

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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50¢

## Temps face life without benefits



by B. Ann Lastelle

The new temp on the line that night was a thin Black man, and he was angry. He had waited in the temporary help agency's office for four nights for work. Then he had to pay, in order to work this minimum-wage job, \$1.25 for plastic safety glasses and \$1.25 for strap-on steel toes. The van driver who brought him to the plant charged \$3. He decided by the end of the shift that he wanted to come back, but he was returned only once more.

That man belongs to what in *Capital* Karl Marx called the industrial reserve army of labor, a sector of which is characterized by "extremely irregular employment. Hence it offers capital an inexhaustible reservoir of disposable labor-power. Its conditions of life sink below the average normal level of the working class... It is characterized by a maximum of working time and a minimum of wages."

Employment in temporary help agencies is expanding rapidly; it rose by over 75% between 1987 and 1994, from 629,000 workers to 1.1 million. Temps are disproportionately young, women and Third World. Blacks make up 22% of the temporary help work force, twice their share of traditional jobs. Temps are concentrated in lower paying clerical and industrial labor positions. Wages are stagnant, and few benefits are provided.

Marx placed the blame for these workers' plight directly on capitalism: "It is capitalist production itself that constantly produces...a relatively redundant working population...whether this takes the more striking form of the extrusion of workers already employed, or the less evident, but not less real, form of greater difficulty in absorbing the additional working population through its customary outlets."

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## Black World

### Nigeria—'things fall apart'...again



by Lou Turner

There seems to be no end to the mounting contradictions that feed the chaos called "Nigeria." Things fall apart...and fall apart some more. In the tangle of its political wreckage there is, strangely, a pattern that, simple or not, gives us some indication of where this largest Black nation in the world is headed.

On June 8, Nigeria's military dictator, Gen. Sani Abacha, died under circumstances most mysterious. Four years of violent repression of every sector of Nigerian society, even in his own northern Hausa stronghold; four years of fending off international sanctions; four years of being an international pariah that the West and Africa none the less couldn't kick the (petroleum) habit of doing business with; and almost a year of grooming himself, as so many of Nigeria's military dictators have in the past, as a "respectable civilian candidate" for the presidency — after all this, Sani Abacha drops dead.

After liquidating his political opponents by means both brutal and subtle, the liquidator is liquidated. (It is rumored that he was poisoned while in the company of three women. However, everyone from his wife, whose son and ex-husband had been killed by Abacha, to Abacha's own northern Kano-Kaduna military mafia, who had grown alarmed at the growing revolt among the Yorubas and Ibos brought on by what Wole Soyinka called Abacha's "machinery of terror," to his enemies in the military, who had grown anxious that his paranoia over coup plots had made them his next targets—all were on board Nigeria's Orient Express when Sani Abacha suffered "a sudden heart attack.")

One month later, on July 7, Moshood Abiola, the country's most prominent politician suffered a heart attack the day before it was rumored he was to be released following four years of confinement by the Abacha regime. Abiola, who was also one of the country's wealthiest men, and certainly couldn't be called a democrat in the proletarian sense of the word, had been arrested after the 1993 elections, in which he was thought to have been the front-runner, were annulled by

(Continued on page 5)

## GM strike shows labor doesn't buy capital's expansion at any cost

by Andy Phillips

*Detroit, Mich.* — Burgeoning labor actions in the U.S. give notice of the increasing determination by American workers to confront the power and problems created by the globalization of capital and the threats to job security. In doing so, they are facing management's expanding arsenal of weapons designed to suppress and crush this worker opposition.

The recently concluded 53-day strike by the United Auto Workers union against General Motors Corporation, the longest GM strike since 1970, is the most prominent. The strike began on June 5 at GM's Flint Metal Center where body parts are stamped out by huge presses, and spread to the Flint East Delphi auto parts plant on June 10. It involved 9,200 workers.

Hundreds of grievances involving health and safety, job speed-up and outsourcing had piled up, and GM had failed to honor its previously negotiated contract commitment to invest \$300,000 to upgrade production equipment, of which only \$120,000 had been invested. GM in turn demanded increased productivity and work rule changes that would slash the work force in half. And just before the strike, GM had stealthily taken body-molding dies out of the Metal Center and moved them to Ohio, directly threatening Metal Center jobs.

Previous strikes at GM parts plants had been quickly resolved since just-in-time production practices eliminated the warehousing of parts, which in turn results in the quick depletion of supplies and plant shutdowns. Expectations were the same for this strike when it first started, but with each passing week the stakes were raised and positions hardened until by mid-July, 27 of GM's 29 assembly plants were down, 200,000 of its 224,000-strong work force were laid off, and negotiations took on national implications that involved many other plants, especially two Dayton, Ohio, brake plants which struck two years ago and halted all GM production.

### CHALLENGES TO GM'S EMPTY PROMISES

Spirits of the strikers remained high, and they received widespread support not only from other laid-off GM workers, but also from other segments of labor. In fact, nine workers at GM's Romulus engine plant in Michigan who protested installing spark plugs from a non-union source instead of the usual Delphi plugs were suspended from their jobs. And Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers union, declared his support by announcing that no workers at GM's very profitable Oshawa, Ontario,

## Old apartheid in the 'new South Africa'

*Following a women's conference in South Africa, our correspondent, a West African women's liberationist and veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa who has lived in exile in eastern Europe, contributed this report on what she saw in Cape Town, a decade after the official end of apartheid — Editor.*

Even though I did not live the period of slavery, the slavery and colonization that persist today in the African continent can still be felt and smelled in Cape Town. Some might say it is too quick for any changes to take place, but that wouldn't be fair for the number of Black South Africans living in extreme poverty who are just as deprived now as at the time of apartheid.

**When I walked through the streets of Cape Town, I thought I was in Europe, say somewhere in Poland where you can count the number of Black people in the streets. And the type of jobs Black Africans engaged in are the jobs that no white persons like to do.**

The shantytowns where Black Africans live are the first things you see entering Cape Town. These places are health hazards, unfit for human beings. Some people have to use their clothes for house walls. When you go a few miles from the shantytowns, there are beautiful buildings, shopping centers, restaurants, bars and hotels where the white people live. Cape Town is one of the most beautiful towns I have ever seen and at the same time one of the most segregated.

The isolation is so clear: Here is a shantytown where Black people live, and a few yards away a modern town where white people live. At the hotels where I stayed all the staff doing the unpopular jobs were Black Africans; the white people were doing the challenging jobs.

**Another thing I observed is the anti-African syndrome: Africans thinking that their lack of jobs, education and prosperity in this new South**



Settled—but not resolved.

truck plant would assemble trucks from parts made in Ohio by dies taken from the Metal Center.

Pickets remained combative throughout the strike. As one Black woman picket told *News & Letters*, "You just can't trust GM. We've had plant meetings where they tell us how important it is for us to cooperate, and in the next breath tell us we have to work faster and that they're moving jobs out of the plant. They must think we're stupid. They want us to cooperate ourselves out of our jobs, while they sit back and rake in their billions."

Since 1978, GM has built more than 50 auto parts plants in Mexico and is that nation's largest private employer, with 72,000 workers who are paid \$1-2 an hour doing the same jobs as Delphi workers getting \$20 an hour. Delphi workers know this, but spoke of helping them. "We have to help them raise their living standards," a picket stated.

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Announcing a new publication  
**Voices From Within The Prison Walls**  
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# Wendy Brown's postmodern Marx

by Laurie Cashdan

One of the works at the center of discussion of the "crisis of freedom" gripping the feminist and queer movements is Wendy Brown's *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, 1995). Like other left postmodernists beginning to grapple with the need for a new emancipatory vision, she admits that Marx and Hegel cannot be thrown in the dustbin of history. From the start, however, Brown makes clear she is not proposing a return to Marx's dialectics of revolution, which she disparages as a view in which "history" is tethered to the project of freedom" (p. 4). Instead, she proposes a postmodernist reading of Marx through the lens of Nietzsche, Foucault and feminist and cultural theories.

Concerned with both left nihilism and radical "alternatives" that accept capitalist domination (e.g. distributive economic justice and resistance politics), she confesses her central question has Marxian-Hegelian origins: *Can something of a persistent desire for human freedom be discerned even in the twisted projects of this aim, even in its failure to realize itself, its failure to have the courage, or the knowledge of its own requisites?* (p. 4)

To answer this question, she analyzes the "relationship between identity formation and rights claims in late-twentieth-century politics" (p. 97). Does the very process of claiming rights as injured victims of inequality (as women, African Americans, gays, lesbians) inadvertently solidify the very modes of domination we oppose? Central to her inquiry is Nietzsche's critique of liberal institutions as "injurers of freedom," in which she sees far more than the obvious exclusions, inequalities and injustices of the state. It also produces more insidious injuries through the very ways in which rights claims operate.

In "Wounded Attachments," she argues that politicizing identities carries both "openings and perils for a radically democratic political project." She probes Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment* (roughly translated as the memory of an offense or lack of consideration, with an intention of vengeance). Nietzsche challenges Marx's idea of ideology as issuing from class domination, Brown asserts, by arguing that "morality emerges from the powerless to avenge their incapacity for action" (p. 44). This morality becomes a claim to power for the oppressed, but is ultimately reactive instead of creative, bound to the history of pain and domination it seeks to undermine. Much "North Atlantic feminism," she says, suffers from just this problem by defining ourselves as victims of men, as in Catherine MacKinnon's legal analysis of pornography, which demands legal redress or censorship.

Instead of a moral positioning of identities based in the language of "I am," she proposes a political language of "I want this for us" (pp. 74-75). This politics of wanting instead of being left me wondering what kind of postmodern "emancipation" she imagines taking place within capitalist society. Such questions persisted as I studied her chapter on Marx's 1843 "On the Jewish Question."

For Marx, what is at issue is the dialectical relation

## Social justice demanded

Memphis, Tenn. — I'm a social justice activist and a volunteer translator for a hospital which is how I met Anna, a 13-year-old immigrant from Mexico who was raped. There is only one fluent Spanish-speaking police officer in this city, where immigrant population estimates range from 15,000 to 60,000 people. He caught the rapist and found a Spanish-speaking counselor for her.

When we arrived at the hospital when Anna was to give birth, we encountered difficulties: "Why is there no social security number? How is she going to pay? Who is the father? Is she really only 13? Who are you, anyway?"

When Anna was examined, the nurse skipped some questions on the medical history. She told me what medicines were in the IV, but only after I asked. I asked a different nurse if women had a choice about what medicines they receive. She said yes, always. But Anna was never told. Why was she given Pitocin to speed up her contractions when there was no need and no consent?

Would an episiotomy have been necessary if her body had been allowed to open in its own time? Would she have bled so much afterwards? Her doctor told me to encourage them to keep an open mind about an epidural, which Anna had repeatedly refused. He said she could barely endure vaginal exams and he didn't "want to be chasing her all over the bed." I asked if he wanted me to translate that?

Anna's mother, Maria, told me the last time Tino, her husband, hit them was when he found out Anna, was pregnant. Since Maria and her three children moved to the U.S. from Mexico, he has treated them much better.

After the death of their first child, Tino abandoned her. When he wanted her back, she refused and he stabbed her and smashed her head in with a brick. Her vision is still poor. When Maria told her mother she wouldn't take him back, her mother lashed out with a common saying: "A woman is like an object. If her husband leaves her under a tree, even in the pouring rain, there she stays until he comes back and picks her up."

I told Maria I could help her find shelter if she chose to leave. She laughed and said she could never leave him as she doesn't have friends here, doesn't speak English, could never support herself and the children, and is too afraid of the INS to even go outside. Why are there no services for undocumented, poor, or working-class women who are victims of emotional, sexual, and physical abuse? These forms of oppression are alive and well in Memphis.

—Outraged translator

## Woman as Reason

between *political emancipation* and *true, human emancipation*. At the same time as he deems political emancipation "a great progress[...], the final form of human emancipation within the framework of the prevailing social order" (quoted in Brown, p. 108), it is in this essay where Marx first uses the expression "permanent revolution." For Brown, the emphasis is on the "deviousness" (Marx's word) of the state and the problems this poses for politics today. Through the very process of granting abstract rights and liberties, the state depoliticizes particular identities. This depoliticization allows it to obscure and further entrench the unfreedoms and narrow egoism of capitalist society, which continue on their merry way. (Just think of racism after the Civil Rights Act.)

This contradictory process poses an especially troubling paradox for political struggles today, such as the demand by lesbians and gays for marriage rights. Brown asks whether the desire to depoliticize or unmark one's social existence can possibly also advance an emancipatory politics, given the process Marx exposes. If winning rights doesn't free us from class, gender, sexual

or race domination but actually entrenches these relations by depoliticizing them, then "how does the project of political emancipation square with the project of transforming the conditions against which rights are sought as protection?" (p. 115). At this point Brown departs radically from Marx by rejecting Marx's dialectics of revolution as what allows us to see the relation between political and human emancipation. Dialectics of revolution becomes no more than a "progressive historiography" steeped in Hegel's "religious metanarrative":

*[T]he contradiction between "political emancipation" and "true, human emancipation" is no more likely to erupt as radical consciousness or be transcended through revolution that various contradictions with capitalism are likely to explode into a socialist alternative* (p. 115). Having written off dialectics of revolution and the Hegelian dialectics of negativity in which Marx saw the "moving and creating principle of history," Brown proposes a new political culture to replace the nihilism and compromising she sees infecting radicals. Freedom is never *achieved*, she argues, but is "a permanent struggle against what will otherwise be done to and for us" (p. 25). Ultimately, it is hard to discern its difference from the distributive economic justice or resistance schemes Brown critiqued earlier.

Reading Marx through Brown's postmodernist lens obscures what could most contribute to the creative resolution of the contradiction between identity and revolutionary freedom. The dialectic is that process through which Subjects move from their immediate identities and critique of what is, to Marx philosophy of revolution in permanence.

## Barbara Smith on the Black Radical Congress

*Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a telephone interview with Barbara Smith, Black lesbian feminist author and activist, about the Black Radical Congress held in Chicago in mid-June. Smith's latest book, due out in November, is titled *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender and Freedom*.*

I was overwhelmed by the political energy at the Congress, which had 2,000 people present. Because of the numbers there, it is hard to think of a historical precedent. The Niagara Movement comes to mind perhaps as a comparable benchmark, but there weren't the numbers. Seneca Falls comes to mind, but it is not a date of great significance for Black women.

The Congress was reinvigorating for the Black liberation movement, although in the present historic context we will have to see if this can be sustained. It is true there are political differences among those who attended especially around sexual political issues. All the documents published before the Congress stated that it was opposed to homophobia and to sexism. These were at times major sticking points. The issue of nationalist versus socialist agendas was also up for debate. These points are connected since some strains of nationalism have been reluctant to confront sexism and homophobia and have even questioned if these struggles are relevant to Black communities.

The "Intergenerational Dialogue" Friday night was one of the most memorable evenings of my life. It was the first time I was ever invited to speak as a peer with leaders in the Black liberation movement. Although I am a couple of years younger than Angela Davis, Kathleen Cleaver and Amiri Baraka, I am part of the same generation of Black activists from the sixties. But I believe because I am out as a lesbian and have done much of my work in the Black feminist movement, I have usually not been included under the umbrella of Black liberation.

At the dialogue, I spoke along with General Baker, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, Nelson Peery, and Ahmed Rahman. I was the only one who received a standing ovation. At the Plenary the next morning, Cathy Cohen, another Black lesbian feminist, also got a standing ovation. This response was not because everyone there was necessarily on the same page in fighting sexism and homophobia, but I believe it was because people recognized courage when they saw it. At those moments people had a sense of what we had been through and what it took for us to operate with integrity in relationship to our sexual orientations in a Black context.

At the Black Feminist Institute held on Thursday, the day before the Congress opened, I was asked to give a brief presentation on the history of Black feminist orga-

## 'Get a job, any job!'

Chicago — As I hear and read about the injustices against women in other parts of the world, like the mass rapes in many places and what the Taliban are doing in Afghanistan, it brings to mind American injustice: the second anniversary of welfare reform.

This so-called reform is targeted mostly at single women with children. The focus of this reform is "Get a job, any job!" — not to become self-sufficient, but just to satisfy the "public."

Many women have been thrust out into quick training programs. Many of these programs are geared toward "women's work"; this equals cheap labor in fields such as daycare, elder care, housekeeping, certified nursing assistants, etc. These mostly minimum wage positions pay nowhere near the costs to support a family.

If a mother decides she wants to obtain a career, reform throws other obstacles her way. To obtain a two-year or better degree she must work at least 20 hours per week plus have 20 educational hours per week. Educational hours are anything that can be documented — library, lab, plus actual classes. During the period between spring break and summer school (which is a requirement), we had to attend "Group Sessions" on subjects such as makeovers, job readiness and massage therapy just to satisfy the "powers that be" that we were busy.

They are determined to get us off the welfare rolls. The *Chicago Tribune* reports, "At stake for states exceeding federal caseload quotas and other measures is a piece of a \$200 million federal bounty, a pot of money Illinois desperately wants" (July 5, 1998).

What will happen to women who exhaust the 5-year lifetime limit for welfare? What will happen to those still in poverty with low-wage jobs? What will happen to their children? This is not reform, it's oppression — oppression of this society's most vulnerable: poor women with children.

—Rose



Australian students protest racist One Nation party which opposes aboriginal and immigrant rights.

nizing in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which included our work in the Combahee River Collective [in the 1970s]. Although it was well attended, I was struck by how few Black women have had the opportunity to do Black feminist organizing on Black women's issues within the Black community.

Not many people across the country have done this kind of organizing. Many women of color have worked on domestic violence and other women's issues, but that work has often been in coalition with white organizations. Our work with Combahee was rare because we were doing it in the Black community and not in academic contexts or other environments where it might be more comfortable to raise Black feminist critiques. To this day there are very few community-based autonomous Black feminist organizations. I believe the basic reason few of us have had the opportunity to raise Black feminist issues in the Black community is fear. Black women wonder: If I raise issues about sexism in the Black community, what will happen to me? How many friends will I lose? How many will ostracize me? How much violence might I be subjected to? This is the kind of challenge we face in this movement. It was remarkable to have space made for these dialogues at the Congress.

It was painful, however, to have to choose between attending the lesbian/gay caucus and the feminist caucus meeting, which met at the same time. The lesbian and gay sessions were among the most exciting meetings I have ever been in because they created a network of people who are activist, leftist and out in the context of whatever political work they do, whether gay related or not. Although Black lesbians and gays have formed a number of organizations, their purpose is usually to be with others sharing the same sexual identity and not necessarily to do political work with a radical critique of the system.

It was wonderful for me to be in a room full of out lesbians and gays who could relate to the concept and were committed to attending something called the Black Radical Congress. I spoke there about the Millennium madness [a reference to conflicts over a proposed march on Washington—ed.] and the idea some of us have been discussing for a national lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered people of color conference in the year 2000.

This meeting itself was historic. As Barbara Ransby [one of the organizers] said at one of the planning meetings, just by virtue of the fact that the Black Radical Congress has asserted that it is against homophobia and sexism something unprecedented has been achieved politically. And of course with our commitment to continue organizing nationwide under the banner of the Black Radical Congress until the next Congress in 2000, we achieved a lot more than that.

# Memphis Overnite after Teamster vote

**Memphis, Tenn.**—I've worked at Overnite Transportation for many years and I saw so much injustice happening. That is why we got in touch with the Teamsters. Tomorrow they could say you're fired and have five minutes to get off the property or they'll put the police on you. We have no rights.

When we go to work we have no idea of when we will get off. They can tell you to come in on your off days or a holiday. If they decide to let a guy who just started working there go home on time and you're working there 10 years, they can work you 12 hours and there is nothing you can do. They will call a meeting and huff and puff and threaten to blow your house down and you can't respond, you have to just be quiet and listen.

A lot of concessions took place when we started agitating for the union, even though Overnite says that had nothing to do with it. In 1994 they told us they would share the profits with us. That year was a big Teamsters strike and we were working from sunup to sundown. That quarter was the only quarter we got one of these bonus checks and it was \$200.

After that we started an organizing campaign. Before the organizing campaign starting pay was \$8 an hour and topped out at \$12 and up to \$15.95. Now full-time workers start at Overnite at \$13.50. Then we topped out at \$12 an hour and now for some it's \$15.95. It's not union scale but we could live with these wages. The thing we're fighting for the most is respect. They're used to doing things their way but you can't just pop a whip and have everybody jump.

We lost the first election in 1995. The company held a little barbecue for the guys, they made a bunch of promises that all problems would be taken care of and they had the employees' interest at heart. At that time the CEO was named Jim Douglass and they even had T-shirts printed up saying "Give Jim a Chance." But after they voted not to accept the union, everything went back to business as usual and the company forgot all these promises they had made. Even the pro-company men got bitter.

## Immigrant workers fleeced

**Vancouver, B.C.**—After being unemployed for more than one month, I finally found a job in a vegetable processing plant. At the rate of \$7.50 per hour, the job involved a lot of physical efforts and the working days are unfortunately very long ones. Workers in this plant have to work from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., sometimes even to 2 a.m. the next morning, and then come in again at 9 a.m.

The overtime hours are never paid at overtime rates. When we come in the morning, we just sign our names and times on a piece of "unofficial" paper, and punch in officially at 3 p.m. We could have stayed at home until the official punch-in time, that is, 3 p.m. But very few workers give up the opportunities of coming early and doing the extra work. The reason for workers' willingness to accept this "deal" is very simple, they need the money even if it is so hard to earn. (In Chinese "earn" is the same word as "struggle.")

The workers here are almost exclusively former peasants from China. They have no skills other than hard working habits. This is not the only job they could find, but it is the only kind of job they could find. However, they still have the hope of escaping from the current situation by doubling their work, which is already very hard. This is the only way out for them and some of them think they are achieving the goal.

The boss takes advantage of workers' eagerness to earn money. If a worker was not told to come early this morning, it means that he or she must have done something the boss did not like yesterday. The guys who come to work early regularly feel they are on a higher level than others who are occasionally told to come early. Those who never come early are seen as garbage. There are a lot of tensions and conflicts between workers themselves. That is the best for the boss.

—Immigrant worker

## CD review: '500 Days'

On July 13, 1995 the *Detroit News* and *Free Press* (jointly published by the Detroit Newspaper Agency) forced 2,000 workers on strike by refusing to negotiate when the existing contract expired. The first six songs on the compact disk *500 Days* tell about the long and bitter labor dispute. The first song, "JOA Blues," was written before the strike and is about the joint operating agreement granted to both papers under "Newspaper Preservation Act" enacted by Ronald Reagan. Songs two through six are written and performed by striking workers and supporters. It is refreshing to hear songs of recent and continuing labor struggles and workers' solidarity. The next song on the disc is "War on the Workers" by Anne Feeney, a singer and labor activist, about the 1993 A.E. Staley strike in Decatur, Ill. This is what history should be about, the voice the ordinary worker(s) against the bosses.

Real audio samples and more info about the 20 songs on the CD can be found at the web site: <http://members.aol.com/dnarag>.

All proceeds from the sale of this CD go directly into the "Newspaper Unions Assistance Fund" to help offset the enormous expenses encountered by the striking (now locked-out) newspaper unions in Detroit. The CD costs \$15 plus \$2 postage. Make checks or money orders payable to Newspaper Unions Assistance Fund, 500 Days CD, c/o Teamsters Local 2040, 2741 Trumbull, Detroit, MI 48216.

—Michael Stec

When we first started organizing, management tried to make the white guys feel like this was a Black thing rather than men at the terminal organizing for a better workplace for everybody. Now even the white guys say, "How are you doing, my brother?" When you see a white guy who was real negative toward us turn around, it's beautiful — like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.

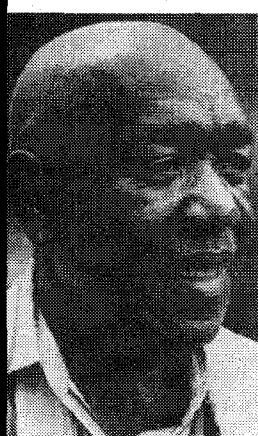
After that first election we started organizing all over again. The company changed leaders again. But this time more people had seen the light. We saw people who had been in management give up those salaried positions and take a time card and come back out in the workforce and work with us and tell us: "I used to be a supervisor and I know these people are lying." I think that put us over the hump and made the people vote in the union about two years ago.

We won by about 20 votes and there are about 350 in the unit. The company contested the election, so we've only been certified for about a year. We went to our first negotiations in November. Just to be able to sit across the table from the company lawyers and the Terminal Manager and have them have to look at you is so great because they have to finally deal with us or at least pretend they are negotiating. Right now they are stalling. They know they will have to bargain but every day they put it off they make money.

There were labor solidarity rallies nationwide in June, and we had one here because Overnite is the biggest thing the Teamsters are working on right now in Memphis. People took the message of our rally into the plant. There would have been more people there if Overnite had not kept them working to make sure they didn't go to the rally. That they have to keep us working shows me that they recognize that we're going to win.

—Militant Black Overnite worker

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## Kaiser ignores CNA deal

**Oakland, Cal.**—At Saturn, played up as the ultimate labor-management partnership, workers voted to go on strike. One Saturn worker interviewed said that he voted to strike because Saturn management was going back to the "GM of old and I thought that they were different." His comment reminded me of what's happening here at Kaiser, where management and the AFL-CIO are trying to copy the same kind of partnership strategy. Just last March, the registered nurses with their autonomous union, the California Nurses Association (CNA), won a landmark contract after holding out with intermittent strikes for a year and a half. This was in spite of a mid-struggle betrayal by the AFL-CIO leaders who initiated the partnership strategy from the top down.

What the nurses won was an unprecedented role determining the quality of the work they do through committees that have contractual authority over staffing levels and work procedures. The problem today is, as one nurse told me, Kaiser management has been dragging their feet in complying with, and straight-up balking at, those agreed-to contract provisions. This reneging on agreements is not only happening here. At UPS, where workers won a major victory over staffing and hiring, they are now finding that UPS is refusing to abide by the agreement. Management is keenly aware that most of today's union bureaucracies are too slow, or too weighted down with illusions, to react to management's sneak attack tactics.

We rank-and-filers are learning that not only are partnerships with management a farce but also that no one contract victory is a solution to the ongoing conflict between workers and management. All management cares about when getting an agreement is to get the workers back to work. When union bureaucrats stick with their administrative mentality, the bosses know they have won. Sure, we can all sign all kinds of contracts. But, if you don't take care of workplace issues on the spot, victories may have already been lost, even before the ink is dry!

—Kaiser rank-and-filer

## Marxism & Freedom today

**DeKalb, Ill.**—Raya Dunayevskaya discusses several issues regarding the working class in her book *Marxism and Freedom*. She focuses on the need for labor to organize, problems labor faces when trying to organize, problems workers face on a daily level, and things that workers should organize against.

She writes that automation has created two different viewpoints: "If you are the one who operates it, you feel its impact in every bone of your body: you are more sweaty, more tired, more tense and you feel about as useful as a fifth wheel. You are never on top of the machine; the machine is always on top of you." The machines do not require as many workers for the same level of productivity. This costs many workers their jobs. She writes, "There has been a disastrous cut in employed miners from 425,000 in 1948, to 225,000 in 1955." The other perspective, the capitalists' perspective, is that automation is fantastic.

Dunayevskaya demonstrates how the labor bureaucracy let down the worker. Since the ideologies of the worker and the capitalist are opposed to each other, it should be easy to see how the labor bureaucrat should respond. Instead, "the labor bureaucracy counseled the workers to do nothing 'against' Automation." Labor bureaucracies threw the workers' interests aside when they should have supported the workers.

Dunayevskaya proclaims that this is why the working man has to think for himself. She holds in high regard the coal miners who led a strike against Consolidated Coal and the continuous miner. She quotes a miner: "There is a time for praying. We do that on Sundays. There is a time for acting. We took matters in our hands during the Depression, building up our union and seeing that our families did not starve. There is a time for thinking. The time is now." The quote concludes, "What I want to know is: how and when will the working man—all working men—have such confidence in their own abilities to make a better world that they will not let others do their thinking for them."

Later in the book, she refers to these ideas going beyond a person's work life. On this, she writes: "Our point of departure has always been production only because to see the crisis in production means to understand it everywhere else... This does not mean that the crisis of our age is 'limited' to production. Our age has rightly been characterized as the crisis of the mind."

The statements made by Dunayevskaya about the alienation of labor still hold true today. The aspect which I consider interesting is that capitalists will do anything acceptable by law to increase profits. A law which is yet to be written is one which holds capitalists accountable to workers. Companies hire part-time workers so that they do not have to pay for insurance or pensions. People work 12-hour shifts so that a plant can run seven days rather than five days. Thousands of people are laid off so that stock prices will rise.

My father and his twin brother were both fired on the same day from the same factory after a combined 60 years of service because of "economic" reasons. In the same factory my cousin was paralyzed by a machine after its malfunctioning safety switch was disconnected. In America, workers have few rights when compared to those of corporations.

Raya Dunayevskaya reveals how the labor bureaucracy is not truly an ally in her book *Marxism and Freedom*. She demonstrates alienation of labor using something that most people can relate to: automation. More importantly, she demonstrates the need for labor to organize itself against capitalists and capitalism.

—Plumber

## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

A striking General Motors worker in Flint, Mich. saw a relationship between those "extruded" and those "not absorbed" by capital: "I'm a single mother with three kids, and I'm out here more for them than I am for myself. I want them to have a better life than I have, but they'll have it worse if we can't keep our jobs here so they can make a living when they grow up" (June *News & Letters*).

Meanwhile the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, in order to promote welfare "reform," has adopted the slogan, "Any job is a good job." Glenn Welstad, president of Labor Ready, the largest provider of temporary manual laborers in the U.S., thinks that it is welfare reform that has helped his company to grow. The company has seen no shortage of laborers or clients.

Capitalist production dominates the working class, employed as well as temporary workers, the unemployed and welfare participants. Of the employed Marx wrote that their "enslavement to capital is only concealed by the variety of individual capitalists to whom [labor-power] sells itself." The industrial reserve army, he wrote, "belongs to capital just as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. ...[I]t creates a mass of human material always ready for exploitation..."

That exploitation is taking new forms, including temporary labor and welfare-to-work schemes, to meet capitalism's need for low-wage labor, thereby undermining traditional unionization. New thinking, new alliances and new forms of organizing against exploitation are arising, too, with the potential to change the face of the labor movement. It can be an exciting time.

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya  
**MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES**

### Editor's Note

August 20 marks 30 years since the Russian-led invasion of Czechoslovakia by some 660,000 Warsaw Pact troops crushed the democratization movement that came to be known as "Socialism with a human face." "Prague Spring," as it was also called, was one of the revolutionary events of that momentous year 1968; the Soviet Union's invasion was one of the counter-revolutionary events that year that signaled a terrible foreboding that the epoch had come to an end. There have been few commemorations of Prague Spring, or retrospectives on the Russian invasion, nearly a decade after the collapse of "Communism." For that reason we print the August 1960 Editorial Statement Raya Dunayevskaya wrote for *News & Letters* two weeks before Russian tanks rolled into Prague, entitled "All Eyes on Czechoslovakia, All Hands Off!" The editorial was reprinted in the *News and Letters* pamphlet **Czechoslovakia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution**. The pamphlet contained an extensive in-person report from a Czech Marxist-Humanist dissident, Stephen Steiger, whose retrospective written this month we also print below. The pamphlet can be found in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #3993-97.

A new page in the history of freedom is being written in Czechoslovakia. It is vividly described in the report, "At the Crossroads of Two Worlds," by a participant in the dramatic events. We ask all our readers, here and in Europe, in Latin America and in the Middle East, in Asia as well as in Africa, to spread this analysis of events far and wide.

This is not just a report of what the Czechoslovak press calls "democratization," and the New Left here would describe as "participatory democracy." This is not only a description of the sudden birth of a genuine public opinion (expressed almost totally without censorship in the mass media) in a Communist land which is situated strategically at the crossroads of two worlds. **Nor is it only an exciting drama of a people striving for national independence while the "fraternal Communist nations" of the Warsaw Pact are engaged in a game of Russian roulette as they conduct their military maneuvers all along the Czech frontier. This is also, and above all, the depiction of a flood of ideas emanating from a people who have "found their tongues."**

Workers are openly questioning their conditions of labor and life. The student youth are expressing their solidarity with East European youth like the Polish, against whom the Communist rulers have struck out with slanders interlaced with a strong anti-Semitic flavor, with firings and outright arrests. And the youth are also expressing their solidarity with the rebels in West Germany and the revolutionaries in France. The intellectuals are demanding not only freedom of the press, but freedom to act, to create, to build opposition parties.

Should anyone in the United States be so obtuse as to imagine that this applies only to lands bound by a single party system, let him take a second look not only at the Tweedledum-Tweedledee character of the American two-party system, which is obvious enough, but at the not so obvious—and when it comes to the field of ideas, far more important—fenced-in pragmatism and arrogance that is summed up in the American intellectual concept of "the end of ideology."

Now compare this ideological barrenness with the concepts of the Czech historian, Milan Hubel, to whom a demand for a plurality of parties signifies a demand for "a plurality which grants freedom to a flow of ideas, competition of concepts, and an outline to get out of quagmire..."

We are in two different worlds.

It is all the more necessary, therefore, to emphasize that, in expressing our solidarity with the Czechoslovak people, we are not doing something "for" them; we have a lot to learn from them.

In calling for all eyes to be on Czechoslovakia, and all hands off, Marxist-Humanists have in mind not only Russian state-capitalism calling itself Communism that had dominated Czechoslovakia for the past 20 years. **We are also expressing our total distrust of and opposition to American capitalism which has seen fit to nurture the most notorious Czech Stalinist general who fled the country the moment of birth of democratization.**

It is not, however, the escape of one general with secrets of the Warsaw Pact that throws fear into the heart of the Russian ruling class. On the whole, they know how to play those kinds of games better than "the West," as is evident from all the secrets they pried loose from NATO. What they fear most of all are masses in motion.

### MASSES IN MOTION

The Russians, for example, have learned well enough how to get along with Rumania. Yet Rumania has officially questioned the whole concept of the Warsaw Pact, which Czechoslovakia has not. Rumania is also flirting with China, which again, is not the way of the Czechoslovak leaders. Rumania displayed its dissidence before Czechoslovakia embarked on her democratization experiment. Yet none of the threats against the latter have ever been pronounced against the Rumanians. **Therein lies the true tale which illuminates the**

capitalist class nature of present-day Communism.

The Rumanian "deviations" have all been handed down from above. No freedom has been allowed the masses. The lid is kept firmly down on any free expression. Though the Rumanian nationalists, like the Russians themselves, no longer bow to the name of Stalin, as China does, Rumania remains completely totalitarian. Hence, the Russians and the Rumanians understand each other perfectly. They can horse trade in capitalistic fashion, practice class compromise and can turn the full state-military fury against intellectuals who would demand freedom of expression and workers who would demand control of production.

Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, though it is a long distance from allowing the exercise of workers' control of production, has released public opinion from censorship. The result has been that not only are intellectuals raising existential questions, and returning to their origin in the Humanism of Marxism, **but masses also are in motion.** The Russian and East European hardliners' attacks on the Czechoslovak leadership have only solidified the nation, including those far to the left of the [Alexander] Dubcek leadership.

### TWO DECADES: PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION

East Germany is vying with Russia as to who can be most Stalinist in its vitriolic attacks on Czechoslovakia. With its Berlin Wall and unchanged Stalinist leaders, it has reason to fear the fresh air of Czechoslovak democracy. By contrast, Yugoslavia, which was the first to break from Stalin's empire in East Europe, seems the model of "democracy" and that, indeed, is the most the present moderate Czechoslovak leadership plans to allow.

It is all the more essential to remember the true facts. One is that Yugoslavia remains a single party system that continues to jail Left opponents. The other relevant fact is that it was not the nationalist breakaway of Yugoslavia in 1948 which inspired serious rebellions against Stalin's Russia. **Rather it was the proletarian revolt in East Germany in 1953, shortly after Stalin's death. The general strike on June 17, 1953, against speedup and low wages, and for "Bread and Freedom," put an end to the twin myths of the invincibility of Stalinist totalitarianism and the alleged incapacity of the working class to rise in revolution in a Communist land. At the same time it inspired the revolt in the Vorkuta forced labor camps in Russia itself.**

It is against similar inspiration emanating from Czechoslovakia today that Russia and East Germany are trying to insulate the masses. All in vain. Already there is clandestinely circulating in Russia a 10,000 word essay by the Nobel prize-winning Russian physicist, Prof. Andrei D. Sakharov, which states: "We must, without doubt, support their (Czechoslovak) bold initiative, which is very important for the fate of socialism and the whole of mankind." Furthermore, Prof. Sakharov condemns the imprisonment of Russian writers who oppose the regime,

# Recollecting the legacy of 'Socialism with a human face'

Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniels, and others. The latest group of rebellious writers who were sentenced to labor camps include Yuri Galanskov, Alexander Ginzburg, Aleksei Dobrovolsky and Vera Lashkova.

No wonder the Russian ruling clique worries about the

consequences, for Russia, of Czechoslovak democratization. No doubt Brezhnev and Kosygin remember that de-Stalinization did not begin in Russia from above, but in East Germany, from below. Moreover, Bertolt Brecht's winged phrase, "to think is to change" notwithstanding, the intellectuals did not lead, and at first were in no hurry to follow, the spontaneous revolt of the East German proletariat. For the most part, the intellectuals then stood on the sidelines.



**It took another three years plus Khrushchev's open declaration for de-Stalinization before the intellectuals in Communist lands would rebel in such massive numbers as to bring about not only a revolution in philosophy, but a philosophy of revolution. But once the intellectuals and workers did finally unite in a struggle against repressive Communism, they did indeed initiate the beginning of the end of the Russian empire in East Europe.** What the Polish intellectuals and youth pioneered in 1956 as they turned from purely economic to existential questions—and with it the humanist character of genuine Marxism—the Hungarian Freedom Fighters brought onto the historic stage in open revolution.

### THE PARTY, THE PARTY

Without engaging in revolution, the Czechoslovak New Left did touch the raw nerve of Communism—in this case, Czechoslovakian as well as Russian Communism. They did this by questioning the concept of the vanguard, not to mention omniscient, role of the Communist Party. Here Dubcek refused to budge. On the contrary. He was not only adamant about the "leading role" of the Party. He not only claimed total credit for the new road of "democratization." And he not only opposed the creation of new opposition parties. He also staked out the claim that "the greatest majority of the best creative minds in the country is in the Party."

This, then, defines the next battleground of ideas. Hence, the importance of the fact that the philosopher, Ivan Svitak, and others, who raised the question of opposition parties, the role of the Communist Party, raised them as inseparable from their philosophic foundation, on the one hand, and the needed unity of worker and intellectual, on the other hand.

In raising the fundamental question of philosophy and revolution, the party and spontaneity, the unity of worker and intellectual, they have indeed laid the foundation of a new relationship of theory to practice. Thereby they have gone far beyond anything raised by the New Left in "the West."

The reporter from Prague whom we print in this special issue of *News & Letters* rightly stresses that the events he describes are but the first act of a live drama whose end-

## Forgotten heritage of 1968

by Stephen Steiger

*Prague*—The history of the year 1968 in Czechoslovakia began in fact in 1938 with the crushing of Czechoslovakia. The Nazi regime of neighboring Germany first broke up the country, occupying the Western parts in March 1939. What was worse, Hitler tried to break the backbone of the Czech nation, first of all murdering a substantial part of its elite. Hundreds of socialist, communist and democratic parties' activists died in German concentration camps (not to speak of Jews and Romas)—women and men missing in the democracy struggles of the post-war years.

The Communist coup in 1948 was a follow-up of the division of Europe and in the opinion of most historians an inevitable consequence of Soviet hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe. However, we cannot omit the fact that the Czechoslovak CP (Communist Party) had a broad popular support both for historical reasons (it had had a strong following in the pre-war years and was an important force of the anti-Nazi resistance movement) and because of its program its members and sympathizers regarded it as socialist. Long years of terror were necessary to eradicate the faith of the people in socialist ideals of equality and fraternity—faith that erupted again in 1968.

### NO STRAIGHT DEVELOPMENT FROM 1948 TO 1968

The path Czechoslovak society took between those two crucial dates was very tortuous—as was the line of the ruling party. The overturn of the "old" democratic order—looking back Czechoslovakia had indeed a cherished bourgeois democracy between 1945 and 1948—took place in the last years of Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union and was of course mimicked by the Czechoslovak CP. While it reached its peak in the "Prague trials" of 1952 (thousands

of "minor" trials took place all over the country, news of which was concealed from the public), it took years before it died out. The same party officials who had been involved in the terror were still ruling the country.

In contrast to this, the Eastern part of the country, Slovakia, with less political suppression, was going through the pains of forced industrialization that changed not only its social structure but strengthened its national sentiments and thus laid the ground for its different development in 1968 and basically also for its separation in 1992. The zigzagging of the party line was nowhere as clear as in the field of culture (in the widest sense of the word). Periods of thaw and frost rotated in accordance with the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) line, creating an atmosphere of defiance not only among the new generation of intellectuals but also among parts of the public which gradually attempted to gain more freedom of expression—other freedoms being non-existent or strongly limited.

Following a severe repression in connection with the "Hungarian events" (the official description of the Hungarian revolt of 1956) a new thaw emerged again partly caused by an economic setback at the beginning of the '60s. What was called "the first crisis of the socialist economic system" (negative economic growth appearing for the first time in a Soviet-type economy) forced the CP only to change the management of the economy, easing the command system. People felt a gust of fresh air.

It was this almost invisible tension between the upper levels of the hierarchy and the unspoken people's demands for more freedom that provoked a social crisis and pressed the CP presidium to halting, reluctant concessions. A rare opportunity for strong criticism of the party, its officials and institutions—in other words, almost the entire system—came with the IVth congress of writ-

(Continued on page 9)

## Black/Red View Black history moves monuments

by John Alan

Washington D. C. has a plethora of monuments, statues, and plaques in parks, squares and in government buildings paying uncritical homage to the ideals of American democracy.

This summer, Vice President Al Gore told the NAACP Convention in Atlanta, Ga. that President Clinton will add one more figure to this array of art by installing a statue of Martin Luther King Jr. on the Mall.

Last July, in a Black neighborhood in Washington, an 11 foot bronze statue of Black Civil War soldiers and sailors was unveiled in the Robert Shaw Metro Square. The occasion was the 135th anniversary of the assault of the 54th Colored Massachusetts Regiment against the Confederate Fort Wagner in South Carolina. The 54th led the Union brigade attack, and after it had withstood the withering fire of the Confederate artillery and had fought a hand to hand battle on the parapet of Fort Wagner, it lost half of its men including its white colonel, Robert Shaw.

But the idea of the bronze statue did not originate in the inner circle of the Clinton administration. It came from Frank Smith Jr., a Washington city councilman, who in his youth was a civil-rights activist in Mississippi.

Smith successfully lobbied the District, the United States Transportation Department and foundations to give the \$2.5 million cost for the memorial. He did not do this alone. He had the support of Washington's Black politicians and the Black people in the neighborhoods.

The proposed King statue on the Mall and the statue of the Black Civil War soldiers and sailors in the Robert Shaw Square are related to each other; they're both in essence, monuments to two unfinished revolutions.

Clinton's and Gore's plan to officially immortalize King as a great leader in the struggle for Black freedom, which he was, comes from their political need to keep the Black vote, while at the same time obscuring the intrinsic revolutionary nature of Black masses when they protest against police brutality and permanent conditions of poverty.

African Americans have always had a strong desire and need to know their history, their own self development, because American racism has turned them into things. But monuments and statues can't convey the dialectics of history, the ideas and the actual struggles that moved people to make and change history. The names of Black soldiers on the wall in Robert Shaw Square were not there because President Lincoln suddenly welcomed them to enlist in the Union Army to end slavery in the U.S. It took a great amount of political agitation from Abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and pressure from the radical Republicans in Congress to get them in the Union Army. Douglass said at that time: "The Colored man only waits for honorable admission into the service of the country — They know that who would be free, they themselves must strike the blow."

Today, even established white historians are aware that the organization of Black regiments, like the Massachusetts 54th, Massachusetts 55th and many others, was the historic event which changed the Civil War from a war to "save the Union" into a revolution to overthrow a society based on Black slave labor.

The South immediately realized the revolutionary dimension of those Black regiments. At once, the Southern General Beauregard called for "execution of abolition prisoners," that is, captured Black Union soldiers and their white officers, "with the garrote." Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, ordered that captured Union officers in charge of Black

## Kenya in turmoil

The situation in Kenya is very bad. For the past six months there has been ethnic fighting, instigated by President Moi to divide the mass opposition that developed to his re-election. Fighting began on the coast and is still going on in the Rift Valley province, where the Kalenjins were incited to kill Kikuyus and to drive them from their homes. The government has done nothing to stop the violence, and now the Pokotis and Marakwets in the same province are killing each other.

Many people who fled the province have not been able to return. My parents barely escaped with their lives and had to leave everything they owned, including their animals; neighbors who belong to the supposedly rival ethnic group are looking after the animals. My parents must remain in the city, with no way to earn a living.

The economy of the country has completely collapsed. Poverty is worse than ever; there are more children living in the street, and of course, crime has escalated. Government checks bounce, and the country's infrastructure has collapsed.

The political situation is unstable. Even within the ruling party, there is a lot of confusion and in-fighting. The president, who everyone knows stole the December election, has not yet named a vice-president five months later, and no one knows what will happen. He continues to strengthen the army by putting people from his ethnic group into positions of power. He is trying to destroy all opposition to his rule. He even sent the police to beat up people attending a meeting of an opposition political party.

People in the U. S. can help by demanding that the State Department put pressure on the Kenyan government to stop the violence.

—In exile

troops be punished "as criminals engaged in inciting servile insurrection." The punishment for that crime was death (See *Battle Cry Of Freedom* by James M. McPherson).

The summary murder of hundreds of captured Black troops by the Confederacy was one of the most inhuman aspects of the Civil War. The South never kept a record of the number of Black soldiers they hung on trees, beat to death and shot.

Lincoln did eventually issue an order that required "for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed." But this retaliation was never carried out in practice. In a meeting with Frederick Douglass, Lincoln said that his retaliatory order was not practiced because of popular prejudice.

President Lincoln never consciously caught the inherent revolutionary character of the African-American struggle for freedom. When he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he acted out of necessity to withdraw Black labor from the Southern war economy. But as Benjamin Quarles, the African-American historian, has noted, he was "giving sanction to a movement that had already reached flood proportion. Black slaves from the beginning of the Civil War, had used every opportunity to escape from working on the plantations and in Southern factories. Lincoln's Proclamation did not initiate this self bringing forth of freedom, it caught up with it."

A statue on the Mall or in a square in Washington canonizes individuals in the eyes of existing society, but does not penetrate to race and class struggles now going on.

## Free East Timor!

Chicago—Activists gathered in front of the Indonesian Consulate here on July 17 to protest Indonesia's ongoing genocidal occupation of East Timor.

On that date the Indonesian government celebrated the anniversary of its having declared East Timor the country's 27th province. Tension in East Timor has been high since General Suharto's forced retirement. That event raised peoples' hopes that a referendum on independence might be just around the corner. However, B.J. Habibie has stonewalled the East Timorese people while maintaining high levels of troops in place. Just one example of this tension was the murder of a young demonstrator by Indonesian forces during the visit of a European Union delegation to the town of Baucau on June 29.

The main East Timorese independence organization, the National Council of Timorese Resistance, condemned the recent announcement by several oil companies that they plan to begin production in the Timor Gap, an ocean trench between East Timor and northern Australia. The rights to this drilling were negotiated by Indonesia and Australia with no input from Timorese representatives and the profits will in no way benefit the East Timorese.

—Kevin Michaels

## Black World

(Continued from page 1)

another military dictator, Gen. Babangida. Abacha overthrew Babangida in a coup in 1994, and arrested Abiola upon his return from Britain, having fled there at the time of the annulment.

The circumstances of Abiola's death remain as shadowy as those surrounding Abacha's (un)timely demise. If Abacha's were a mix of personal revenge and the *real politik* of military thugs anxious to stave off a revolution, the motives behind Abiola's death seem, in brutally hypocritical terms, to be in the interest of "democracy."

To arrive at a "democratic" transition satisfactory to northern military hegemony, U.S. corporate and foreign policy interests (which are one and the same), and so as not to provoke a revolt on the part of the Nigerian masses, a broader conspiracy than the palace coup that liquidated Abacha was needed to ease Abiola from the scene. For these ruling class interests it isn't human rights and the conditions of life and labor of the most populous Black nation in the world that is at stake. On the contrary, at stake is that one vital statistic that has determined Nigeria's place in the world since it gained independence in 1960—OIL.

Nigeria earns \$10 billion in oil revenues a year, a good share of which is siphoned off by the military and the ruling class; U.S. exports to Nigeria reached \$816 million last year, while U.S. imports from Nigeria were over \$6 billion; direct U.S. investment in Nigeria is over \$980 million; the major U.S. multinational corporations in Nigeria are Shell, Mobil, Phillips, and Chevron. And yet, while a corporation like Shell has since 1958 taken over 900 million barrels of oil from the tiny delta state of Ogoniland, estimated at \$300 billion, the Ogoni people don't have piped water or electricity; their ground water is polluted by the more than 100 oil wells, two refineries and one fertilizer plant that occupy their 12 X 14 square mile state. Along with a severe shortage of schools, unemployment is rife since Shell recruits its labor from other parts of the country.

Stabilizing Nigeria for the purpose of protecting these

## Toxic racists spurn tests

Memphis, Tenn. — In the middle of the Black community of South Memphis sits the Defense Depot, a 640-acre Superfund site, meaning it is contaminated with chemicals that pose a serious threat to human health. The Superfund law set up the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), which is supposed to do a "public health assessment" for each Superfund site. They wrote one for the Depot in 1995, but it was a propaganda piece aimed at proving the Depot's toxic chemicals couldn't have caused any harm, rather than seriously trying to find out why there is such an alarmingly high rate of death and disease in the surrounding neighborhoods. ATSDR didn't do any testing, but relied on the Army's testing, which didn't look at anything off the Depot. Instead of testing whether any chemicals got into the community, the assessment tried to prove they couldn't get off the Depot.

The Defense Depot of Memphis, Tennessee-Concerned Citizens Committee (DDMT-CCC), a community group organized to fight the Depot's toxic racism, demanded that the health assessment be done correctly, that testing for contaminants be done in the community and not on the Depot, and that the actual health of people in the community be evaluated, which ATSDR has never done.

Now they are saying they will re-test the Depot, acting as if that is what we asked for. But it isn't. The base has already been tested. Two studies were done, in 1990 and 1995. They found arsenic, mercury, chromium, lead, volatile organic compounds, PCBs, pesticides and dioxins, and indicated these contaminants were in the surface water runoff. If they re-test, they will just find some way to claim that the community is safe.

Not one of ATSDR's studies anywhere in the nation has complied with the law that defines a health assessment. It must determine the size and extent of contamination; routes of contamination, including groundwater, surface water, air emissions and the food chain; the size and susceptibility of the population exposed to chemicals; and comparison of diseases known to be caused by specific chemicals, with respect to short- and long-term effects. They didn't do any of these things in the first assessment, and it looks like they won't do them in the second.

The whole health assessment is dedicated to discrediting our group. They're trying to counter the charges we've been making about the rates of death, disease, and cancer higher than anywhere in the state but Oak Ridge, which has aging nuclear weapons facilities.

We don't want cancer rates adjusted for race and age. (They compare against national rates for Blacks, disregarding the fact that Blacks are most likely to be contaminated.) It's a 99.99% Black community. They're trying to turn an environmental justice issue into a scientific issue. It's not their job to adjust anything, but to assess if there is a hazard to human health. We want to know specific things, like how many from age 65 to 80 have cancer, how many young boys and girls are getting cancer, do the chemicals they found there have anything to do with the cancer?

—Kenneth Bradshaw and Franklin Dmitryev

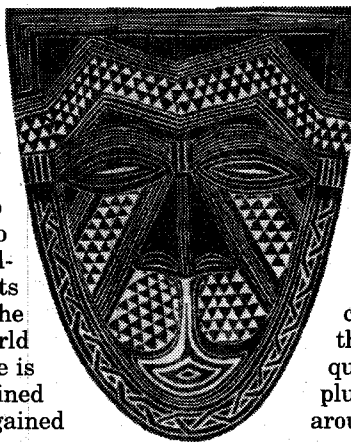
interests is, of course, the real subtext underlying all the "transition to democracy" rhetoric. Bill Clinton gave the green light to Abacha back in March during his Africa trip when he counter his administration's policy, articulated by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice, and declared that the U.S. would accept Abacha's staying in power as a "civilian" president. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Clinton's international trump card, made a surprise trip to Nigeria to bolster the efforts of Abacha's predecessor, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, to pressure Abiola to abandon

his mandate from the 1993 election as a condition of his release from detention. Likewise, former Ambassador to Nigeria and CIA/State Department envoy to El Salvador during its darkest days, Thomas Pickering was with Abiola pushing the same line when the Nigerian politician fell fatally ill.

There is, in short, no word said in the name of helping Nigeria make a "peaceful transition to democracy" by the likes of these global gamblers of the capitalist class that isn't aimed at installing a regime that will continue business as usual. The question now is **who** will the ruling class pluck from the chaos it has created to unite around? What former military dictator, who may have done a little prison time under

Abacha, does the Nigerian neo-colonial state intend to anoint its "democratic" hopeful for president to once again make Nigeria ungovernable and fit to assume its place in the global capitalist order?

The one name that has consistently come up at every critical point in the tangled unfolding of events of the last two months is Gen. Olesgun Obasanjo, the former military ruler from 1976 to 1979, who was released by Abubakar on June 16, the same day that Abubakar tried, unsuccessfully, to convince Abiola not to claim his 1993 electoral mandate. Obasanjo is acceptable to the north and to Abiola's southwest Yoruba constituency, and his light-weight prison experience is the kind of stuff from which "democratic" credentials are made by U.S. foreign policy makers and by that most stealthy stalking horse for U.S. foreign policy, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.



### Editor's Note

Our newest publication—*Voices from within the Prison Walls*—has just come off the press. This 70-page publication, written by D.A. Sheldon, himself a prisoner, is the result of an intense three-year process of dialogue and discussion with prisoners across this country. We reprint here 1) the preface to the pamphlet by Peter Wermuth, national co-organizer of News and Letters Committees and 2) excerpts from the two parts of the pamphlet itself. See ad on page 7 to order your copy now!

### Preface to the pamphlet

As the twentieth century comes to a close and a new century begins, American society is being placed on trial by the hundreds of thousands locked up in near-death conditions in prisons and jails across this country. The explosive growth in the number of incarcerated over the past two decades has heaped an unprecedented level of abuse, harassment, impoverishment, and social control upon Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and poor whites. And yet just as the dialectic of capital never ceases to be met with ever-new sources of resistance from the "wretched of the earth," the growing police abuse, prison warehousing of the poor, and slave-labor conditions inside and outside of prisons have given rise to new voices and sentiments of liberation.

This pamphlet is an expression of these voices. It is written by a prisoner who has experienced America's hell-holes first hand. But it is not just a solitary voice. It is the product of an active back-and-forth with dozens, and indeed hundreds of others. The idea for this publication first arose through a questionnaire the author sent around to other prisoners which asked them about their conditions, the criminal injustice system, and what can be done to cure the social ills of American society. From out of a three-year process of dialogue and discussion that followed came the wealth of factual and human material found in this pamphlet. For News and Letters Committees, America's only Marxist-Humanist organization, this publication represents a link of continuity with our effort, central to us since our founding in the mid-1950s, to record new voices of opposition to capitalism unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

One of our earliest expressions of this was the pamphlet *Workers Battle Automation*, written in 1960 by Charles Denby, the Black worker-editor of *News & Letters* newspaper. It followed the publication of the first book-length treatment of Marxist-Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today*, which focused on the American roots and world humanist concept of Marx's Marxism. *Workers Battle Automation* disclosed the emergence of a new humanism from out of the struggle against automated production. At the time, many thinkers, including radical ones, had concluded that the emergence of what we now call high-tech production had succeeded in erasing the revolutionary voices of opposition. As against this, *Workers Battle Automation* showed that a new social question was being posed by workers in battles against speed-up, overwork and layoffs—"what kind of labor should man perform?"

That kind of search for new human relations as the heart and soul of social transformation has been expressed again and again by the forces of liberation of our time, whether by women's liberationists, youth, or the Black dimension which has shown itself to be in the vanguard of revolutionary struggles in the U.S. Yet far too often such voices have been covered over, neglected, and not become the basis of revolutionary theory. The

## Announcing a new *News & Letters* publi

# Voices

problem is no less pressing today when many have become so disoriented by the global stage of retrogression inaugurated by Reaganism that they have given up the very idea of revolutionary transformation. In contrast, this pamphlet helps show that a new revolutionary consciousness is brewing within the mind of the oppressed in America's jails and prisons. While the forces of reaction may currently have the upper hand, the power of mind, when coupled with a full-fledged philosophy of liberation, can truly shake American "civilization" to its foundations. As D.A. Sheldon makes clear, especially in Part II of this pamphlet, the struggle on the part of prisoners to break down what the poet William Blake called the "mind forged manacles" of unfreedom is a lengthy, difficult and contradictory process. Yet by situating himself within these contradictions, he has shed new light on the nature of the struggle to liberate the mind of the oppressed.

This pamphlet makes concrete the comment made half a century ago in the hell-hole of Mussolini's prisons in fascist Italy by Antonio Gramsci: "The philosophy of praxis is consciousness full of contradictions in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not merely grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradictions and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action." We trust that the dialogue and discussion around this pamphlet will prove a crucial step in the process of self-emanicipation so needed at this turning point in American history.

—Peter Wermuth

### From Part I of the pamphlet...

Feodor Dostoevsky, the 19th century Russian writer, wrote in *Crime and Punishment* that "the degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." Though this was written in the late 1800s, the quote still holds true in present-day America, where police statism is practiced by the increasing incarceration of its citizens. The results of such actions are staggering. In 1970 the population of state and federal prisons stood at 196,429. Through the 1970s this number rose, and in 1980 stood at 329,821. Then the prison population skyrocketed during the politically retrogressive 1980s and '90s. In June 1994, a Department of Justice press release declared, "State and Federal Prison

Population Tops One Million!" In its report one perceives a heartless boasting by Federal bureaucrats, as if they were out seeking the distinct reputation of being the biggest incarcerator in the world.

The number of those incarcerated in jails is usually not mentioned by media outlets. Yet 30% of all confined individuals are jail inmates. Between 1983 and 1994 the number of jail inmates increased by 116%, an annual rate of 7.5%. In 1995 the jail population reached a record high of 515,000. By 1998 the total jail and prison population was over 2.4 million. Compared to other countries the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate. At the beginning of 1995 the U.S. incarceration rate was 575 per 100,000 residents, compared to such powerhouses as Russia (558), South Africa (368), Thailand (159) and our next door neighbor Canada (116).

Even more disturbing are the characteristics behind who is incarcerated. As one Latino prisoner stated: "I'm a minority, and I believe my race is a major reason for me being here." A Black Illinois prisoner said: "This government since its illegal inception has truly needed and needs to keep my people and other people of color down in order for capitalism to stay productive." This has always been true, beginning with the genocidal Christopher Columbus, who exploited and enslaved Native Americans for the profit of gold.

Today the prevalence of racism drives minorities into prison. Sixty-five percent of the incarcerated are minorities. The lock-em-up binge has fallen heaviest on poor Black people. Racist sentencing laws, like the 100 to 1 disparity between crack and powder cocaine possession, are due to reactionary legislators who know that 92% of all defendants convicted of possession of the cheaper drug are Black and Latino. At the end of 1993, 50% of prisoners, 456,570, were Black compared to 431,780 white. The same demographic characteristics apply to local jail inmates, with 215,400 (44%) being Black compared with 191,900 (39%) white. An even more striking illustration of the prejudicial attack against Blacks is imprisonment per capita. At the end of 1995 there were 1,832 Black prisoners per 100,000 Black U.S. residents in prisons and jails, compared to 354 per 100,000 whites. This shows that Blacks are five times more likely than whites to be thrown into an American dungeon. The number of Latinos incarcerated is 18%, though this percentage is predicted to rise in coming years due to the war on immigrants.

\* \* \*

The unique circumstances in which female prisoners are terrorized by their keepers is a measure of the physical and mental brutality within the system. Women are usually in an atmosphere filled with sexual and physical intimidation. They are sexually harassed by male guards, subject to sexual blackmail, pressured to trade sex with guards in return for protection or favors, subject to lack of privacy and forced to put up with other horrifying conditions...

A Texas female prisoner told of her observations at a Texas prison for women:

We are subject to all sorts of abuse around the clock, most noticeably verbally, mainly by male guards, who are the majority of guards here. They go out of their way to deride, downgrade, abuse and humiliate women.... We are called "bitches," "cunts," and told to "put your shit there," "move your asses here," and so on.... In the dining room, clusters of male guards get together while we eat, to tell all sorts of dirty jokes, making sure we hear every word said... It is illegal for male guards to watch women at the toilets. Even with the toilets in our cells, male guards come unannounced into the living area next to the cells, and can watch us use the toilets, dressing, undressing or sleeping... Once a tall white woman was forced to strip to her bra and thermal underwear pants in the middle of the inside yard, in view of everyone. Doing the strip search were two female guards, but with the yard being open in view of everyone here, there was plenty of male guards looking on.

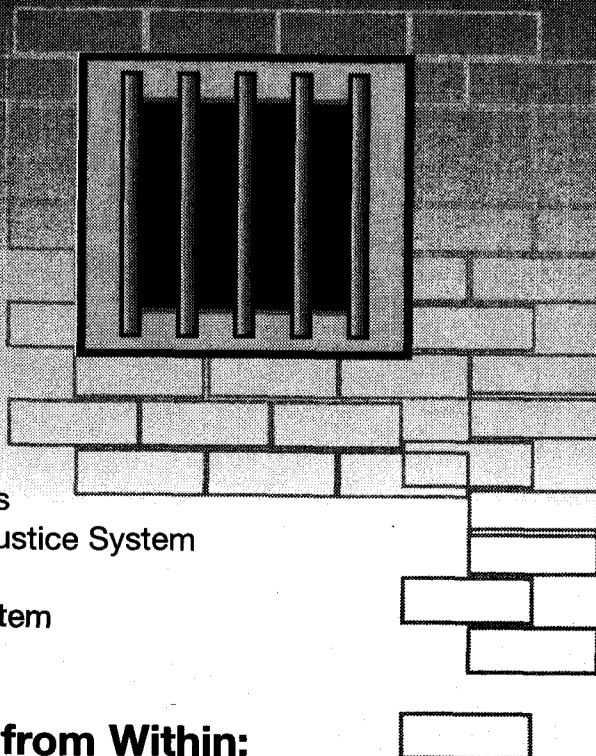
Besides the fact that women prisoners are subjected to a barrage of sexual abuses, a majority receive less services and opportunities than their male counterparts on everything from medical and mental health services to educational-vocational programs. Even more troubling is the number of women in jail and prison who are mothers. Over 156,000 children are affected by their mothers' incarceration, half never visiting their mothers during what is considered an important time in life when these children need to be nurtured most. A substantial reason

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### Part II:

#### Organizing the Revolution from Within: A Marxist-Humanist Perspective

on



these family ties are severed is either economic and/or the distance which makes the trip to the prison impossible. Mothers often lose custody and visitation rights to their children even after they get out...

\* \* \*

All prisons and a good majority of jails use their captives for producing goods for the state and for maintaining a given institution's operations. In what are called "industries" in most prisons, prisoners are required to work for 40 hours a week at less than minimum wage, making products like office furniture, picnic tables, park benches, mattresses, clothing, license plates, laundry and hygiene care products. What really caught my attention was that prisoners in South Carolina are paid 34 cents an hour to construct prisons for the state. To attract prisoners to do the dirty work for the state, the Department of Corrections offers a series of incentives that other South Carolina prisoners do not receive. Such incentives include the highest wages and sentence reductions compared to other work done by prisoners in the state. All of this is in the name of cutting labor costs! If prison labor were not used, budgets for jails or prisons would rise by untold millions.

One type of work done by prisoners, the revived chain gangs in Alabama, Arizona, Florida and Iowa, has caught the singular attention of the public and human rights advocates. It all "restarted" in Alabama when the state prison commissioner, Ron Jones, decided to revive the dark ages technique of shackling prisoners together by ankle chains and parading them on Alabama roads for all the public to see as a "deterrence." These actions in Alabama became a testing ground to see if prisons could get away with using chain gangs again.

This was the case when Jones invited the nation's media to observe prisoners breaking rocks in the sun for an entire day. The practice of chain gangs was originally phased out in the early part of this century after complaints of brutal and barbaric conditions. It is shocking to think our society has taken a step backward to a long discredited practice. You would guess the U.S.'s condemnation of the Chinese, or for that matter any nation that fails to follow the U.S. standards, means that use of prison labor does not apply to this country. Supposedly the U.S. is more "humane." All I can say is give me a break! In the future we should expect the drastic growth of the industry that uses prison labor. It is powered largely by the profit motive. This will guarantee the necessary industrial production way into the 21st century as the ruling class looks for greater profit by trampling on human rights.

**From Part II of the pamphlet...**

Aside from the techniques used to suppress prisoners, there is another side of the battle that is not usually considered. That is the battle of the mind—the struggle over our own conflicts. It is important to bring out this inner-self, in order to get a grip upon ourselves and reality in general.

A starting point for this "battle of the mind" is the choice between challenging the repressive prison system or following institutional rules in hopes of an early release from the dungeon. Hopefully, one would choose to challenge the system itself without being destructive toward your fellow prisoners. As one Kansas state prisoner put it:

*Many today feel that because of their presently short prison sentence they can use the time in prison for a grand party and game where anything goes—drugs, robbery, even sex with another inmate! Until these men realize, and usually too late, that the system is merely using them, they never realize until those same doors shut that they had only fooled themselves by not at least making the effort to conform to the norms of free-world life instead of submerging themselves in the mentally and personally destructive prison life.*

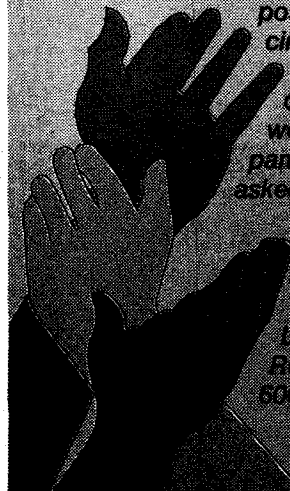
We must find a middle ground of revolutionary humanist thought, wherein we show respect for the oppressed, while struggling against the oppressors. This has been a challenge for myself, since I have watched fellow prisoners destroy themselves over petty things, challenging each other instead of their keepers. This has often led me to question my efforts to fight the system in what sometimes seems a one-person army against the entire world. I have asked myself, why should I help my fellow prisoners when they seem set on not helping themselves? What I have learned, however, is that to

overcome the feelings of distrust towards others, we must overcome the hatred that we build up against the "me." What I mean by this is that a lot of prisoners feel disfavor for what they've done or who they are, and they project this feeling of self-alienation onto others. But once we accept that we are human and are bound to make mistakes, then our own inner battles can be resolved and our struggles against the real enemy can begin. We must all remember that the prison system is set up to control us so we can be silenced by our keepers at all times. We do not deserve to be treated as inhuman. We need to take the struggle to the next level. And if we dig deep enough, we will find sources of the needed opposition to this society right from within the prison populace. This is clear from the responses to our questionnaire. It posed a number of questions, such as: "What do you believe is the main objective of prison administrators in their use of control mechanisms?"; "Do you believe the current sentence which you are serving time for is justifiable?"; "If you could change the prison environment, how would you do it?" The final question was: "What does the word 'revolution' mean to you?" Here are just a few of the many responses to the last question:

- *Revolution means change and the willingness and action to effect such positive change. The civil and criminal "Justice" systems must be positively changed.*
  - *Revolution simply means "change." It is a beautiful word often equated with violence. But revolution (change) does not have to be violent unless someone for some reason is opposed to change. Then it should really be looked into. Let's use Jesus for example. Jesus was a revolutionary, he brought change. Something that was totally different from the "norm." Things only resulted in violence (death) because of opposition to truth. America engaged in a revolutionary war because the British refused to give her independence. 'Revolution' only involves violence as a result of opposition to truth and righteous principles. But we must remember that we must first undergo an "internal" revolution by revolutionizing our thought process.*
  - *Complete change or political overthrow brought about from within. This happens when damn near everyone is dissatisfied.*
  - *Revolution to me means seizure of all that is held to oppress or exploit a human being. It's a complete change of ways for the better. For the peoples of the struggle, revolution is strength, a love of power and unity and an imperative act and conscious expression. The oppressors have been digging so many graves; now the grave may be their own!*
  - *Revolution is a mass movement from the bottom up, non-authoritarian, anti-statist, anti-capitalist, with the purpose of doing away with capitalist social relations, capitalist states, hierarchies, patriarchy, racism, and making provisions for the total democratic control of the means of production—without utilizing any sort of bureaucracy or leaders except leaders subject to immediate recall, and this only in an industrial area. In short, a worker-run society without bosses, state or centralized bureaucracy.*
  - *Rip the current system down and start over again, working toward a human-wrought system and ridding ourselves of leaders who need to be overthrown. Revolution to be effective must be ongoing. But no one can be certain because it has never been accomplished.*
- These responses show that many are reaching for a revolutionary solution. But at the same time, many want

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to know what can be accomplished through a socialist revolution, in light of what existed in such Communist nations as China, Russia, North Korea or Cuba, etc. The only goal of the capitalist government is to make sure all the power and profit goes toward a few wealthy individuals, no matter the harm to the rest of society. True Marxian socialism gives the power and control to the lower classes and thus socialism is a threat to the society of the overly rich. It does not stop at simply getting rid of the rich and nationalizing property under the control of the state, as occurred in Communist countries. Genuine Marxian socialism calls for transforming conditions at work, in school, in the family, and in society as a whole, by ending the division of mental and manual labor, whereby one class does the thinking and another the doing. Marx distinguished himself from what he called the "vulgar communists" of his day, for thinking all that was needed to change society was the abolition of private property. He instead proclaimed his philosophy to be "a thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism." To begin any revolutionary action against this corrupt capitalistic system, we first must consider socialist philosophy as the back-bone of struggle under a Marxist-Humanist perspective. We must at least consider with openness Marxist-Humanism as the philosophy with which to begin the struggle against the corrupt system. In doing so we prisoners and those in the free world can start to change the oppressive environment from the inside out.

—D.A. Sheldon

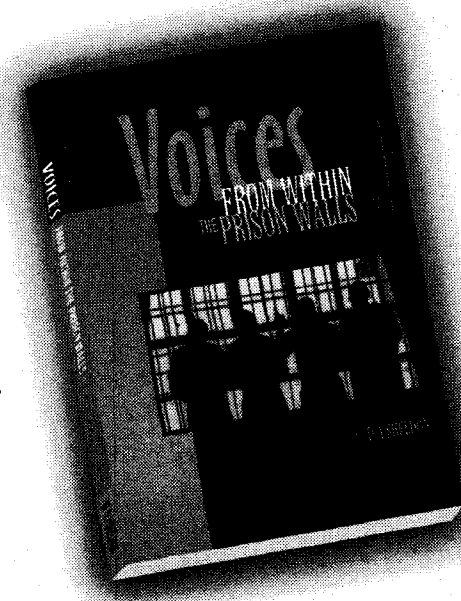
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# GM strike shows labor doesn't buy capital's expansion at any cost

(Continued from page 1)

"By helping them we also help ourselves."

Another picket with a historical perspective noted, "First there was Caterpillar, then the Detroit newspapers. If we lose this one, it's all over."

On July 21, GM moved its attack to the courts, marking the first time courts have been involved in contract negotiations since the 1936-37 Flint sit-down strikes that created the UAW. GM charged that the strike was illegal, involving job-outsourcing and investment decisions, which were non-strikable issues, and a Federal judge put the dispute into the hands of a mediator. The UAW countered by moving to obtain additional strike authorizations from GM's Saturn plant, the only assembly plant still operating, a truck plant in Janesville, Wis., and the Corvette plant in Bowling Green, Ky. The UAW already had strike votes from the Dayton brake plants.

The first break in the standoff came the third week in July when GM and the UAW agreed to a weekly work rotation of 550 strikers at the Delphi plant to produce parts for non-GM customers like Harley Davidson and Wal-Mart. The second break came on Sunday, July 26, when GM returned the dies taken from the Metal Center. The strike ended the next day, July 27.

On the strike issues, GM won a 15% increase in productivity at the Metal Center, job cuts and changed work rules, plus job speed-up and job cuts at Delphi. But most importantly, GM got a no-strike pledge for the two Dayton brake plants, thus succeeding in re-opening the contract and putting a stranglehold on those workers until the end of 1999. GM can now exploit them at will without fear of a strike—a sellout of those workers who had no vote on this giveaway. The Delphi workers got the promise that GM would not close or sell the plant until the end of 1999, and at the Metal Center, GM's promised to honor its \$300,000 investment commitment—which had already been negotiated in the existing contract.

The UAW got GM to drop its court action and to pay workers for the July 4th week they would have gotten as paid vacation days if they had not been laid off. This money comes from a joint UAW-GM fund that costs the company nothing. (As we go to press, GM has announced plans to sell its Delphi parts operations.—Ed.)

Financially, GM lost \$3 billion in profits, this year's second quarter earnings plummeting 81%, from \$2.1 billion last year to \$389 million this year. Its market share also suffered and is probably down to 30%, compared to 35% five years ago. However, GM's production capacity is geared for 35% of the market, which means it is producing nearly a million more vehicles than it can sell.

**UAW workers lost some \$1 million in wages, but much more than finances were involved. They gained a new sense of solidarity, confidence and power, and proved once again that the strike weapon can shut down the biggest corporation in the world.**

A Delphi woman worker said that on the first day back on the job, bosses were looking over their shoulders and speeding up the work. They also had taken over for production a rest area the union had negotiated for workers to use for their rest periods, setting up an immediate worker-management confrontation. "It's worse than it was before the strike," the worker said.

The job speed-up and horrific overtime GM will schedule to try to recoup lost profits is sure to result in increasing injuries and other health problems. Instead of bringing peace, the strike sets the stage for future war.

## NATION JOINS A PRIVATIZATION FIGHT

Other significant labor actions demonstrating the grow-

ing fighting spirit of workers include a general strike in Puerto Rico, a huge labor demonstration in New York that paralyzed the city, a 40-day Philadelphia transit workers' strike, and international show of solidarity for workers at a Mexican Hyundai auto supplier plant, and the biggest union organizing victory in 20 years.

In Puerto Rico, 6,400 telephone workers fearing huge job losses went on strike on June 18 to protest plans by Gov. Pedro Rossello and his ruling party to sell the national telephone company to a consortium headed by U.S.-based GTE Corporation. The workers, with the near unanimous support of the entire 3.8 million population, demanded a national referendum on the sale.

Rossello, who had already privatized government-owned hotels, utilities, prisons and hospitals and supports



Mass demonstrations in Puerto Rico took place in a national movement against privatization inspired by striking telephone workers.

a voucher system for education, rejected a referendum. As support for the strikers grew, the Board Committee of Labor Organizations representing some 50 different unions, joined in preparation for a general strike on July 7-8, the first general strike in the island since 1932 when sugar cane workers walked off their jobs.

**On July 7, an estimated 500,000 people joined in the strike, blocking the airport roads, closing banks, retail stores, hotels, and the island's huge shopping mall, causing cancellation of scheduled cruise ship stops, and the barricading of the university by supporting students and professors.**

While the strike shut the island down, Rossello refused to budge, and signed legislation authorizing the sale although the price went up from \$1.8 billion to \$2 billion after a Spanish phone company put in its own bid on the company.

Rossello, who supports U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico, hopes his privatization policies will result in Congressional approval for a vote at the end of this year to determine the island's status: to remain a commonwealth, become an independent nation, or become a U.S. state. While the 41-day strike by the telephone workers is over, they have vowed to continue their protests with sporadic one-day strikes.

In New York some 40,000 construction workers and their friends brought the city to a standstill on Tuesday, June 30, from 8 a.m. until noon. The demonstration was sponsored by the New York Building and Construction Trades Council to protest the award by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of a \$32.6 million contract to a non-union contractor to build a new command center.

The huge turnout, however, took the union leaders, police, and city administration completely by surprise. Instead of dispersing after the 8 a.m. rally, the workers spontaneously began to march to the command center site, overwhelming police on horseback and on foot who tried to stop the marchers with billy clubs and tear gas, bringing traffic to a complete halt and closing hundreds of other construction sites in the city.

Led mostly by young workers who opposed both their union leaders and police who tried to stop them, the demonstration inspired a new sense of confidence in both the construction workers and other city laborers, especially since three previous rallies of one to two thousand workers had flopped.

So frightened were the labor leaders over their loss of control over the workers that another scheduled rally was called off, and a furious Mayor Giuliani vowed to crush any future city disruptions.

In Philadelphia, a Transport Workers Union strike of 40 days by 5,000 workers ended on July 10. The strike, which

shut down all buses, trolleys and subways that daily affected 435,000 passengers, was the second longest in Philadelphia transit history and was marked by many demonstrations, arrests, injunctions and lawsuits.

Job security dominated the struggle, with the transport authority demanding work rule changes that would result in hiring part-time workers, increased use of part-time workers, job speed-up, and cuts in other benefits. The question of part-time workers, unresolved at the strike's end, was instead referred to arbitration and remains a bitter point of confrontation.

## CROSS-BORDER SOLIDARITY

In Mexico an international display of labor solidarity mushroomed from a strike for an independent union by Mexican workers employed at Hyundai's Han Young auto supplier plant. Workers at the plant contacted labor support groups in the U.S., which in turn contacted other groups in America and other countries, resulting in support responses from groups in San Francisco, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Chicago, Boston and New York, as well as Brazil, Bangladesh and Spain.

**In Portland, Ore., a support group closed the Hyundai ports for a day. One supporter declared that if governments can cross borders to exploit workers through treaties such as NAFTA and GATT, workers have to cross borders to protect each other through solidarity actions during struggles.**

At United Airlines, in what is the greatest U.S. union victory in 20 years, over 19,000 reservation takers, ticket sellers and gate agents won recognition to join the International Association of Machinists, the same union demanding increased job security and other benefits for their Northwest Airline union members.

The United Airlines victory was the culmination of a year-long effort by the IAM, which promised to redress the service workers' complaints that included a three-tier wage system, with the lowest tier, representing 40% of the work force, receiving fewer vacation and sick days and less health care coverage than the other employees.

Meanwhile, departing William Gould, who resigned in July as chairman of the National Labor Relations Board, blasted both interfering Congressmen and the four other negligent board members for the failures and delays in settling hundreds of pending unfair labor practices cases.

He confirmed what many workers know—especially Black southern women workers who have been trying to organize their work places—that filing an unfair labor practices charge against management is almost always a losing battle. Exposing these delays in detail, Gould stated that the only way that workers can get justice is by rewriting the present law to remove the many known loopholes for employers.

A case in point involves more than 3,000 workers at the Avondale shipyard in New Orleans who voted five years ago to join the New Orleans Trades Council. They are still waiting because owners and management have effectively used legal loopholes to block and delay union recognition.

These same tactics have been used by the Detroit newspaper owners to deny re-employment of over a thousand workers who struck over unfair labor practices that have been upheld but continuously appealed for over three years. The majority of the Labor Board members is so blatantly anti-labor that the agency is now known as the graveyard of union organizing.

Despite all of the obstacles, the new challenges by American labor are sure to grow as the effects of the national and international economic crises are felt. Already evident are falling U.S. production and profits caused by the economic collapses in Asia, accounting for one-third of the world's economic output and one-third of U.S. exports. Faced with increasing job insecurity, workers will be forced to seek their own solutions to the ever-growing divisions in American society.

## "Capitalism's new global crisis reveals the todayness of Marx"

This is the title of the draft of the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives Thesis for 1998-1999 as it appeared in the July *News & Letters*. As part of the preparation for our upcoming national gathering, we urge your participation in our discussion around this thesis because our age is in such total crisis that no revolutionary organization can allow any separation between theory and practice, workers and intellectuals, "inside" and "outside," philosophy and organization. We are raising questions and ask you to help in working out the answers.

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## Editorial

## Support the people's war in Kosova

What is taking place in Kosova today is nothing less than a people's war. Even the most hostile bourgeois journalists and military experts concede that virtually the entire Albanian population of Kosova now consider themselves either members or sympathizers of the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA). Without any significant training, the lightly armed KLA forces have, in a matter of months, taken over nearly half of the province. They are backed by a well-organized Kosovar Albanian community abroad which has funneled money, arms, and fighters into the battle zones, across the mountainous border with Albania, making the KLA a multi-tendenced and diversified rebel movement.

Arrayed against the Kosovar Albanian people are the Serbian military-police-militia forces headed by the war criminal Slobodan Milosevic, the true commander of all

Serb units during the Bosnian war. Serb forces are well-armed and battle-tested, with such famous "victories" behind them as the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of 7,300 Bosnian men, mostly unarmed and willing to surrender.

Those who are betting on a Serb victory have forgotten the nature of a people's war. They should remember Bunker Hill in 1775 when American patriot forces composed of farmers fighting for their land, homes, and freedom routed a crack unit of the British army. They should also recall Valmy in 1794 when an untrained French citizen army, fired with the idea of freedom, shocked Europe by defeating the cream of the Prussian army, and went on to defeat all of the kings of Europe. They also forget the power of the idea of national liberation, from Ireland to India and from Poland to Nicaragua.

On the ground in Kosova, the most startling recent

event was the sudden appearance of KLA units outside the strategic Trepca mining and industrial complex. This complex, perhaps the most valuable piece of real estate in the region, not only supplies power to all of Kosova plus large swathes of Serbia and Macedonia; it also earns Milosevic millions of dollars in foreign exchange through exports to the U.S. and elsewhere, evading the international sanctions against his regime. The KLA attack, although repulsed some days later, surely had a remarkable effect on Serbian nerves.

Before the 1980s, when Milosevic and his Serb chauvinist followers attacked the ethnic Albanian community of Kosova at the onset of their drive for a Greater Serbia, 75% of the Trepca miners were ethnic Albanian. After they went on strike in 1988 against the curtailment of Albanian freedom, Milosevic imprisoned their leaders and fired most of the workers, replacing them with ethnic Serbs.

In those days, before the outbreak of the Bosnian war in 1992, thugs such as "Arkan," later known for his crimes in Bosnia, were allowed to terrorize the population of Kosova, setting up a virtual apartheid system. The rulers were to be the 10% Serb minority. This was exemplified by the fact that one of the main hotels in Pristina, the capital of Kosova, had a sign out front declaring: "Entry Forbidden to Animals and to Albanians." Today the sign has been removed, but the policy remains.

The so-called international community has shed crocodile tears over Bosnia and Kosova, but taken care never to aid the liberation fighters. For example, after some mild threats against Milosevic this spring, NATO backed off once it realized that the KLA stood a chance of success. Though the vast majority of Kosovars now support independence, the U.S. and NATO steadfastly oppose it. In July, the U.S. government called off efforts to capture top Bosnian Serb war criminals Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic. The UN Bosnian war crimes tribunal has tried a few small fry, but has not even indicted people for rape and sexual slavery because of pressure from the Vatican and legalistic quibbling.

The U.S. has been the most arrogant of all in attempting to block the establishment of a permanent world court to deal with war crimes. While 120 countries voted for the new court, the U.S. was among only seven opponents along with China, Libya, and Israel.

For over a decade, the Kosovar Albanians have resisted Serb rule, first nonviolently and now with armed force. They point to the lessons of Bosnia on two points: (1) Never trust promises from Milosevic, and (2) do not depend on the U.S. and its allies.

Besides the Kosovars, many forces and currents are today closing in on Milosevic and his regime. The 7,300 dead of Srebrenica and their fellow Bosnian citizens cry out for justice. Serb-populated Montenegro's people have not only encouraged their sons to desert, but have also taken in thousands of refugees from Kosova, including many Albanians. In Belgrade, people still remember the mass democracy movement of 1996-97.

We call on all who support freedom, who support national liberation, who oppose fascism, racism, rape, and sexual slavery, to join us in supporting the Kosovar Albanians in their fight against the Milosevic regime. Those factions on the Left and in the peace movement who continue to excuse Milosevic or to equivocate need to be publicly exposed and denounced. Milosevic must be defeated and tried for his genocidal crimes. There is no middle ground.

## Fighting 'Three strikes'

**Oakland, Cal.**—On June 27 the Oakland chapter of Families to Amend California's Three Strikes (FACTS) held their first organizing meeting against this mandatory sentencing law. With clear documentation how wrong and ineffective the three strikes law is, FACTS is mounting a campaign to exert political pressure.

From their leaflets: "Non-violent offenders are being locked up in maximum security housing units. California built 19 prisons and only two universities in the last ten years; 80% of law enforcement time and money is spent prosecuting minor offenders, not violent criminals. Families have become victims of three strikes. Many have lost friends, jobs, homes and now live in poverty. The Three Strikes law has led to unduly harsh sentences for people with no history of violence. People with drug addictions are being 'rehabilitated' with life sentences. The Three Strikes Law is applied to Juvenile Crimes—going back to 16 years of age. The Three Strikes Law does not reduce crime. It builds a Prison-Industry Complex. Prisons are big business and people are the commodity."

At the Oakland organizing meeting, an activist named Mary told the story of her organizing. She, together with one other woman, Karen, addressed their first audience in northern California on Jan. 1, 1998 in San Jose. In the six months since then, Mary has not only seen the organization in San Jose grow so much that they are able to hold regular demonstrations in front of the courts and jails in San Jose and correspond with about 125 prisoners per week, but has also helped start eight other northern California chapters of FACTS.

Clearly much credit is due Mary and Karen for their "parking lot" organizing (talking to other people visiting prisoners, while they are visiting their loved ones.) Yet they are the first to point out that their explosive growth is due in large measure to the organizing from the inside. Prisoners find out from each other about the organization and are asking their loved ones to get involved.

For more information, write FACTS, P.O. Box 21613, San Jose, CA. 95151, or visit members.labridge.com/facts on the web.

—Ursula Wislanka

## Youth

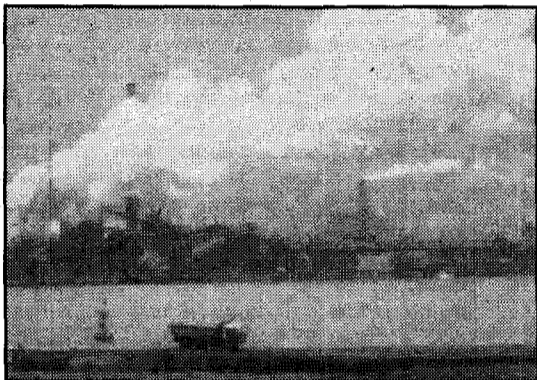
## Environmental accords vs. earth

The clock is ticking and many of us are wondering how much longer before the environmental time-bomb goes off. In recent weeks, negotiators from countries the world over have been meeting in Bonn, Germany to try and work out the details of the Kyoto Protocol. The agreement was reached last December, requiring industrialized nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 5% below 1990 levels for the years 2008-2012.

Unfortunately, the conference seems more like a nursery with the U.S. whining the loudest. The general attitude is that no one wants to take any step forward unless their economies are secure. The U.S., for instance, has threatened that the agreement will not be passed by Congress if it is required to take more and larger steps than poor, developing nations. The U.S. also favors a system of emissions trading with no restrictions placed on the proportion of a country's target reductions that could be bought or sold.

But it's not just the U.S. Even plans favored by the more liberal European nations reflect the attitude that countries should do the bare minimum to reach target reductions and nothing further. This is the fundamental problem with all environmental legislation today.

This attitude is not going to save the environment. It's not even going to come close. Because by the time these target emission reductions take effect 10 years from now,



it may be too late. A report released by a congressional commission this year said that the rate of rain forest destruction is increasing, despite its being the most celebrated environmental cause. Estimates now state that if the current rate continues, the Amazon rain forest will be gone in 20 years. Only bits and pieces would be left—not enough to support an ecosystem.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if the largest tropical rain forest in the world is destroyed, we're going to have some problems. What about the people who live there? What about the people whose jobs depended on the forest? What are they going to do? The loss of biodiversity. Erosion. Global warming. Overpopulation. Deforestation. Loss of 20% of the world's fresh water supply. The list goes on.

The timber companies, multinational corporate polluters, oil companies and politicians who do the bidding of these eco-criminals show no signs of slowing down.

What is it going to take for people to realize that there isn't going to be any use for the money they've worked so hard to save when we can't breathe the air or drink the water? It's time to cut the crap and actually work on legitimate plans to create an ecologically sustainable society.

Act now, because this may be our last chance to work towards a truly humane, respectful and sustainable society.

—Peter Brinson

## Forgotten heritage of 1968

(Continued from page 4)

ers in 1967. Soon after, those in power wanting to set an example of their severity and brutally suppressed a demonstration of students in Prague. These were visible signs of the necessity for change.

## SPRING OF 1968—A HOPEFUL SPRING

Not a few of the top party officials were aware of this. What was needed first of all were personnel changes. The authoritarian rule of the first party secretary Novotný—who at the time was also president of the republic—had to be broken. His behavior towards the Slovaks gave a welcome opportunity to criticize him and ask for his removal from office. After a prolonged inner-party struggle he was forced to resign his post and a Slovak, a less-known personality, Alexander Dubček was elected. Thus the year of 1968 began promisingly.

The big change started with small steps, but in March a daring measure—daring under a Communist regime—was introduced: Censorship was abolished. This was a step of immense consequences and proved what freedom of expression could cause. Suddenly, no problem, no question, seemed taboo and began to be discussed freely in the media—from the "Prague trials" to victims of other "political" trials to problems of party officials to economic difficulties. All this provoked another, seemingly unstoppable current of popular demands for other freedoms.

The spontaneous outburst of a thirst for freedom was breaking institutional barriers: Under the prevailing system all "activities" were governed by single-purpose organizations (so the CP could more easily control them)—one youth organization, one for women, a single trade union, etc. Now out of the blue many new associations (most, however, with old traditions interrupted by the regime back in 1948) emerged, like Scouts, students, trade unions, and an attempt was made to re-vitalize the social democratic party.

What seemed most promising for the future, however, were the first attempts to found workers' councils in some coal mines and factories in northern Moravia. Intellectuals like the philosopher Ivan Sviták joined them trying to forge a common "front." While the dam of the party's power seemed broken, conservative elements of the party and state bureaucracy were doing their best to stop the movement or to slow it down at least. These efforts would not have been much more than inside struggles for power had it not been for their international links. The Soviet leadership was following very closely the Czechoslovak developments and understood too well what consequences they might have for the whole Soviet bloc.

When all official as well as unofficial warnings were not heeded—the Czechoslovak press, now free, even opposed their Soviet colleagues, which was considered almost a

treason against "socialism"—the leaders of the "brotherly" countries, i.e., the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia met twice to settle "the Czechoslovak affair." (It was only Yugoslavia's Tito who showed his sympathies to the events in Prague and Hungary's Kadar who tried to mediate—Tito powerless to help; Kadar, under pressure, sent troops to Czechoslovakia in August.) The last of these meetings took place in July 1968—when the Soviet rulers had finished preparations for the invasion.

Skeptics warned of possible intervention yet this was something unimaginable for most people—one "socialist" country attacking another! It was most probably unimaginable also for Alexander Dubček, not because of his limited imagination, but for him being a true Communist. Though he was a favorite of many people in his country, he was not the one who was "at the head" of the movement but rather reluctantly following the masses. This was best seen in his behavior in the August days. While he was made a prisoner by the invading Soviet army on August 21 and held captive for some time, he headed the delegation of the CP to Moscow that signed the Moscow "protocols" which paved the way for the following "normalization"—one of the most humiliating and morally devastating periods of modern Czech (and Czechoslovak) history. It ended only in November 1989.

## RESULTS AND HERITAGE

The results of the Czechoslovak experiment are mixed. On the one hand, this "socialism with a human face" was the last and definitive proof that "socialism" of the Soviet type had not and never could have "a human face." It could only be uprooted, but not essentially changed. The Soviet Union had to be broken up and had to fall so all the other "socialist" countries of its bloc would be able to search for their own ways to freedom. Enemies of Marxism and socialism had an easy time of showing this. Many sympathizers and leftists in the West, both Marxist and non-Marxist who still believed in the Soviet Union, were shocked; many of them turned away forever from what they regarded as socialism.

The end of the Czechoslovak developments of 1968 seems also—until today—an easy argument for those who praise the "free market" order of the present Czech Republic. The survivors and witnesses of "Prague spring"—almost a rejected generation in this country today, outcast from public life after 1989 by young people who knew nothing about the hopes of their fathers and mothers—however, can draw one lesson, a lesson of hope. When people search for freedom, their thirst can overcome many barriers of power. Sometimes it is a blind search that has no philosophy at its base—then it may fail. Given this philosophy, however, it can articulate more clearly its goals and find the means—and in the last instance win.

## ON OUR 'DRAFT FOR MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES'

I liked the Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives in the July issue, especially the section on "the power of negativity." I believe Hegel's idea that "all forward movement proceeds through the power of negativity, the negation of obstacles to the subject's self-development," is true in real life. The Haitian people thought they had won freedom when we got rid of the dictator, but even President Aristide did nothing to improve our lives, and became another obstacle. The need for negation is endless.

**Haitian woman  
New York**

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I enjoyed reading your analysis. One thing seems to be clear—the new openings we have seen in freedom struggles over the past two years are such a high point that it seems to blind the Left from taking seriously the organizational issue. A fundamental failure to deal with this always leads to tragic mishaps. The most important point raised by the events in Indonesia is: will the workers there go beyond the point they have reached, by creating a basis for revolution in permanence? The organizational issue becomes most fundamental precisely here.

**African Revolutionary  
The Gambia**

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I appreciated the way the Introduction to the Draft for Perspectives laid out the post-Cold War nuclear peril and tied it to the economic situation. The section on the role of the state in today's globalized capital reminds me of Rudy Giuliani and New York City, where the state is trying to break many unions at once. Similarly, the governor of Puerto Rico is intent on privatizing and making sweetheart deals with multinationals.

**Ray McKay  
New York**

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At the same time that labor has won some key strikes in Australia, a more ominous trend has also developed. In June elections in rural Queensland, the newly-formed One Nation Party won 23% of the vote. Founded a year ago by Pauline Hanson, One Nation opposes aboriginal land claims and immigration from Asia. Nationwide, opinion polls give the party nearly 15% support.

Hanson claims that Australia is being overrun by Asian immigrants at a time when the overall Asian population is a mere 5%. She has even dared to warn of the supposed danger of bacterial infection from immigration! Student and teachers' organizations have denounced her attitudes toward Aborigines as racist to the core. Conservative Prime Minister John Howard, who has pontificated against strikers again and again, has been conspicuously silent about One Nation.

**Sociologist  
Indiana**

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The section on globalized capital in the Draft for Perspectives is a good analysis, but I don't think it's necessary to make the predictions it does about the bubble holding up the U.S. economy bursting and the unraveling of China's economy.

**Radical Economist  
Washington, D.C.**

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I believe that the article "Capitalism's New Global Crisis Reveals the Todayness of Marx" is a very important document in which there are a lot of thoughts and observations which are highly enlightening to people who believe Marxism is still alive today, and I am pretty sure that there are quite a few of them in China. I am thinking of translating it into Chinese.

**Scholar  
China**

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I think the Draft makes a very important point in quoting Dunayevskaya's comment, "The question of class consciousness does not exhaust the question of cognition, of Marx's philosophy of revolution." There are lessons to be learned from this when it comes to someone like C.L.R. James. He thought the socialist consciousness which arises from the masses as central enough that

a category had to be made of it, yet he shied away from relating Hegel's concept of absolute negativity, where the negation of the negation is most fully developed, to those forces of revolt. It is one reason why he also shied away from working out the relation between dialectics and revolutionary organization.

**Solidarity activist  
Oakland, California**

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The section on Rosa Luxemburg and the problem of organization in the Draft for Perspectives is crystal clear. After reading this, no one can confuse N&LC as being simply a spontaneist organization or one that has much in common with the thought of C.L.R. James.

**Andrew Kliman  
New York**



## REMEMBER HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

This year is the 53rd anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the spirit of the end of the Cold War, the possibility of nuclear war and ethnic and religious conflicts still threaten workers and people everywhere. Both India and Pakistan have carried out underground nuclear tests and announced that they will maintain nuclear weapons. Moreover, imperialist America and the other nuclear powers, while criticizing Indian and Pakistani nuclear testing, are continuing to maintain and develop nuclear weapons through computer simulations. In the midst of all this, we must think about why the pleas for peace from people all over the world are spurned by rulers who carry out their deceptions using the UN as their stage. The Zengakuren has continued to struggle at the forefront of the anti-war movement, in spite of the attempts on the part of the Japanese authorities to suppress us.

**Ishida Takahiro  
Tokyo, Japan**

## COMMODYFING DNA

According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has received an application to create a "Chimera" through genetic engineering: "part chimpanzee, part-pig, part-human." The article says that the Chimera could perform "menial tasks" currently left to "less skilled members of the work force, but without such expenses as wages or health benefits." This raises the prospect of capital truly escaping the law of value, because labor-power could be separated from human labor. In any case there's an "upside" in that this Frankenstein technology might open up a roaring boom in supplying organs for transplants (if they can't get enough from people in prisons, which is another story).

I certainly wouldn't rule out the Christian Right, as good free-marketeers, accepting these "miracles" just as they did with nuclear power (and even the Dalai Lama supports India's nuclear tests these days). Hegel recognized a dichotomy between the abstract logic of capital and the ethical state, but according to Marx he was confined by the "standpoint" of bourgeois political economy—a "science" which Marx described 150 years ago as "the final denial of humanity."

**Dave Black  
London, England**

## SENECA FALLS, 150 YEARS LATER

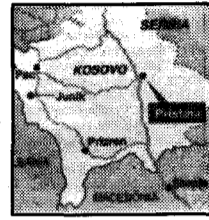
It's disgusting that *Time* would declare feminism dead on the eve of the 150th anniversary of the historic women's rights convention in Seneca Falls. If it was really dead, no magazine would have it as their cover story because no one would care. It's only because feminism is a vital movement, full of potential, one that has been under constant attack—including bombings and murder—that *Time*

# Readers' Views

would want to weigh in on the side of the right wing. The hypocrisy of the author, Ginia Bellafante, is seen in the transcript that was available on *Time's* web page, where feminist writer Phyllis Chesler makes the obvious point that "what the article does is attack non-feminists and anti-feminists, whose work is quite minor..." If we were to believe Bellafante, the people leading feminism are Courtney Love, the fictional Ally McBeal (whose creator is a man), self-promoter Camille Paglia, and the darling of the date-rape-denying set, Katie Roiphe.

**Revolutionary Feminist  
Memphis**

## ON THE MEANING OF THE STRUGGLE IN KOSOVA



You have made a great impression on me with your analyses of international events, especially in the former Yugoslavia. It is clear that the major world powers as well as Serbia are using Bosnia and Kosova for their own purposes.

**Subscriber  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

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I recently attended a meeting here of Workers Aid for Kosova (email: towhtuc@dircon.co.uk). So far they are concentrating on sending an aid convoy to Tuzla, Bosnia to pick up fresh supplies to then take to Kosova via Belgrade. In Serbia they hope to hold a rally with anti-war activists. There was a debate over this. While I thought it necessary to develop the opposition to Milosevic within Serbia, I agreed with the Kosovars that it would be better to take aid from the British labour movement via Albania. This could be done with the cooperation of the Kosova Liberation Army. I think such cooperation would be a massive symbol of internationalism in action and could give a real morale boost to the besieged Kosovars. When this is over I hope the initiative can concentrate on challenging the New Labour government's compliance in the ethnic cleansing. The Kosovars at the meeting had great illusions that Britain and NATO would intervene on their behalf. I hope through a rally I proposed to hold in Parliament we can challenge the illusions of the emigres.

**Chris Ford  
London, England**

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As a graduate student from the former Yugoslavia, I am concerned that in the article on the symposium on "Women and Class" in San Jose reported on in the April issue (p. 11), stressing my words "I come from the country where Marxism had frozen into a dogma" might contribute to reinforcing stereotypes about Yugoslavia. Marxism was deformed and vulgarized but we were also discovering the humanist and original Marx.

I am pleasantly surprised by the level of understanding usually demonstrated in articles on Yugoslavia in *N&L*. As long as Milosevic's regime is supported, even if Kosovo becomes a part of Albania, the rights of many people—not only "minorities"—are going to be endangered. But if we argue that it would be better for Kosovo/a to belong to Albania, aren't we close to supporting the further disintegration of Yugoslavia? I have more questions for the authors of the text on Kosovo/a in the April *N&L*. Wouldn't it be necessary to present a little more of history than to mention the 1389 Serbian battle between the Ottoman Turks and Serbian sentimental attitude toward Kosovo, in order to understand fully why Kosovo/a was (is) a part of Serbia and Yugoslavia? Writing seriously about the Kosovo situation demands not only the knowledge from there and from all sides, but also considerations of many past events and processes that resulted in the fact that Albanians became the majority in the province. This leads to indicators of how Serbian people were

also subjected to ethnic cleansing and, together with Albanians, were the instruments of politicians in power.

**Milina Jovanovic  
California**

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Today's events in Kosova took me back to the mid-1980s, when Mihailo Markovic, the Yugoslav socialist humanist, began to write articles complaining about the growth of the Albanian populace in Kosova. We were shocked by these articles, but little did we know that this former dissident would quickly transform into an outright supporter of Serbian ethnic cleansing. Markovic is a tragic example of what happens when you follow out the logic of a wrong idea. If anyone on the Left were to write articles complaining of the growth of the Latino population in California or New York, they would immediately be denounced and considered reactionary. Why weren't Markovic's comments about the Kosovar Albanians treated the same? And why does such reasoning still go unchallenged, even after we have witnessed the awful ethnic cleansing of Bosnians and now Kosovars by Serbian forces? I guess what Lenin said about his co-leaders in Russia remains true of many others on the Left today—"scratch a Bolshevik and you find a great Russian chauvinist."

**Bosnian Solidarity activist  
Chicago**

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I am interested in your position on the struggle in Kosova. Kosova's supporters are divided between those favoring immediate autonomy and those favoring some kind of UN or NATO protectorate for the area. While I am for its independence, I don't trust the Kosova Liberation Army to establish a free society.

**Balkan Historian  
New York**

## RAIN FORESTS IN JEOPARDY

In the past 12 months hundreds of fires raged in Indonesia's rain forests, creating a smoke cloud that blotted out the sun across tens of thousands of square miles of land inhabited by 200 million people in seven Asian countries. Uncounted numbers were sickened or killed, especially the poor who had no means of escaping the smoke. At the same time, the Amazon rain forest's unnatural burning season set in, the worst in history scorching millions of acres by March. Then Mexico and Central America followed suit, with 10,000 wildfires creating a 2,000-mile-long smoke cloud and threatening Mexico's most important rain forest. Texas went under a health alert and the smoke triggered asthma attacks as far away as Memphis. The media-painted picture of the poor farmer slashing and burning to clear land for crops does not tell the whole story. Large landholders—and sometimes multinational corporations—use the same practice on a massive scale. When the UN's 1996 report faulted poor farmers for destruction of tropical forests, Kenyan environmental justice activist Wangari Maathai retorted, "Poor people are the victims, not the cause. In Kenya at the moment, we are fighting to protect the remaining very few indigenous forests from some of the richest people in the country."

**Franklin Dmitryev  
Memphis**

## Smelling the Roses

I have enjoyed the recent essays in *N&L* on Alienation and Queer Theory. In my view *N&L* could spend a little time with both bread and roses. That which is essential to life and the joy of life itself. It needs to be also brave, wise, and imaginative. The enlightenment philosophers helped pave the way for the French Revolution and it is my hope that *N&L* will do its share for the revolution (in permanence).

**Pat Duffy  
England**

**FLINT WORKERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**

When you're in the plant, you learn a lot from other workers around you and other workers learn from you. You also learn a lot from the strike, and the most important thing we've learned is that you can't trust General Motors.

**Delphi Striker  
Flint, Michigan**

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I started out working here in 1978, and thought it would be just a temporary step on the way to reach my dreams. But one thing lead to another to block my way out of the plant. The way things are now, with so many jobs going somewhere else, I can't even be sure I'll be able to retire before I get laid off.

**Delphi Woman Worker  
Flint, Michigan**

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You read about the millions that GM's top brass makes each year. Now I ask you: How many houses can you live in? How many cars can you drive? How much clothes can you wear? How much food can you eat? It just doesn't make sense that a few get so much and so many get so little.

**Delphi Woman Worker  
Flint, Michigan**

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I'm not so sure that the job rotation of strikers at the Delphi plant was a good idea. I worked last week because I need the money and have three children and a lot of bills to pay. But I only did it because the union said it was okay, and I know a lot of workers are against it.

**Woman Striker  
Flint, Michigan**

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Every year, supervisors come around and tell us that Champion or someone else is after our jobs. Then they give us a set of production figures, with the threat that if we don't meet them, our jobs are gone. These threats against our jobs have been going on a long time. The machinery we run is gauged by engineers, but we're the ones who get them up and running to meet production figures. They can't do it without us, so I really resent how GM shows its appreciation of us and our families by threaten-

ing to end our jobs.

**Press Operator  
Flint, Michigan**

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We should have walked out two years ago when we had about 3,000 more people working here. Now they're gone. We have stopped GM by sticking together, but it's not over. All the equipment at Delphi is set up on wheels with quick disconnects, so that GM can pull it out at a moment's notice.

**Delphi Worker  
Flint, Michigan**

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I think GM purposely mismanaged this plant so they could turn around and say we're not productive enough. How can you be productive when you tell your supervisor you need stock, and he doesn't deliver it? Many supervisors who have come in lately don't know how the jobs run, so we have to show them. At one point, we went for months without any supervisors, except as needed for time and attendance records. We got out production, so the claim that we don't work hard enough is nonsense.

**Woman worker, Delphi  
Flint, Michigan**

**CAPITALISM AND  
HYPOCRISY**

In the wake of President Clinton's visit to China, I can't help but wonder why our nation is embracing that country, yet continues to bully our small island neighbor, Cuba. Is it because Cuba is Communist and has a poor track record when it comes to democracy, freedom and human rights? That's what our government would have us believe. However, the same description pertains to China. In fact, the U.S. government has a long history of supporting and supplying brutal military dictatorships such as those of Guatemala and El Salvador in recent years. Currently, it supplies the notoriously corrupt police and military of Mexico, ostensibly for the so-called drug war, but those same forces are engaged in suppressing the Zapatista movement.

Human rights abuses and perverted democracy are easy for our government to overlook when the "national interest" is served. That "national interest" is capitalism. That is why China is being embraced—American businesses are eager to exploit the low wage Chinese workers to boost their own profits.

**D.W.  
New Orleans**



**QUEER  
NOTIONS:  
LANGUAGE, LIFE,  
EMPOWERMENT**

In response to the "Gay Reader" in Madison who objected to the use of the word "queer," when we use the word we are using it to empower ourselves. We are taking a word that can be filled with hatred and homophobia and turning it into a powerful statement about who we are. We are proving to the homophobic and hateful that their words mean nothing because we are strong and proud. Those who submit to the anti-queer definition of queer are letting the Right define who they are. We are laughing in their faces every time we use that word because it infuriates them.

**Jennifer Handel  
Iowa City, Iowa**

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I was very disappointed to see both the title attributed to my article on the Les/Bi/Bay/Trans Pride in San Francisco, and the accompanying article from Memphis. The title, "Gay Pride: Party or Politics?" sounds like we are saying all of the whole Gay Pride movement is about partying when there is a rich Queer political history beginning in the 19th century through today. Why did the author of the Memphis article bother to go to the parade if only to look for the negative elements while almost completely ignoring the positive which she said were there but didn't describe? Isn't our role to draw out the revolutionary elements of movements we support and relate to people on that basis?

**Julia Jones  
San Francisco Bay Area**

**PRISONERS SPEAK OUT**

It is good to read insights from fellow travelers on the road to truth in *N&L*. It's a rule that a profound acquaintance with truth makes one increasingly aware of error. For instance, supposedly the slaves were freed with the end of the Civil War in 1865. But not quite. During the Civil War one of the South's largest manufacturers of Confederate Johnny-Reb uniforms was the Texas prison system. However, with the end of the Civil War, the Texas prison system did not cease to manufacture the gray uniforms of traitors. It increased the manufacture of such uniforms which then, as now, are the gray uniforms of Texas prison employees. That is meant to be an ever-present gray reminder that the harsh and oppressive capitalist slave-holding mentality has remained alive and well. Instead of abolishing slavery, Texas institutionalized it, tossing some whites and Hispanics in for good measure.

Make no mistake: It is the intrastate popularity of such actions that Governor George W. Bush intends to ride to reelection and then the presidency.

**Prisoner  
Tennessee Colony, Texas**

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The biggest concern here is the lack of rehab programs or the time prisoners have to wait to get into a program which in a lot of cases delays a prisoner from being released. Many are getting frustrated at the continued policies and rules enacted on what seems a weekly basis. Every time you look at a bulletin board some policy has been revised prohibiting you from doing something. Just this week a memo from the superintendent ordered no more drinking cups or other containers in the yard. It's things like this that build up hostilities and are a lot of the reason things are getting worse.

**Prisoner  
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## Our Life and Times

## South Korean workers fight mass layoffs

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

After tasting the bitter fruit of a three-way agreement between business, labor, and the government of Pres. Kim Dae Jung, tens of thousands of South Korean workers rejected any more concessions in a series of general strikes in July. In a rare joint action, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) and the more militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) rejected the government's plan for "reform" which "demands sacrifice only from workers."

The first three-way agreement brokered by Kim in February gave companies a green light for mass layoffs. At that time, the trade unions withdrew a threatened general strike in order to show support for then President-elect Kim, who had aligned in the past with workers and in opposition to the previous anti-labor military dictatorships.

The brief rapport with President Kim evaporated quickly. By May Day, workers were demonstrating with banners naming Kim an "enemy of labor." Instead of "sharing the pain" of the austerity program mandated for the IMF's \$58 billion bailout, well-off South Koreans are reaping a bonanza from high interest investments meant to lure funds back into South Korean banks. Meanwhile, the vast majority of people are being saddled with pay cuts and layoffs.

Unemployment has skyrocketed from around 2.5% one year ago, to 7% currently—over 1.5 million people.

## Rape is a war crime

Women from around the world won their demand that the UN conference to establish an International Criminal Court treat enforced pregnancy as a war crime. They had been opposed by the Vatican, a number of Islamic governments, and U.S. anti-abortionists. The conference, which concluded July 17, had included enforced pregnancy in its draft, together with rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and enforced sterilization.

**The crime of rape as an organized, brutalizing tool of ethnic cleansing, perpetrated by Serb aggressors primarily against Muslim women in Bosnia, was first brought to the world's attention by women's groups, yet there was only one case of formal rape charges being delivered. Women wanted the crime of enforced pregnancy included so that in cases such as the rape camps in Bosnia, where women were imprisoned and deliberately impregnated through rape as a means of ethnic warfare, all those involved could be prosecuted.**

The perpetration of rape on an organized, massive scale also appeared in Rwanda, where Tutsi women were first dehumanized by Hutu propaganda and, when the genocidal campaign began, were raped and sexually mutilated. Algerian women who identified with secularism have been abducted and sexually brutalized by Islamic fundamentalists.

The most recent crimes were committed in Indonesia during the May upheavals against the Suharto government. Officially, at least 168 women and children—overwhelmingly of the Chinese ethnic minority—were raped by groups of men widely suspected of being affiliated with the military. Twenty of the victims died. Women's groups have received reports of hundreds more rapes in Jakarta and elsewhere. Women have also documented that the rapes have continued along with threats against those who would report them, or support the rape victims. Despite the intimidation, a group of about 100 women demonstrated in mid-July outside the Defense Ministry in Jakarta, holding up a banner which stated: "Indonesia! Republic of Fear, Republic of Terror, Republic of Rape!"

Joblessness is expected to exceed 2 million this year. There is no "safety net" of support for the unemployed, and reportedly 27 job loss-related suicides are happening daily.

The July strikes were further fueled by the government's announcement of plans to privatize over 10 state-run enterprises, including telecommunications, construction and utilities. Among the companies is Pohang Iron and Steel, the world's second largest steel manufacturer. The state plans to make partial ownership available to foreign investors. In the private sector, five failed banks are scheduled to merge with still-sol-

## India anti-nuclear rallies

*Nagpur, India*—The recent nuclear testings in the Indian subcontinent has given birth to an anti-nuclear movement in India. There were quite a few demonstrations and rallies in all the major cities in India against



the blasts. I had taken the initiative to organize one such rally here, attended by about 100 people.

We also organized a symposium against nuclear weapons in which we discussed the horrors of nuclear war, the short term effects of such a war on human life and ecology, and why such a war cannot be confined to any particular region and is likely to become global and endanger all forms of life on the planet. We strongly condemned the ruling classes of both countries for creating an atmosphere of war hysteria in South Asia.

—Arvind Ghosh

## Ireland accords tested

The solid support that Irish voters gave on the May 22 referendum to a power-sharing arrangement between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and an end to 26 years of British rule there, was soon put to the test.

In July, the reactionary anti-Catholic, men-only, Protestant Orange Order traditionally stage a series of provocative marches through the Catholic minority neighborhoods. This year, after the support given the May referendum, a number of Orangemen agreed to tone down the most offensive aspects of their parade. But a group of several thousand, goaded on by Ian Paisley and other rabid anti-Catholics, staged a siege at Drumcree in Portadown where British troops had blocked off the Catholic neighborhood from the march.

The real test, however, occurred after July 12 when three young Catholic brothers living in a Protestant housing area were murdered in a firebombing. The torching climaxed earlier attacks on over 130 Catholic households across Northern Ireland, 10 churches and 13 schools. The Loyalist Volunteer Force and other vigilante paramilitaries are suspected in the arson campaign and murders. The outrage over the boys' deaths united, at least for the moment, Protestants and Catholics who reject mindless sectarian terrorism.

vent ones, eliminating another 10,000 jobs.

Auto workers at Hyundai Motor Company have been among the most militant in opposing mass elimination of jobs as the "solution" to South Korea's moribund economy. In April, Hyundai announced its intention to cut 10,000 jobs. When the layoffs began July 16 with the elimination of 2,678 jobs, plus another 900 terminated for two years, workers attacked the managers who came to hand out the pink slips.

Over 2,500 auto workers have occupied Hyundai's main plant in Ulsan since July 20, when the company shut down production. Their wives and families have held support rallies and set up an encampment outside the plant gates. Officials have deployed riot police nearby, and the state began an intimidation campaign against trade union leaders and strike supporters, issuing over 100 arrest orders under the state's notorious National Security Law. Despite the threat of force, workers quickly blocked company attempts, July 28, to reopen the factories.

Whether the state will attempt to end the confrontation with the unions by force, or by some compromise, South Korean workers have been very articulate in rejecting the notion that human beings are the expendable factor in restructuring capital's survival. Lee Kap-Yong, KCTU president, said that if Hyundai is allowed to eliminate jobs unilaterally, it will set an example for other companies in South Korea: "All workers are on the edge of a knife called 'lay off.' So, this is a life-and-death fight that we can't step back from."

## Algerian singer murdered

Lounes Matoub, the internationally known Algerian singer, was killed in June in an ambush near his home in Tizi-Ouzou, Kabylia, the center of that country's large non-Arab Berber population. Matoub's music and political statements had been a thorn in the side of the two most powerful groups in the country, the military government and the Islamic fundamentalists who have been fighting against them since 1993.

Matoub had long been on the fundamentalists' death list because his songs dealt frankly with sexuality and other "forbidden" themes, and because of his support for the secular Berber-based political party, the Assembly for Culture and Democracy. After fundamentalists kidnapped him in 1994, he escaped death after 100,000 demonstrated for his release and after he promised to give up performing. After his release he did not, of course, feel bound by such a promise given under duress, and resumed his musical career, albeit mostly from abroad. He was caught and killed during one of his brief visits home.

**Although a splinter of the murderous Armed Islamic Group (GIA) took responsibility for the murder, the thousands who came out into the streets of Tizi-Ouzou and elsewhere to mourn Matoub made clear that they also blamed the military regime for his death. Many believe that the military often allows the GIA to strike against dissident intellectuals in order to eliminate its own opponents, and to strike against civilians, especially women. This allows the authoritarian government to appear reasonable when compared to the barbarity of the GIA.**

The military had reason to fear Matoub because of his strong stance against new laws to make classical Arabic the official language. Matoub and other Berber intellectuals have objected to forcing Arabic on the Tamazight-speaking Berber minority, some 10% of the population. Long before the rise of fundamentalism, Matoub had first gained prominence during the Berber Spring of 1980, a cultural and political revolt against the Arabization policies of the single-party National Liberation Front regime, then still in power.

## 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*.