "in-itself" and the class "for-itself," which the Left never stopped repeating because this opposition is mediated by the Party as the historic "bearer" of the class consciousness of the proletariat. This Hegelian par excellence actually did not even come close to Lenin in his encounter with the dialectic in-and-for-itself, let alone how it unfolds in an actual revolution. Naturally, no new unity of Force and Reason can be achieved when theoretic discourse is based on such a great divide between the self-determination of labor and the Idea.

## ABSOLUTE METHOD AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Contrast this to how Raya practiced Absolute Method in engaging labor during the Iranian Revolution of 1979, specifically the oil workers. She highlighted their achievements, from the political general strike to their opposition to the counter-revolution ordering them to go back to work. Yet precisely at their high point she revealed a duality within labor when it came to their perception of "anti-imperialism," in which they did not fully distinguish themselves from the counter-

<sup>2</sup> Included in *Iran: Revolution and Counter-revolution*.

revolution's appropriation of that concept.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, she did not leave the universal of labor as an abstract generality. On the contrary, she demonstrated that there is differentiation within labor, that class consciousness is an internally manifold totality, which contains its "Other" within itself. Only through the negation of this "Other"—i.e., through the "negation of the negation"—does that universal become concrete for-itself.

Thus, when Dunayevskaya projects the power of the Idea as it shapes the course of the actual, it is wholly immanent because it reveals that the impulse to transcend the duality is within the revolution itself. Workers who achieved the overthrow of U.S. imperialism in Iran, opposed the counter-revolution when it sent them back to work, even if they were not able to fully deal with that counter-revolution's pseudo anti-imperialism trying to consolidate power against them. Therefore a theoretic articulation is needed to reach a new determination of self and reality so that workers can transcend the Other. Isn't this how theory and practice merge into a new unity to usher in a new beginning also the day after the revolution?

Every revolution discloses something new and unique. The new in Iran at the end of the 1970s found articulation in what was then Dunayevskaya's book-to-be: *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. Suddenly the question of women's liberation, spontaneity, Luxemburg's "Mass Strike," the 1907 London Congress of Russian tendencies, and organization—all became life and death questions pertaining to and interwoven with an ongoing revolution.<sup>4</sup>

Yes, the masses proved, once again, how all-powerful they are as they unfurl the banner of freedom. But Iran's greatest tragedy was that it was without a philosophy of liberation, and therefore did not disclose the path to total freedom. Thirty-two years later, that's still where we are. Can the Iranian roots of Marxist-Humanism be rediscovered? Will Dunayevskaya's relentless engagement with that revolution and her new theoretic points of departure be made known in today's movement? Moreover, will all this be treated as the immediately given, or will we be able to respond to the challenge of "Where to Begin?" as she posed it in that undigested Political-Philosophic Letter "What is Philosophy? What is Revolution?" The task remains to be done even as she left all the doors open for our generation to engage with her body of thought as what can make a difference in an actual revolution.

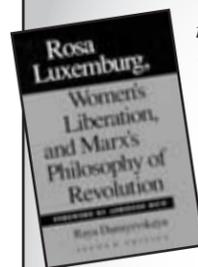
<sup>3</sup> See Dunayevskaya's discussion of the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, and the holding of the employees hostage, in "Grave Contradictions of the 1979 Iranian Revolution," included in *Iran: Revolution and Counter-revolution* and reprinted in the December 1999 *N&L*.

<sup>4</sup> As Dunayevskaya put it in *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (News and Letters, 1980): "*Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* greatly illuminated the events of 1979 and 1980. History had paid little attention to the 1905 Russian Revolution's extension to Persia...though especially the women's *Anjuman* (soviet) was a true historic first. Suddenly, however, another element of that revolution in Persia—its first constitution—became a focal point for the 1979 Iranian Revolution. But what the Islamic fundamentalists meant by it and what the young revolutionaries related to, were absolute opposites."



"Women's Liberation is society's liberation" was a slogan women carried on the March 8, 1979, demonstration.

## Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution by Raya Dunayevskaya



"Iranian opponents of the Shah kept referring to the 1906 Constitution ... whereas the Iranian women who had participated in the revolution ... were recalling a very different aspect of the 1906-11 Iranian Revolution—that which had created, for the very first time anywhere in the world, a women's soviet (anjumen)."

## Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future

"As if Workers' Councils, Neighborhood Committees, Anjumen, many new forms of spontaneous organization, and youth dominant in all, did not take on the apparition of a dual government, there came...a mass outpouring of women, bearing the banner, 'We made the revolution for freedom, and got unfreedom,' which may very well have opened Chapter 2 of the Iranian Revolution."

Order on page 7



## THE OPPOSITE OF WAR IS NOT PEACE BUT REVOLUTION

Your Statement, issued on your website on Dec. 9 had it just right! "The continuing threat of war on the Korean Peninsula underscores the urgency of the Marxist-Humanist perspective that the opposite of war is not peace but revolution."

And you had it right that "Obama's diplomatic plans to defuse the situation began and ended with leaning on China to rein in North Korea, revealing that Obama had no plan at all." But most of all, you had it right that "this is a time when global crises are so profound that a relatively minor incident raises the specter of nuclear annihilation."

The only real future that state-capitalism, in all its forms, has in store for humanity is "endless wars and immiseration." The only meaningful opposition to that is, indeed, "a revolutionary uprooting of the old and the creation of a new human society."

**Marxist-Humanist  
Chicago**



## TEABAGGERS AND RISING FASCISM

As a person of color, I immediately identified with two recent articles by Gerry Emmett in *N&L*: "The new white supremacist U.S." and "Rising fascism grounded in American racism." Racist fanaticism is a fundamental aspect of this country's founding. The Southern delegation at the Continental Congress had the section aiming at the abolition of slavery expunged from the Declaration of Independence. The recent manifestations of newer forms of racist tendencies represent a continuity of an old reality of North American society.

Efforts to totally uproot America's racist tendencies can be facilitated by projection of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. The philosophic viewpoint is needed to unmask the economic uncertainty. Exposing the true reality of capitalism, its law of motion that breeds accumulation of wealth at one end and abject poverty at the other, will make it possible to finally bridge the gulf that has divided humanity and bring us together on a shared commonality.

**Faruq  
Pelican Bay, Cal.**

When I look at Arizona today—not just the recent terrible shooting but the total climate of repression and racism—it makes me think that Arizona has become what Mississippi represented as the Civil Rights Movement began in the 1950s and '60s. We need an even more profound civil rights/human rights movement today to roll back what is happening—and certainly not only in Arizona.

**Veteran of the civil rights movement  
California**

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I agree with *N&L* that the right-wing Republicans and the Teabagger thugs are counter-revolutionary. They say the Constitution is being violated but they don't say how. When they say they want to "take back the country" do they mean lynching and women back in the kitchen? Their "ideal past" was filled with racism and women held back in a form of servitude.

The far Right seems interested only in lower taxes and the complete failure of Obama and the Democrats. Do we really want to let them kill off all progressive legislation, get rid of Medicare, social security, unemployment insurance and our other rights? We have to fight to keep our rights and values in place.

**Mark, a Patriot for Peace and Justice  
Chicago**

## SINGLE-PAYER MEDICARE

A nationwide organization of doctors issued a statement on Jan 7, rejecting calls by Republican leaders to repeal the new health law and saying that the enactment of a single-payer Medicare-for-all program was the only way to assure high quality, comprehensive care to all Americans and rein in skyrocketing healthcare costs.

I had thought all the doctors who believed in the single-payer concept had died with my father several decades ago. He complained then that Kaiser treated people like things. Where have we heard about that concept before? He was one of the early followers of Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism.

**Judy  
Los Angeles**

## COMING HORRORS REVIEW?

*N&L* provides a national review of coming horrors, like the article in

## RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA'S MARXIST-HUMANISM

Now that the centenary of Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-2010) is over, it seems to me one part of her character and philosophy was not dealt with adequately. She was not a Hope Seller. Certainly some of her merit and greatness rests on that fact. She innately understood, as did Marx, that basically humans make their own hope. She never stooped to selling hope, while this country has been inundated with sleazy hope-sellers. Thank you, Raya. Hope is the ultimate merchandise and snake oil is capitalism's finest product.

**Robert Zani  
Tennessee Colony, Texas**

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For Raya Dunayevskaya, nothing was ever separated from anything else, with all pointing to the need for revolution. She saw what Marx meant in writing that "Time is the place for human development." In her writing there is an insistence on the past and present reaching for the future. The shock of recognition when we deal with history is that it presses upon us the need for revolution until we arrive at a new way of life.

**Dawn  
California**



One of the significant aspects of Raya Dunayevskaya's *American Civilization on Trial* is how she made the distinction between the established literary writers and the Abolitionists. The literary writers, by virtue of their narrow vision, tended to attribute changes in societal development to the government's administrative policies, whereas the stalwarts of the Abolitionist Movement became the unified voice of the actual mass movement of slaves fleeing their Southern bondage to Northern freedom. By their constant contact with the slaves, the Abolitionists discovered the

human source for the reconstruction of society. Dunayevskaya's drawing this out serves to reinforce the point she made in her other writings, that a theorist cannot write out of his/her head, because real theory grows out of the activity of masses in motion. She saw it as the duty of the theorist to not only see the duality in mass practice which is a form of theory, but also to give assistance by articulating the theory while simultaneously demonstrating the inseparability of practice to theory and theory to practice.

**Prisoner  
Crescent City, Cal.**

# READERS' VIEWS

the November-December issue on the "Superheroes in Honeywell lockout." You are accurately describing where we are headed with increasing speed. Years ago, when I was growing up, parents would tell their children "Eat all your food, people in China are starving." Now people in China can tell their kids, "Eat all your food. Children in America are hungry and homeless."

**Prisoner  
Texas**

## GAY LIBERATION STRUGGLES

It was shameful how the Smithsonian Institution caved in to the Right by removing David Wojnarowicz' classic short film "A Fire in My Belly" from its exhibit on Gay history. Congressional Republicans Erik Cantor and John Boehner threatened their funding. In this case it would have been worth the fight.

I was happy to see that many other museums, including three here in Chicago, were taking up the slack by exhibiting the film. If anything, it is more powerful now, when the face of AIDS has changed—AIDS is now disproportionately affecting Blacks and Latinos, and so this racist society begins to forget.

**Tim Finnigan  
Chicago**

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It's a proud time in Illinois with both of its legislative houses passing a civil unions bill that will be guaranteed to have Gov. Quinn's signature! Applause for the legislators who voted "Yea" for it. Its provisions for the LGBTPQI and straight communities are limited compared to a federal equal marriage bill, but it's in the direction of liberation.

Liberation would mean all the benefits currently granted to married couples would be granted to consenting adults in committed relationships no matter how many people are involved and to all parents. If we truly treasure the precious children, let's keep marching in that direction!

**Pansexual  
Chicago**

## FIGHTING SHARIA LAW

To mark International Human Rights Day on Dec. 11, One Law for All held an all day conference on Apostasy, Sharia Law and Human Rights at Conway Hall, London.

The urgent cases of Pakistani Asia Bibi, who has received a death sentence for blasphemy; Palestinian Waleed Al-Husseini, arrested for criticizing Islam; and campaigners in Iran charged with "enmity against God," were highlighted. The conference unanimously demanded their unconditional and immediate release.

Rounding off the event was a play "Masculine Law" by Ghazi Rabihavi which demonstrated how Sharia laws subjugate women and endanger the welfare of children. The conference was dedicated to preventing the stoning of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in Iran.

**Maryam Namazie  
London, England**

## SOUTH KOREAN LABOR APPEAL

On Dec. 3 of last year, the prosecutor in the Seoul Central District Court demanded prison terms of five to seven years for eight members of the Socialist Workers' Alliance of Korea (SWLK), a revolutionary socialist group. These activists in the Korean working-class movement were indicted under South Korea's notorious National Security Law

(passed in 1948 and theoretically still stipulating the death penalty for "pro-North" activities). The eight militants of the SWLK, who as internationalists advocate working-class revolution in both Koreas, were accused of no specific crime except being socialists, but in reality the indictment resulted from their intervention in several strikes and movements going back to 2007.

It is not impossible that a barrage of e-mail protests to Judge Hyung Doo Kim of the Seoul Central District Court will help reduce or obviate the pending sentences. Let Judge Kim know your feelings in your own words about this crackdown on "thought crime" by writing to swlk@jinbo.net

Please distribute this appeal as widely as possible. Messages in languages other than English are welcome. For more details on this case, contact me at lrgoldner@gmail.com

**Loren Goldner**

## OBAMA AND THE GOP RIGHT

I read your excellent editorial on "Capital on Strike" (Sept.-Oct. 2010 *N&L*). It was elegantly, persuasively and clearly written. But there was one item that I would characterize as a half-truth: "The Republican Right agenda... is to cut Social Security and Medicare." This is, of course, a correct analysis but only tells us half the story. The other half is that this is an agenda that is shared by the Democratic Party as well. Sure, the GOP will more boldly raise the issue. Yet it will be the Dems that will carry the day and drive the crucial nails into the coffin, "reluctantly" bowing to the pressure of the Republicans.

The pressure that Democratic leadership responds to is only in the direction of the Right; in the direction of dismantling the entitlements of the popular classes. The Progressive Caucus is the largest in Congress, but Obama has found little cause to make any concessions to them. Rather, concessions have been all in the direction of the so-called progressives delivering their constituency to the Right while attacking the Left.

**Reader  
Bay Area**

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One of the points Senator Bernie Sanders made in his eight to nine hour filibuster against the Republican/Obama tax break for the richest Americans is that the USA has the most poverty in the industrial world. That's a major reason why we have the most people of any country in prison.

**Basho  
Los Angeles**

## FOR BEN EPSTEIN (1918 - 2010)

A memorial for Ben Epstein on Oct. 24 at the Niebyl-Proctor Marxist Library in Oakland celebrated a long, rich life as a Marxist, psychologist and father. I didn't get to know Ben until he was already in his late 80s but the circumstances were remarkable. At that age and with great intellectual capacity, Ben put out a call for a group to read and discuss the whole of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. He felt Marxists needed to study Hegel straight in order to comprehend Marx's roots there. A roomful of people responded but only a handful completed that journey over a year later. We had, as might be expected, somewhat sharp differences at times, but we became friends. His daughter said his memorial was at the library because of the importance Ben attached to the Hegel study held there.

**Ron Kelch  
California**

**ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLES CONTINUE**

Hazel Johnson, one of the most important fighters against environmental racism in the U.S., died Jan. 12. She began organizing in 1979 with other African-American residents of the Altgeld Gardens public housing project on the South Side of Chicago. Initially, they were seeking proper maintenance of their homes.

Her organization, People for Community Recovery (www.peopleforcommunityrecovery.org), is still active today with Cheryl Johnson, Hazel's daughter, as Executive Director. Hazel learned that her community was surrounded by polluting industries and waste sites, and had been built on top of a landfill. She called it a toxic doughnut and became an environmental justice activist before the phrase was invented.

For the rest of her life, she never stopped fighting for the people of Altgeld Gardens and every community around the world whose health is under attack by polluting companies and complicit governments. (See "Environmental Justice Wake-up Call," Aug.-Sept. 1995 *N&L*.) She pointed out that poor people of color were most affected. Last year she fell ill and received the kind of low-quality healthcare the poor in our country so often receive. We need more fighters like Hazel Johnson. The struggle continues!

**Franklin Dmitryev**  
Chicago

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After only a day and a half, there were nearly 1,000 signatories to a coalition letter thanking Gov. Cuomo for his "continuation" of the executive order for further environmental review of hydraulic fracturing (fracking). We are not out of the thicket yet, but things appear to be getting brighter.

**Walter Hang**  
Ithaca, N.Y.

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The flooding in January that killed over 600 in Brazil, while floods in Australia devastated an area the size of France plus Germany, forcefully brought into the new year the message that scientists released at the same time:

2010 was the wettest year on record, and one of the hottest. Even insurance companies are commenting that the recent surge in "natural" disasters—making 2010 also the most disaster-filled year—can only be explained by global warming. We are witnessing effects that will get worse if humanity doesn't get a handle on climate change. The fact that so many people in power only want to deny it and push off action is a sign of a system that feels its coming end in its bones. Let's make sure it's the end of capitalism, not of human civilization.

**Environmental activist**  
Southern California

**OUR CRIMINAL INJUSTICE SYSTEM**

Javan Deloney seeks release from over 20 years in prison. His "confession" was forced with torture. On Jan. 6, Cook County Presiding Judge Paul P. Biebel was to render his decision to assign a special prosecutor for Deloney. After more than an hour and 45 minute delay, Biebel allowed an assistant Cook County States Attorney to make a delaying motion in response to Deloney's petition. Biebel accepted the motion and ruled to reserve his decision until Jan. 20.

As a former torture victim, I am outraged that Biebel delayed this case until Jan. 20, clearly knowing that Jon Burge would be sentenced on that exact same date. (See "Forum: Stop the Culture of Torture," Nov.-Dec. 2010 *N&L*.) As a former torture victim, I remain shocked by the leeway that judges provide the Cook County State's Attorney office, knowing that this office should not be assigned these cases. Mr. Deloney, and all victims tortured under Burge's leadership, deserve hearings on their claims of torture based on evidence from the Special Prosecutor's report released in July 2006. It found that tortures were an "epidemic" at Police Station areas two and three and "systematic" under Burge's command.

**Mark A. Clements, Wrongful Conviction**  
Coordinator, Chicago Alliance against Racism and Political Repression

On Jan. 11, the Illinois State Senate passed a bill to end the death penalty in Illinois. If Governor Quinn signs the bill, it will be law. (It has already been passed by the House.) This represents decades, if not more than 100 years, of work by people from all walks of life who see the death penalty as barbaric. I, for one, cannot imagine that it is OK for the state to take a person in its custody, who is in a completely helpless position before enormous power, and put that person to death. Most people don't know that on the death certificate of an executed person the cause of death is listed as Homicide.

**January**  
Chicago

**MAURITIUS: FREE CHAGOS!**

Late last year Lalit (a left party in Mauritius) held the International Conference on Diego Garcia and Chagos in Mauritius. The UK split the Chagos Islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean from the country of Mauritius in 1965 and the native population was forced out to make way for the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia. The conference recalled street battles won against the Riot Unit, victorious court cases when Chagossian and Lalit women were on trial for illegal demonstrations, and the 2004 Peace Flotilla to Diego Garcia.

Lalit thanked News and Letters and several other groups for their messages to the conference. Strong opposition was voiced to the "Marine Protected Area" declared by the UK. A Wikileaks U.S. cable from May 2009 quoted UK Foreign Office official Colin Roberts saying, "former inhabitants would find it difficult, if not impossible, to pursue their claim for resettlement on the islands if the entire Chagos Archipelago were a marine reserve." Conferees agreed to continue a unified struggle for closing down the U.S. base, dismantling the British colony of the islands, and assuring the right of return for all Chagossians.

**Solidarity activist**  
Illinois

**VOICES FROM BEHIND THE WALLS**



I am presently held in a High Security/closed custody wing, locked down 24/7, with zero movement

for prisoners.

Everything that comes into the pod that is readable is passed from cell to cell.

Your paper has sparked many debates and flat-out arguments about what's good for the workers, what's good for the country, and how the government has pretty much abandoned the worker (the backbone of its revenue) and the people.

Thank you for keeping us informed about issues the mainstream papers skip over, or openly refuse to print. As long as prison industry (slave labor) exists, the worker is in danger of being imprisoned simply for the purposes of production.

**Prisoner**  
Amarillo, Texas

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The struggle is an ongoing process. It never ends. Our education never stops. As we grow and develop and transform ourselves into whatever we are to become, the question that most demands an answer is: Did you learn anything?

I hope to soon contribute to your pages and share a few of the things I've learned in the struggle. It never ends.

**Prisoner**  
Bennettsville, S.C.

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What a publication! We who are in the belly of the beast get equal treatment. Your paper sheds some light on the capitalist thinking of our country. Keep up the good work. The devil is mad. You serve a purpose. Be strong.

**Prisoner**  
Gatesville, TX

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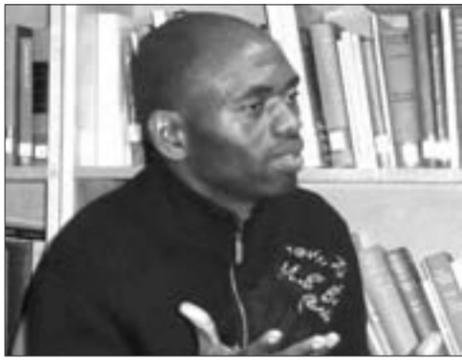
# South African shack dwellers: 'a new social movement'

*Editor's note: S'bu Zikode of Abahlali baseMjondolo of Western Cape spoke recently in Oakland, Cal., on a U.S. tour about this movement within South Africa. Here are excerpts from his talk:*

People are born and live in these shantytowns, at least 2.3 million of us. In 2005 Abahlali baseMjondolo, an organization representing 25,000 people, came together to build a movement. Abahlali is a Zulu word meaning residents; baseMjondolo means living in shacks.

The movement was born out of anger, hunger and frustration. It started spontaneously as a road blockade. Twenty-five people were arrested, then beaten and tortured in the local police station.

After that we realized that a road blockade is a political action. We were not aware we were playing with fire. The objective was to fight for and protect the inter-



Ursula Wisniewski/News & Letters

ests of the shack dwellers. The initial idea was to petition the government. As the movement grew, it became a challenge to the authorities.

We are fighting for land and housing in the city. South Africa prides itself on building "world-class cities," cities without poverty, without the homeless. The campaign to achieve that was similar to Mugabe's campaign in Zimbabwe, where thousands of homes were destroyed a few years ago. South Africa was writing legislation that would give legitimacy to evictions, which we had to challenge.

In some communities as many as 10,000 of the evicted share only five communal tents. They have to wake up at 2:00 AM to queue up to get water. There are only six toilets. There is a lot of disease in shantytowns, a lot of HIV and AIDS, yet all have to queue up to use those six toilets and women are raped waiting for them. In most shantytowns there is no water, no road access, no electricity.

Of the people in shantytowns, 80% are unemployed. The 20% who are working are in the "alternative" economy, selling things on the street, or providing domestic labor in the surrounding middle-class homes.

We began by saying, this is who we are, this is where we are, this is what we want. We created our own space, a democratic space, democratizing the neighborhoods where we work. We run an HIV/AIDS project. We have partnerships with some of the state departments who are able to fund services: more water, more toilets.

## CREATING OUR OWN SPACE

We have victories apart from securing some services and winning in court against the eviction act. We have a space where the shack dwellers, the unorganized, unemployed, uneducated can come together and share our suffering. What a precious space we have created! We protect this space against all who try to take it. We encourage a culture of learning within the movement. We have our own university of Abahlali baseMjondolo to stimulate and create learning through opportunities we create, libraries, debates. We send some shack dwellers into universities to learn and then bring back their learning to the community.

When you join our movement you have responsibilities from the very first day. We ask everyone to pay membership dues. Whatever issue brings you into the movement—unemployment, housing, poverty—we ask that you find 50 others in your community who would want to work with you on that.

The work we promote is at the community level. When there are 50 people in a community wanting to work with us, we send someone to explain who we are and what is the responsibility that each of us has. When we launch a new branch, we stress that we are not going to struggle for you, but we will struggle with you.

## 'LIVING POLITICS' OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

People learn that you don't act in isolation, that a community is people you can rely on, who will hear you when you are in trouble. So the movement doesn't depend on leaders in the office, but the community that takes on a commitment and a responsibility.

This concept of a social movement is new. It used to be that people thought that joining one of the existing parties was the only form of political participation. Abahlali baseMjondolo is unique in that we are not of any party. Some politicians feel threatened by this force. We came up with what we call "living politics," which is politics that ordinary people can understand. If I have no water and no electricity, it is not for any other reason but for my life that I need water and electricity.

In distinction, party politics focuses on electoral politics, affiliating with a political party as a license to enter politics. Whatever party you belong to does not provide you a job, a house—you are still here, living in this shantytown. A lot still needs to be done to deal with the trauma of apartheid, like the inferiority complex and the lack of confidence. The political leadership has failed to deal with it. But it is all of our responsibility to create a new society, from the family level, to neighborhood, to provincial and national level before we can talk about a global change of mindset.

## UNFINISHED STORY OF A BETTER WORLD

We pay a price for organizing. Some people who say their job is to think for us, to make decisions for us, think that it is a bad thing what we are doing. They attack our form of democracy, attack our people.

For example, we have evidence that an attack on us which took place in December 2009 was planned very high up in the government. Some people were killed, many were evicted, their homes burned or looted.

We were forced into exile, we had to become refugees in our own country, in our own city. In the post-apartheid "democracy" we find ourselves without homes, without jobs, without anything. Our movement called for an independent inquiry into the attack, but

the government had something to hide.

The African National Congress (ANC) continues to send people to intimidate us. We may need to prepare for even worse to come in our struggle for social justice. Organizing is hard, but what keeps us going is trying to help people, even if we don't have any money and rely only on our strength and our unity.

We have been successful in getting together thousands of people, and we find that when we are together we are very powerful, we can shape our country. When we are together we can make the law work for us, make our own laws. Organizing does impact policies.

We are facing the threat of arrest and even death. When South Africa became democratic, we had all hoped that things would be much better. But the work of Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and so many others has been undermined. The work that we do is to continue that unfinished story, to try to bring a better world where everyone is equal.

## 'No foreclosures! I'm not leaving my house!'

*On Jan. 13 Silvia Baca appeared in Housing Court and found that the loan company had sold her house on Nov. 4—for one-fourth what she and her husband had paid. Below is the history of her ongoing struggle against eviction.*

**Chicago**—My husband and I bought a house in 2006. A year later, we wanted to refinance. Ruth, working with TCF Bank, told my cousin not to send the next payment because the closing would be Oct. 8. But the closing didn't happen.

Our mortgage was transferred from Fremont Mortgage to Litton Loan Servicing without notice to me. My papers say they are supposed to tell you two months before a transfer. Litton said they needed me to send the payments. I said, How can I send the payments to Litton when I sent them to Fremont already? So I was behind in my mortgage. All they offered me was a repayment plan—with a lot of interest.

I didn't know my interest would change every year. It kept increasing. The papers said the interest could get increased every six months, but it started to increase every three months.

They tried a lot of things to get me out of my house. We tried four times to get a modification. First they said we sent the papers and money late, but I had sent papers by mail and by fax. They did not return my money until eight months later.

The second time, they told me they were going to do it internally. A month later, they sent me a letter that my husband didn't qualify for modification. He was still working. I said, Why is he not eligible for a modification when he was eligible to buy the house?

My husband lost his job when his company closed. We spent all his unemployment to pay for the house. One day I told him I'm not going to send any more payments because for two years I haven't been able to buy my kids clothes, shoes, school supplies.

After he was unemployed, we called Litton and they denied the modification again and returned the checks. I told the judge that they didn't explain why. At a hearing he asked the lawyer why they sent the checks back. The lawyer said, "I don't know." The judge told him to go back to Litton and tell them they need to start doing the modification.

Litton called me and said, We're going to do a modification by Obama's program. With the last payment I sent, I called to let them know. They said we'd get the modification, and to call them in ten days. When I did, they sent me straight to a message that said your modification is denied. The judge said he could do nothing, we had to move in 30 days.

**As we left the courtroom, I found some people from the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign. They asked us, Do you want to keep your house? We said, if we can fight for our house we will fight. The day when those people told me I could fight for my house was the first time I felt like I was not alone. When I was working with those banks, I felt they were very powerful and I had nothing in my hands to fight with.**

I found my house had been sold to HSBC in 2008. What are they doing to us? I kept working with people in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and my house was already sold!

My kids say they want to fight to keep our house. They don't want to move from the neighborhood and lose their friends.

Sometimes my daughter comes with me to get more families involved in this fight. She made a big banner with big letters to say "STOP FORECLOSURES. I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE MY HOUSE." She arranged with the principal to let us speak with the kids at the school, to invite them to join us in canvassing and attend meetings.

If I lose my house, I want to fight for others who are in the same situation. The money we pay in taxes, the government gives to these banks. I think we all have a right to have a good place to live, especially when there are kids there.

—Silvia Baca

## BLACK/REVIEW

continued from p. 1

Caribbean after 1808 "had a profound impact on slavery in the United States—with especially drastic results for slaves in the upper South, where Tubman and her family lived.

"Suddenly, enslaved African-American women, already expected to perform harsh and exacting physical labor, became the sole legal source of slave labor." In other words, enslaved African-American women were forced to produce both material commodities for the market as well as human laborers who would produce more commodities for the market.

This dual exploitation of African-American women made Maryland slaveholders extremely wealthy. They sold the children of African-American women to Southern cotton plantation owners at a high price. Harriet Tubman lost two sisters in this diabolical exploitation.

## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

According to Clinton, Harriet Tubman heard a rumor in 1849 that her master was planning to "sell her down the river" and had to take action. The white woman who aided her in escaping gave her a slip of paper to deliver to the home of another white woman, who ordered her brusquely to take a broom and sweep the yard. This was to make her appear as a servant, at the very moment she had entered into the Underground Railroad. When the woman's husband came home, he loaded Tubman into his wagon and transported her to another town where she was directed to another station.

Harriet Tubman later became the most prominent "abductor" on the Underground Railroad. She went deep into the South to bring slaves out. Only very few had the courage and the skill to engage in this dangerous activity. Conductors only conveyed slaves from one specific depot to the next depot. The abductor went into the very center of slavery and organized willing slaves into an expedition. "She spread the word along the slave grapevine, informing members of plantation communities about the time and place for her rendezvous with candidates for escape. She might provide false information at first to flush out any betrayers. Once she found local prospects to her satisfaction, Tubman made her final appeal....'She directed them by her songs, as to whether they might show themselves or continue to lie low....No one would notice what was sung by the old colored woman as she trudged along the road.'"

## BLACK WOMEN'S GENIUS

She must have led hundreds of African Americans to freedom. She never learned to read or write, which, as Raya Dunayevskaya points out, might have led some to underestimate her intelligence. In 1975, Dunayevskaya said, "Sojourner Truth and sometimes also Harriet Tubman are dutifully mentioned, condescendingly admitting their bravery—and of course their suffering as slaves—but never as Reason which drove the educated to face reality: that the Black women were the orators, generals, and, yes, thinkers, whereas they, the middle-class intellectuals, were but subordinates." ("Today's Women Theorists" reprinted in *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*—See p. 7 to order.) As Clinton documents, Tubman was consulted by John Brown about the lay of the land at Harpers Ferry, set the date for his attack, and became a scout for the Union Army during the Civil War.

Once the war broke out, she knew it had to be about freeing the slaves and not saving the Union. She said at the end of 1861 to abolitionist Lydia Maria Child: "I'm a poor Negro; but this Negro can tell Mister Lincoln how to save the money and the young men. He can do it by setting the Negroes free." This was Marx's criticism of Lincoln at the time, that he was not winning the Civil War because he did not make emancipation of the slaves the main issue of the War.

# EDITORIAL Back to the nuclear brink

The continuing threat of war on the Korean Peninsula, the nature of debate over the just-ratified New START nuclear arms reduction treaty, and the "wisdom" Homeland Security has shared with us on surviving a nuclear attack, all underscore the urgency of the Marxist-Humanist perspective: **the opposite of war is not peace, but revolution.**

North Korea last Nov. 23 returned the question of war and nuclear annihilation to world attention by raining deadly artillery shells down on South Korean-controlled Yeonpyeong Island, killing two civilians and two South Korean marines. It sank a South Korean naval ship in March, killing 46 sailors, leading South Korea to end most trade and aid; then it raised the nuclear threat level in October by revealing a massive plant for separating out bomb-grade uranium-235.

The North Korean regime has survived since World War II, buttressed by the mythology built around founder Kim Il-sung as the great liberator of Korea from Japan's colonial rule. Its "military first" (*sunghon*) policy funneling resources to military forces has made it a nuclear power at the expense of starving over two million North Koreans in the last two decades. Last year's currency revaluation has revived fears of a return to the worst days of famine.

## MARKERS FOR WORLD WAR III

Escalation of international tensions, which always strengthens military dominance over North Korean society, also benefits succession to office of Kim Jong-il's 20-something son Kim Jong-un. As the Korean Peninsula remains the last partitioned country created by Cold War rivalries after World War II, North Korean saber-rattling, pinned between China and the U.S. fleet, renews the threat of World War III as each nuclear-armed power—North Korea, the U.S. and China—reacts in ways that raise the risk of war.

The Obama administration, vowing to stand "shoulder-to-shoulder" with South Korea, hastily ordered an aircraft carrier task force to the Yellow Sea for joint naval exercises with South Korea. On Dec. 3, the U.S. and Japan began an eight-day joint military exercise of 44,000 troops near the Peninsula. If there were a war, the ten million citizens of Seoul, a stone's throw from the border, would be among the first casualties.

President Obama's plans to defuse the situation seem to begin and end with leaning on China to rein in North Korea. China, which has an interest in maintaining easy access to North Korea's mineral wealth, pointedly did not condemn its artillery attack, but did condemn the U.S.-South Korea joint naval exercises.

China's suggestion, accepted by North Korea, to restart six-party talks—between North and South Korea, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia—was first rejected by the U.S. and Japan. Now the U.S. is promoting those talks but South Korea is holding back.

## START TREATY HELD HOSTAGE

Despite this months-long reminder of nuclear brinksmanship, Republican Senators made the New START arms reduction treaty with Russia unusually partisan by filibustering it along with all other Obama initiatives. Using old Cold War rhetoric they claimed treaty provisions, which in general cut the maximum missiles in active service by one-third to 1550 per side, fettered only the U.S. This placed Republicans to the right of their hero Ronald Reagan, who favored a zero nuclear world. They *did* follow Reagan's hypocrisy, as he had simultaneously promoted nuclear escalation with his "Star Wars" anti-missile defense systems.

Obama caught that legacy of Reagan: as his administration "defended" the New START treaty he assured Senators that it would not interfere in expanding anti-missile emplacements across Eastern Europe facing Russia. By promising billions for modernizing nuclear facilities, Obama seduced defectors from the Republican side, including two right-wing Tennessee Senators. Even so, the treaty was ratified 71-26 on Dec. 22, by a narrow margin over the two-thirds vote required.

## 1950s 'DUCK AND COVER' REDUX

The Homeland Security Department's revised report on surviving a nuclear attack, issued on Dec. 16, that urged victims to get behind a brick wall and "shelter in place," was met with universal derision. "Shelter in place" was mocked as a remake of "duck and cover," the watchword of 1950s nuclear "preparedness." "Duck and cover" addressed the real and near-universal fears of a nuclear holocaust. It did not allay those fears, as surveys at the time confirmed, but it attempted to make the idea of threatening nuclear war acceptable.

"Shelter in place" addressed those old fears and the

fears of terrorism that have been stoked for political gain since before Sept. 11, 2001. The Homeland Security report assumed a nuclear device, smaller than the bomb that devastated Hiroshima, detonated by terrorists. This report is part of legitimizing the endless war on faceless terrorists—as against the real terror threat of anti-abortion and Tea Party zealots.



One scheme to "shelter in place." You didn't actually want to sleep on that mattress or sit in your lounge chair, did you? Should you start rearranging your furniture now, or wait for the bomb to be thrown?

The only real future that state-capitalism in all its forms has in store for humanity is endless wars and immiseration. Neither Obama's pragmatism nor that of China's Communist Party leadership presents a real alternative to that.

To fully oppose the war moves by all parties to this conflict means to confront exploitative capitalism and its barbaric wars across the globe, and to base that opposition on a total concept of what we are *for*: social revolution. War will continue to be a present reality until the

achievement of a revolutionary uprooting of the old and the creation of a new human society.

## 'Waiting for Superman'

**New York City**—The controversial film "Waiting For Superman" started with the premise that U.S. public schools are broken. It blamed the teachers' unions and tenure, and demonized the President of the American Federation of Teachers Randi Weingarten. The film ignored the facts. It held up Finland as a model but failed to mention that Finland's public schools are much better funded and that Finland's teachers belong to a very strong union and have tenure.

Michelle Rhee, ex-Chancellor of Washington, D.C., Public Schools, was depicted as a superwoman with a broom as she fired teachers and supervisors. Are we to go back to when there was no due process?

It held up charter schools as the panacea and included Geoffrey Canada as a sort of superman. But his Harlem charter school receives lots of money from private sources and is better funded than other Harlem public schools. The facts about charters in general do not jibe with the film's admiration of them. The Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University found that 83% of charters did no better than their public counterparts. The new NY statewide achievement tests now show similar results.

The most striking part of the film was how cruel the lottery selection was to children and their parents who are led to believe that winning would get them out of the problems of the inner city. They were filmed with high hopes going into a large auditorium. The names of a small minority of winners were called out while the rest went home dejected, often in tears. The message was that we needed more charters, i.e., privatize the public schools.

Yes, our public schools are broken but not because of our teachers and their unions. They are broken by a society that accepts high unemployment, an increased income gap between the ultra rich and the rest of us, wars, the highest prison population in the world and entrenched racism. They are broken by a political system that bailed out the banks which caused the present economic crisis while it puts this crisis on the backs of workers by laying them off and cutting funds for our public schools and social services.

—Tom Siracuse

Retired public school teacher

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# QUEERNOTES

by Elise

The Bisexual Queer Alliance of Chicago (BQAC) was formed in autumn 2010, to raise visibility of the Bisexual community there—where we're virtually unknown—to erase Bi-phobia and to work towards Bi civil rights. BQAC applauds the Center on Halsted, a Chicago LGBT resource center, for holding a space for us for years and now we've finally taken them up on it. BQAC fundraised for Howard Brown Health Center—serving the special needs of the LGBT community and, until very recently, in danger of closing—and the Broadway Youth Center. BQAC meets the first Saturday of each month. It participates in actions, including Chicago's Transgender Day of Remembrance vigil and several rallies for Civil Unions in Illinois, which passed and will soon be signed into law.

\* \* \*

Your life may be in danger in Cameroon if you're merely perceived to be Transgender, Bisexual, Lesbian or Gay, according to l'Association pour la défense des droits des homosexuels and other human rights groups. Beatings, arrests, prison time without charge, outings by the media, prison officials ignoring abuses by inmates, unemployment, no healthcare and shunning by friends and family—doubly harmful to women in that culture where they're expected to be dependent on family throughout their lives—are the result of media-coined and promoted "homocracy": the perception that GLBT people are power-hungry, corrupt, rich, and intent on controlling the country.

\* \* \*

Toting the sign, "Keep the Promise: Fight Global AIDS," Boston-area college students protested President Obama as he headlined a get-out-the-vote rally for Governor Deval Patrick, last autumn. Obama has only delivered 10% of a campaign-promised \$50 billion to fight AIDS worldwide. Protesters also rallied for a federal gender-identity-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and marriage equality.

\* \* \*

New Jersey Governor Christie signed the toughest statewide antibullying bill in the nation. It requires all public school teachers, staff and administrators to be trained on what to do when harassment occurs and to report every incident. Those who do not act on such incidents—inside or outside of school—and school employees and students who bully students, will be disciplined. This is especially good news for NJ middle school students as, nationally, middle school GLBT students experience the most bullying and intolerance.

\* \* \*

The 2010 International Transgender Day of Remembrance (ITDOR) was marked in the Philippines by The Society of Transsexual Women of the Philippines with a film, candle lighting and readings of the stories of those who died. In Israel people marched, and a Hate Crime Poster was launched in Northern Ireland as part of their annual Outburst Queer Arts Festival. The Ukraine's ITDOR viewing of "Boys Don't Cry" was tear gassed by masked men. The victims are pursuing charges of hate crime rather than the official charge of hooliganism.

\* \* \*

Canadian prisoners' rights advocacy group Prisoners' Legal Services is fighting the ban on government funding of sex reassignment surgery for inmates. The Public Safety Minister ordered the ban in November. The ban flies in the face of both the Canadian Human Rights Commission and federal court rulings.

# EDITORIAL Bloody ideas

continued from p. 1

loss of support the militia movement of the 1990s suffered following Timothy McVeigh's 1995 bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Already right-wing talk show hosts are calling for the head of Sheriff Dupnik, who said: "The anger, the hatred, the bigotry that goes on in this country is getting to be outrageous. And unfortunately, Arizona I think, has become the capital. We have become the mecca for prejudice and bigotry."

The sheriff is correct. The Right has no other answer to the ever-deepening crisis of capitalism than an ever-deepening inhumanity. This was seen in Arizona's anti-immigrant legislation, which Rep. Giffords opposed. The rhetoric of hatred, racism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia and so forth doesn't come from nowhere. It has a basis in the worsening material conditions of the economy, and the "solution" it offers is a wrong turn through irrationality and scapegoating straight into American fascism.

It is brutally ironic that a few days before the massacre in Tucson, the new Congress—by demand of the Tea Party—had indulged in a farcical reading of the U.S. Constitution which removed all references to slavery. They wanted a history wiped clean of blood and guilt. That lie didn't last them or us very long.

# European revolts confront crises

continued from p. 1

involving millions in occupations and demonstrations against the tripling of university fees to \$15,000 per year. The measure passed, but the new Tory-Liberal Democratic coalition government may have a short life because 21 out of 57 LibDem MPs broke ranks and voted no. They couldn't abide by the total hypocrisy of their party, which had appealed to the youth in the election by promising to abolish university fees. "We're all here," one student said, "because we're passionate about this. We feel betrayed." Many students were bloodied by police truncheons as they struggled to confront lawmakers directly in Parliament Square.

## WORKERS PAY PRICE FOR BANKS THAT FAIL

The exorbitant fees will now exclude most workers' children from a university education. Those who persist will be saddled with lifelong debts while the government deepens its austerity program, which it says is necessary after rescuing private banks from their debts. Student demonstrators held up poster-sized covers of their textbooks to emphasize that education is not a business proposition. They included books of Marxist and other critical thinkers, looking for an alternative to capitalism. Though these demonstrations shook up British politics, even giving the British royals Prince Charles and Camilla a scare by tarnishing their Rolls Royce, an alternative is not to be found in the opposition Labour Party. Labour leader Ed Miliband was mostly nowhere to be found, but when he did say he opposed the bill, what he put forward was not an alternative course but rather the political "lesson" not to make "a promise that I am not sure I can keep."

Similarly in France, President Nicolas Sarkozy saw his popularity plummet to an all-time low of 29% after demonstrations and strikes enlisted millions of workers and students in the weeks that led up to passing, on Nov. 10, a key part of his austerity agenda—raising the minimum retirement age from 60 to 62 and the age for a full pension from 65 to 67 (see "French workers vs. state and union leaders," *N&L*, Nov.-Dec. 2010).

France's political climate has changed since Sarkozy came to power after demonizing French youth from North Africa as "scum" when they revolted in 2005 against police abuse and lack of economic opportunity. But, again, the revolt on the ground is searching for a way out of the logic of capitalist rule in its latest form of finance capital, which seems so far to be able to keep all the players in the political arena in tow.

## RATE OF PROFIT AND CAPITAL'S CLASS WAR

The financial crises and revolts in Ireland and the rest of Europe are the latest fallout from the September 2008 meltdown of capitalism's global system of finance, after which the world's political leaders worked together with a no-holds-barred infusion of cash from state treasuries to bail out the banks in the name of evading a total collapse of the financial system and another Great Depression. In this moment of what Marx once dubbed "capitalist communism," the financial sector's tremendous losses, which had been tallied as years of fictitious profits, were transferred to workers, who continue to experience depression-level unemployment and are now the designated owners of the bloated national debts. This outrageous reversal of fortune and totally inverted justice keeps spurring new revolts and a search for an alternative to capitalism's business and politics as usual.

**The disappearance of fictitious profits revealed a much lower rate of profit being generated in the real economy, where now finance capital, which is again making record profits on paper, is conducting a class war to boost profits. During the speculative bubble, consumers in Europe and especially the U.S. were hailed as the heroes of the world economy, but they are now considered profligate. Once the state was used to save the finance sector, there was no place for the further Keynesian state intervention to boost demand because, for capitalists, workers demand too much and not enough demand is directed to capital goods for capital to accumulate.**

Like the economic integration of Europe under the EU, it has been an article of faith that globalization, or globally integrated production, will stave off a drift into war in an economic crisis. Yet while finance capitalists practice solidarity in saving their status as lords of

the universe and in waging class war, the now evident collapse in the rate of accumulation has also brought new tensions over trade between competing centers of finance capital like the U.S. and China. In the trade arena, German and Chinese mercantilism are called "acts of war," as are U.S. efforts to devalue the dollar by flooding the world with its currency.

**The trade war between centers of finance capital is background to competition over real weapons. Skirmishes, as on the Korean peninsula, can set off a nuclear war (see Editorial, p. 9).**

China and Japan's clash over a Chinese fishing boat resulted in China's rulers withholding rare earth elements crucial to Japan's high-tech car components. This scared the Pentagon because those elements are critical to smart weapons, even as worries mount about a new Chinese missile that can take out U.S. aircraft carriers. China's neighbors, who were asserting their independence from the U.S., suddenly lined up behind U.S. imperialism and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's gunboat diplomacy in the area.

The very day U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates showed up in China in January to meet Chinese president Hu Jintao to try to promote friendlier relations with China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), the PLA sent its own message by testing successfully its first stealth fighter jet, purportedly unbeknownst to Hu and the civilian leaders.

## UNEMPLOYMENT: CAPITAL'S ACHILLES HEEL

As seen in the Republican victory in the U.S. House of Representatives, the outrage over bailouts and economic hardship can also turn to national chauvinism and racism, attacking Muslims and blaming economic problems on immigrants and unionized workers. The result is that President Obama has acclimated to what he once denounced: "the new normal" of the deepest long-term unemployment since the Great Depression. Obama joined the drive to make workers pay for the exploding debt from the cost of wars and tax cuts for the wealthy, by entertaining deficit reduction plans that cut Social Security and Medicare as well as going after the pay and benefits of workers in the public sector.

**That is why, for Marx, the significance of political upheavals is only as they reflect the struggle for self-determination in everyday life, where alienated labor is the source of all value and surplus value that manifests itself as profit for the capitalist.**

As we put it in our Sept.-Oct. 2010 Editorial, "Capital on Strike": "The totality of the present crisis calls for a return to Marx's philosophy of liberation. Marx predicted today's total contradictions of growing permanent unemployment and a falling rate of profit engulfing capitalism. However, what was essential to him was not proving those economic outcomes but rather working out its opposite in the struggle of laborers, employed and unemployed, against being alienated from their own labor and social lives in this inhuman system."

## Review: David Harvey on capitalism's crisis

*The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capital* by David Harvey (Oxford University Press, 2010).

The British geographer and social critic David Harvey, author of the influential *The Limits to Capital* (1982), has undertaken an admirable and timely task: a serious analysis of the ongoing economic crisis of world capitalism that began in 2008. The product of Harvey's effort, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*, is a sophisticated treatise on aspects of Marx's criticism of capitalism aimed at a general audience.

I say "aspects" because Harvey states quite plainly in the book's first sentence that his concern is "capital flow." This means that despite the book's title, he does not directly treat the true enigma of capital, which Marx called the "fetishism of the commodity and its secret." Harvey's focus is instead on the problem of surplus capital—the enormous challenge the capitalist class faces in finding profitable fields of investment for its accumulated capital.

Harvey takes up in depth a number of the crucial elements of today's global capitalist economy, including the relationship between the state and capital, which he calls the "state-finance nexus," the environmental impact of the reproduction of capital, and—importantly for Harvey's discipline of geography (in his words, the "neglected orphan of social theory")—the process of capital's construction, destruction and reconstruction of urban spaces such as cities and slums.

In addition to these economic, or material aspects, of life under capitalism, Harvey has an interesting discussion in his chapter "Capital Evolves" of its important non-material, or subjective aspects, which

## Gaza youth shout out



Editor's note: This Manifesto, posted by Gaza youth on Facebook, spoke for so many that it spread all over the world and was translated into dozens of languages. For the full statement go to: [http://www.facebook.com/notes.php?id=118914244840679&notes\\_tab=app\\_2347471856](http://www.facebook.com/notes.php?id=118914244840679&notes_tab=app_2347471856).

"Fuck Hamas. Fuck Israel. Fuck Fatah. Fuck UN... Fuck USA!"

"We, the youth in Gaza, are so fed up with Israel, Hamas, the occupation, the violations of human rights.... We want to scream and break this wall of silence, injustice and indifference..."

"We are sick of being caught in this political struggle; sick of coal-dark nights with airplanes circling above our homes; sick of innocent farmers getting shot in the buffer zone because they are taking care of their lands; sick of bearded guys walking around with their guns abusing their power, beating up or incarcerating young people demonstrating for what they believe in; sick of the wall of shame that separates us from the rest of our country and keeps us imprisoned in a stamp-sized piece of land; sick of being portrayed as terrorists, home-made fanatics with explosives in our pockets and evil in our eyes; sick of the indifference we meet from the international community, the so-called experts in expressing concerns and drafting resolutions but cowards in enforcing anything they agree on; we are sick and tired of living a shitty life, being kept in jail by Israel, beaten up by Hamas and completely ignored by the rest of the world.

"There is a revolution growing inside of us, an immense dissatisfaction and frustration that will destroy us unless we find a way of canalizing this energy into something that can challenge the status quo and give us some kind of hope.

"...During the war we got the unmistakable feeling that Israel wanted to erase us from the face of the Earth. During the last years, Hamas has been doing all they can to control our thoughts, behavior and aspirations. Here in Gaza we are scared of being incarcerated, interrogated, hit, tortured, bombed, killed..."

"...WE SAY STOP! This is not the future we want! We want to be free. We want to be able to live a normal life. We want peace. Is that too much to ask?"

he calls "activity spheres." He identifies seven separate spheres, including "the reproduction of daily life and the species" and "mental conceptions of the world" (he places this latter phrase in quotes). This is an important discussion that seeks to take up human existence in a non-deterministic manner, but

because Harvey does not consider Marx a philosopher, he deals with these philosophical concepts within the limiting boundaries of sociology.

Harvey expresses other ambivalences toward Marx, including skepticism toward Marx's theory of the falling rate of profit, and incredibly, fails to include Marx's *Capital* in his "Sources and Further Reading" list at the end of the book. Furthermore, because Harvey is so intensely focused on the problem of surplus capital, he neglects what Marx considered to be the far more important "surplus" problem of capitalism, that of "surplus population"—the masses of people totally unnecessary for the purpose of the accumulation of capital.

Because Harvey is focused on "capital flow" (the circulation of capital), this problem of surplus population, resulting from Marx's "General Law of Capitalist Accumulation" (accumulation of wealth at one pole and unemployment at the other), is ignored almost completely. The attention on circulation of capital, which, following Marx, Harvey compares to the circulation of the blood through the body, comes at the expense of attention to the "cell-form" of capital, the commodity, which, as mentioned above, is capital in its ultimate enigmatic form.

Despite these reservations, Harvey's book is to be welcomed as the initiation of a serious Marxist discussion of an economic crisis to which no end is yet in sight.

—Kevin Michaels

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# WORLD VIEW

## Neo-fascists in Israel

by Gerry Emmett

Dutch Rightist Geert Wilders, who has also visited New York to attack the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque," visited the West Bank settlements last month to declare that Palestinians should leave, to live in Jordan. "There already is a Palestinian state, and that state is Jordan," he lied. Wilders, who sometimes tries to present a reasonable facade, went so far as to say there: "Without Judea and Samaria, Israel cannot protect Jerusalem. The future of the world depends on Jerusalem. If Jerusalem falls, Athens and Rome—and Paris, London and Washington—will be next."

Wilders is attempting to create a reactionary alliance that would include both the European far Right and the American Tea Party Right. The warped history and fantasy apocalypse he expressed on the West Bank catch the exact tones of those movements.

Until the 1980s, official U.S. government policy held Israel's West Bank settlements to be illegal. This was only reversed by the world outlaw, Reagan, at the time of the Begin government's invasion of Lebanon.

**The alliance forged with world reaction at that moment has meant one disaster after another for Israel, for Palestinians, and for Lebanon.**

At the same time, representatives of four European neo-fascist parties visiting Israel published a so-called "Jerusalem Declaration" supporting Israel's right to self-defense against what they term "Islamic terror"—which in their countries they interpret as any presence of Muslims. Filip Dewinter of Belgium's Vlaams Belang, Heinz-Christian Strache of the Freedom Party of Austria, Kent Ekeroth of the Sweden Democrats, and René Stadtkewitz of the German Die Freiheit all represent the politics of anti-Muslim bigotry that found a home in Europe since Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic used it so brutally in his own interests.

According to Dewinter, "The Arab-Israeli conflict illustrates the struggle between Western culture and radical Islam."

**This latest fascist rewriting of history denies the genuine freedom struggles of the Palestinian people, which have been non-violent and creative, particularly on the West Bank, and have found support among Israeli progressives.**

This was seen in the outpouring of support following the death of Bil'in resident Jawaher Abu Rahma after she was tear-gassed by the Israeli Defense Forces near protests of the "security" wall on Dec. 31.

It was also seen in the subsequent words of her mother, Sulhia Abu Rahma, "We want to live and not to die. We want to live alongside Israel, but in dignity."

**A number of these "freedom-loving" European parties trace their roots to Hitler's Third Reich and post-World War neo-Nazi movements.**

Few things could have been more shocking than the coming together of the West Bank settlers, and elements of the Israeli government, with the neo-fascist European Right. It will surely give rise to much soul-searching among thoughtful people in Israel. Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* correctly pointed out that these European Rightists were "trading in their Jewish demon-enemy for the Muslim criminal-immigrant model" and were visiting Israel to gain "Jewish absolution that will bring them closer to political power."

Apparently, the West Bank settlers, Members of the Knesset and others who participated in these rallies have searched their souls and found nothing there at all, certainly no memory of actual Jewish history, or of the Shoah. Instead they chose to stand with the racist European heirs of Mussolini, Mosley and Hitler.

This sickening alliance is being recreated elsewhere. In Toronto, for example, the thugs of the English Defence League were invited to a rally at the Toronto Zionist Center by the Kahanist Jewish Defense League. This has been rightly criticized by the Canadian Jewish Congress, among other groups.

## Haiti one year after



One of the many tent cities that still remain in Haiti one year after the devastating earthquake.

Oxfam, Amnesty International, the Red Cross and the UN issued sobering reports on the first anniversary of the most devastating earthquake in modern Haitian history. Only an estimated 5% of the debris which covers much of Port-au-Prince has been removed. Beyond nearly a quarter of a million people who died, several thousand more have recently fallen victim to cholera.

More than a million people still live in tents in makeshift camps. A fraudulent first round election for president was held, with a number of groups trying to ram the results down the throats of the masses. In the words of one critique, "Port-au-Prince still lies buried under the rubble of competing NGOs (non-governmental organizations)."

How could it be otherwise? It isn't a question of good NGOs vs. bad NGOs, or of donors insisting on control, as many do. The central question has always been: *Will recovery, reconstruction and rebuilding of lives be in the hands of the Haitian people themselves, or will it be under the thumb of Haitian elites and their outside collaborators and co-conspirators?*

These powers are determined that Haitians will never decide their own future. They block the return of Aristide. They attach strings to the aid delivered to "fit" the Haitian masses into the gear-boxes and mechanisms of capitalism. As we wrote immediately after the earthquake: "continued 'aid' to Haiti, done in an external manner that denies self-determination for Haitians, will only perpetuate Haiti's man-made tragedies." One year on, the man-made tragedies continue.

—Eugene Walker

## Sudan at the crossroads of self-determination

The final vote for southern Sudan's independence from the north will be overwhelming. The days of referendum have been days of tears and memories along with happiness. Among the diaspora, people in line to vote echoed the words of one woman who said, "I'm casting my vote for the men and women who fought in the trenches of southern Sudan to bring us freedom today."

We are witnessing the birth of a new nation born of unimaginable suffering. In 50 years of intermittent civil war over 2,500,000 people have died, the vast majority civilians. It was war that became alternately tribal,

## Tunisia: a revolution?

Protests have exploded in Tunisia and Algeria. On Dec. 17, in the city of Sidi Bouzid in central Tunisia, 26-year-old street vendor Mohammad Bouazizi doused himself in gasoline and burned himself to death in a despairing protest at the confiscation of his unlicensed fruit and vegetable cart.

Then on Dec. 22 another young man, Hussein Nagi Felhi, also killed himself in protest via electrocution. As he climbed the high voltage power line he shouted, "No for misery, no for unemployment!"

### MASSES TAKE TO THE STREETS!

Within days of these horrible incidents, protests were spreading throughout Tunisia. Frustration with soaring youth unemployment, chronic political repression, and anger at government corruption has welled up from the interior to the capital, Tunis, and shows little sign of stopping. The government tried to enforce a media blackout, and the demonstrations and strikes received little coverage outside. But in return, sympathetic international hackers have taken down Tunisian government websites.

Masses took to the streets demanding the end of ruler Ben Ali's government. They are supported by the country's labor unions. In the face of peaceful protests, the government has wavered between offering reforms and firing on the people, killing dozens so far. Tunisia is an ally of the U.S., but diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks reveal that the U.S. considers it "unfree," with a "mafia"-like ruling family.

Meanwhile, unrest spilled over to neighboring Algeria, where clashes with police over food and housing left dozens injured and at least three people dead.

### THERE'S NO TURNING BACK

After the regime decided to fire on the crowds, there was no turning back. On Jan. 14 Ben Ali left the country for whatever exile he can buy, and Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi took power in his wake, but was replaced the next day. The situation remained uncertain. One opposition figure, Najib Chebbi, said "This is a crucial moment. It must lead to profound reforms, to reform the law and let the people choose."

But the overthrow of aging autocrat Ben Ali could have consequences far beyond the Maghreb. Across the region, it is certain that many would agree with the Lebanese student who said, "We are not used to seeing something like this in this part of the world. It is bigger than a dream in a region where people keep saying 'what can we do.' Young people across the Arab world should go to the streets and do the same. It is time that we claim our rights."

Further, the labor movement and student protests show a profound international affinity to the experiences of European workers and youth resisting capitalism's austerity plans. Rising food prices and housing shortages around the world should place the Tunisian struggle in the center of global attention.

## NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

# Who We Are And What We Stand For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

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