

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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## 'Young warriors' keep fire burning



by S. Hamer

Ever since I wrote the article in *N&L* last month about how we lost the union representation election at Super Value Lewis Grocery in Indianola, Miss., I have been thinking about the "generation gap" between the older workers on day shift and the younger workers on nights. Day shift had senior employees, with 15 or even 25 years seniority. Many of them said that they would vote for the union. But on election day, they couldn't vote against Mr. Lewis, the main owner, because they have a stereotype in their minds about the white man always being right. The night shift was mostly young Black men, 20 to 32 years old, radical-type guys who showed a lot of courage. I kept thinking about why there was such a difference between the two shifts.

The union drive wasn't started by the union, UFCW Local 1529. It was started by these young workers. A call came to the union hall back in April, asking the union to send representatives to a meeting at a lounge. When the union reps walked into the room, they found 45 workers already there, hostile to the company and ready to fight to make a change.

They had made up their minds that they were through with being treated like boys. They had spunk. This was the first time I ever saw so many young men working together for a cause. To me, they were our young warriors. They were so strong and determined, they could have run a race forever.

But the more I thought about it, the more I saw the difference between the shifts was not just about age. At Delta Pride Catfish, the stronghold of our union, many of the younger generation aren't really active. They don't care about things because the way was paved for them; they didn't have to fight the harassment and plantation conditions that we faced when we built the union there. It makes a difference when you have been through a struggle and when you haven't. So even though they are young, they don't have the same revolutionary attitude that the Lewis Grocery workers have.

It's like we say in the News and Letters Committees

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## Black World

### Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!



*Editor's note: This month I am turning over "Black World" to the following speech Gene Ford gave on Mumia Abu-Jamal and today's prison movement on Nov. 11 at the headquarters of the new Black Panther organization, New Panther Vanguard Movement, in South Central Los Angeles.—Lou Turner*

by Gene Ford

While the movement within the prison walls has been ongoing outside the public eye, today, all hell seems ready to bust loose. After being on death row in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania for 15 years, Mumia Abu-Jamal's date with death is fast approaching. On Oct. 30, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied Mumia's final state appeal for a new trial. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge is expected to sign a death warrant any day. All further appeals seemed to be stopped by the state from above as if they are "God."

From a youth in the 1970s, when at 15 years old he started a chapter of the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia, to his relationship in the MOVE organization to his radio program aired to the masses and titled by the people "Voice of this voiceless," Mumia's political activity spoke out against police ruthlessness within the Black community.

Mumia's activity marked him for death. His crime is not the shooting of a police officer but his defiant spirit, which aroused people with its ideology of freedom. He did not compromise his love for the oppressed. This is what the state condemned him for.

His spirit of freedom cannot be denied and can be seen in two books written by him, *Live from Death Row* and *Death Blossoms*. In the preface to *Death Blossoms*, Julia Wright, states that this book is "the narrative of an escape from prison into the liberated territory of the

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## Middle East crises simmer: from Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

by Kevin A. Barry

Despite the fact that the Clinton administration called off at the last minute its air attack on Iraq, no one believes that this will bring more than a temporary respite to the region. Few expect that Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein will adhere to his promises to allow unimpeded UN arms inspections. Even fewer expect any change of heart in Washington, where both Clinton and his far-right opponents in the Congress seem determined to continue indefinitely an economic embargo that over the past nine years has resulted in untold suffering and death among the Iraqi people.

During the same weeks that the U.S.-Iraq confrontation flared up again, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued its slow burn, despite Clinton's very limited Wye Plantation accord.

### THE MIDDLE EAST AND GLOBAL POLITICS

These twin crises—each of them involving the U.S., the Arab world, Israel, Western Europe, Russia, Japan, and the United Nations—show that conflicts in the Middle East continue to have a major global impact in today's unipolar world. The U.S., as the sole remaining superpower, continues everywhere its drive for single



Palestinian youths protest the shooting death of Wasim Tarifi at the hands of Palestinian Authority police two days after the signing of the Wye accord.

world domination. It seeks to prove its "resolve" and its indispensability, whether in the Middle East or in other areas of crisis such as the Balkans, South Asia, Central Africa, or East Asia. The Middle East remains key for several reasons.

(1) It is the world's chief oil supplier, especially to Western Europe. The fact that new oil fields are being developed in the nearby Caspian region of Central Asia increases rather than decreases the importance of the Middle East in world politics. The U.S. is determined that it, and neither the peoples of the region nor rival powers, be the determinant in controlling that oil.

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## Shut down U.S. 'School of Assassins'

*Memphis, Tenn.*—I was one of nearly 7,000 people who gathered outside the gates of the Fort Benning, Georgia military base to protest the U.S. Army's School of the Americas (SOA), which is really a School of Assassins. This year's participants came from all over the country and some from other countries as well. It was a very diverse group of people coming together in the spirit of solidarity and opposition to oppressive forces.

The SOA trains between 700 and 2,000 soldiers each year from Latin America and the Caribbean. Many have left a trail of blood and suffering in every Latin American country where they have returned. Alumni include two of the three officers in El Salvador cited for the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, 19 of the 26 officers also in El Salvador cited for the 1989 murder of six Jesuits, and three of the top officers convicted of murdering nine university students and a professor in Peru.

In 1996 the Department of Defense was forced to release torture training manuals issued at SOA. They advocate execution, false imprisonment, blackmail, physical abuse and other forms of torture. They confirm that SOA has been instructing Latin American soldiers to intimidate and murder their own people—especially religious leaders, labor organizers, and others working for the rights of the poor—all in the name of democracy. Last year's protest brought about 5,000 people and 600 of them crossed the line into the base and were arrested.

As those of us who were crossing the line gathered in rows of four, a couple on the main stage began singing out the names and ages of men, women, and children who have been killed by people trained behind these gates we were about to enter. The crowd responded saying "Presenté!" after each name was called.

We were loaded on buses and prepared to spend the rest of the day being processed and ordered not to come back. Instead we were driven to a park and told that what "they were going to do for us" was let us go. When we found out there were nearly 2,500 of us it seemed obvious that they were doing themselves a favor and not us.

Currently, there is a bill in Congress to close SOA. Hopefully we won't have to go back next year. But if we do, I imagine the numbers will only grow and eventually our voices will be heard and there will be no more SOA.

—J.

*New York*—Over 2,300 people were prepared to risk some form of government sanctions for "crossing the line" onto Fort Benning, probably the largest number prepared for civil disobedience at any protest during recent years and certainly the largest group committed to incur arrest since these annual protests began in 1990. These numbers did not impress the *New York Times* which gave only a tiny blurb to the event. Coverage was sparse in other media, as well.

One possible reason was that for the first time, the military officers in charge decided not to prosecute any of the group which trespassed onto the Fort Benning Military Reservation which houses the notorious School of the Americas, the focus of the annual protest.

The 1993 United Nations Truth Commission Report on El Salvador and the 1998 "Nunca Mas" published by the Archdiocese of Guatemala (the announcement of which resulted in the recent assassination of Bishop Gerardi) are among the several reports documenting names, dates, and places of hundreds of murderous incidents involving SOA graduates.

The intention of SOA Watch, organized by Father Roy Bourgeois, is to put enough political pressure on the U.S. government, which funds this combat and counterinsurgency training school at the rate of nearly \$20 million a year, to close it down.

Those nations with the worst human rights records have sent the most soldiers for training. Following the Chiapas resistance of 1994, Mexico has been sending more trainees than other Latin American countries; it now accounts for one-third of all soldiers trained there.

My goal in attending this year was to add my voice and presence. Participants could not help but experience political and spiritual solidarity both with all those present and with the too-many victims.

—Participant

### ON THE INSIDE

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# Feminism and *The Communist Manifesto*

by Maya Jhansi

This past year, there has been much discussion on Marx inspired by the 150th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*, from journalistic discourses on Marx's prescient descriptions of globalized capitalism to more scholarly meditations on its rich history. What is troubling, however, is how little feminists have participated in these important discussions. Why haven't feminists felt the need to engage with Marx on this important anniversary?

To some, the answer may seem obvious. The history of Marxism and feminism has always been a tortured one, with many, if not most, feminists arguing Marxism to be at best shortsighted on women's liberation and at worst totally irrelevant.

This is certainly the vantage point of the few feminist discussions of the *Manifesto* that I have been able to find. Sheila Rowbotham, a socialist-feminist theorist and author of one of the earliest books of women's revolutionary history, *Women, Resistance and Revolution*, wrote a piece called "Dear Dr. Marx: A Letter from a Socialist Feminist" published in a recent book, *The Communist Manifesto Now: Socialist Register 1998* (ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys). In this piece, Rowbotham assumes the persona of a fictional 19th century woman, Annette Devereux, who writes to Marx from a utopian Fourierist society called the Wisconsin Associationists in 1851.

The letter is mostly an excuse for Rowbotham's predictable and hollow criticisms. For example, Rowbotham anachronistically derides Marx for not recognizing the beginnings of the women's movement in 1848—even though the *Manifesto* was written before the Seneca Falls Convention. She also criticizes Marx for assuming that women must wait for their freedom until the "abolition of the present system" (p. 7). Certainly, this is hindsight criticism of a manifesto written for the first of the 19th century proletarian revolutions.

Rowbotham castigates Marx for not recognizing the need for an autonomous women's movement, but even feminists were not calling for this in the early 1800s! It is true that there is a rich history of women's activism and philosophic engagement with the Idea of Socialism

## Matilda Gage conference

*Kalamazoo, Mich*—Revolutionary feminists today have a distinct lineage of thought and activity from previous centuries. In her writings, the Marxist-Humanist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya constantly returns to the women of the past, from Maria Stewart to Rosa Luxemburg, to show how a total philosophy of revolution generates the category of woman as revolutionary force and reason. It was in this spirit of understanding the past's relevance to contemporary struggles that I attended a conference last month on Matilda Joslyn Gage.

Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826-1898) was a leading 19th century white feminist in the U.S. She worked with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, co-writing the *History of Women's Suffrage*, but her politics were consistently more radical than theirs. One indication of that was her active solidarity with Iroquois women; she was eventually adopted into the Mohawk nation.

Her house was a stop on the Underground Railroad, and she was one of the Abolitionists who pushed the U.S. government into conducting the Civil War as a war of liberation, saying that "Until liberty is attained—the broadest, the deepest, the highest liberty for all—there can be no permanent peace." Her life and work, which culminated in a scathing denunciation of religious oppression against women, in *Women, Church and State*, had as its driving motivation that "family, church, state, and capitalist: all existing forms of these institutions must be overthrown!"

Gage's influence was, however, systematically distorted and buried by Stanton and Anthony as they were pulled into the retrogressions and racisms of the 1890s. Thus, despite her half century of outstanding radical activism and thought, a conference on Gage, held at Kalamazoo College in Michigan this past October, was the first ever meeting dedicated exclusively to her work. There were 30 active participants, including revolutionaries, workers, students, academics, activists, and lesbian-feminists.

What made this event so compelling was that all the participants were eager to speak of revolution. Feminists—even those from tendencies of the Women's Liberation Movement that might have written off Marx in the past—were ready to engage with Marxist ideas, propelled by Gage's challenge, from her time to ours, that the total transformation of society was both necessary and possible.

I cannot help but wonder what might have been if the feminists of previous eras had been aware of Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, or if the feminists of our own time had taken seriously the philosophy of revolution embedded in Marx's works. Events like this conference on Gage demonstrate how the movement of the Idea of freedom is alive in women, past and present, and what a responsibility we have not to self-limit our transformative ventures, nor to succumb to thinking that we can simply leap to the new society without working through the contradictions in front of us.

—Jennifer Pen

dating back before *The Communist Manifesto*. In 1843, for example, a woman, Flora Tristan, called for a Worker's Union and insisted that the emancipation of proletarian men was hindered if women remained oppressed in the family. But even Flora Tristan called for an International of men and women to put an end to the division between mental and manual labor, not for an autonomous women's movement.

In the famous section on the "abolition of the family" in the *Manifesto*, Marx criticizes the bourgeois "for seeing in his wife a mere instrument of production," arguing that far from introducing a "community of women" to replace the private property relationship of marriage, "the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production." To Rowbotham and others I have read, this section expresses Marx's inability to see women as active agents of their own liberation—women are freed as a consequence of (male) proletarian revolution, not their own revolutionary praxis.

But is that really what Marx is saying here? Does Marx imply that women should "rely for their emancipation upon men?" (Rowbotham p. 7)

I think it is, in fact, quite the contrary. The very fact that to Marx the revolution uproots all relations under capitalism, including the patriarchal and alienated relations within the family, means that revolution is not stagified but rather total from the start. After the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, Marx did not back away from this vision of thorough-going revolution—in his March 1850 Address to the Communist League he called for "revolution in permanence."

Marx expressed this concept of revolution in permanence in 1844 when he projected the Man/Woman relationship as the most fundamental human relationship in need of uprooting. He developed it in the 1850s in a series of still unpublished notes on women's history. Later, in 1871, Marx wrote on the centrality of the "feminine ferment" to the extraordinary Paris Commune, and in the 1880s he focused on women and the Third World in his *Ethnological Notebooks*. Throughout his lifetime, Marx deepened his view of women's revolutionary activity and reason. It is just not true that women are excluded or external to Marx's philosophy.

It is all too easy to slough off onto Marx's shoulders the responsibilities of our age as Rowbotham does. Bringing out explicitly the centrality of women's liberation to Marx's concept of revolution in permanence is our task. A full 30 years after the Women's Liberation Movement, feminists still fail to take responsibility for making what is implicit in Marx explicit. If we are at all serious about working out a socialist alternative to this sexist, racist, class-ridden society, then we cannot afford to shirk this responsibility any longer. The pages of *News & Letters* are open for such discussion.

## Slepian murder shows leap in anti-abortion barbarism

"Please don't feign surprise, dismay and certainly not innocence when a more volatile and less restrained member of the group decides to react to their inflammatory rhetoric by shooting an abortion provider." —Dr. Barnett Slepian

When anti-abortion fanatic John Salvi III gunned down clinic workers Shannon Lowney and Lee Ann Nichols and wounded five others in December 1994, we recognized that this was not only a continuation of the escalating violence begun 25 years ago when women won the legal right to abortion. Rather, it was a leap in barbarism. That barbarism revealed itself anew with the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian in late October, shot in the back by a sniper with a gun so powerful that after the bullet went through his body it ricocheted into another room.

Slepian ran the only clinic left in Buffalo, N.Y., the state's second largest city. It is a clinic used by mostly poor and working-class women, and he spoke often against the murderous fanaticism of the anti-choice movement: "When you're using words like 'kill' and 'murder,' that's where it can lead. If the rosary-holding churchgoers and the bishop don't think that's true, they're fooling themselves."

That Slepian was Jewish was not coincidental to his murder. Four out of the five doctors shot around Remembrance Day, Nov. 11 (a day to remember veterans, dubbed by anti-abortion fanatics as a day to "remember the unborn children"), were Jewish. The fact of their Jewishness becomes more relevant because, as Mark Potok, who tracks the radical Right for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Birmingham, Ala., said: "There's been a real convergence between [U.S. militia groups and anti-abortion fanatics], and it's speeded up recently."

*The Christian Science Monitor* reported: "Increasingly, 'Patriots,' white supremacists, 'Christian Identity' adherents, the Ku Klux Klan, and other sectors of the far-right are taking up abortion as a major cause. At the same time, some in the pro-life movement are adopting the methods of antigovernment radicals, such as the 'paper terrorism' tactic of filing phony liens as a form of harassment against doctors who perform abortions."

Yet despite the clear evidence of danger to Dr. Slepian, nothing was done to prevent his murder. Even the warning sent to Slepian came from the National Abortion Federation, not from any federal authority or from the police.

Federal as well as local authorities must take respon-



## Discussing the *Manifesto*

*New York*—In celebration of the 150th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*, the Brecht Forum sponsored a "Manifestivity" Oct. 30-31. While the music and readings from historical documents and plays were terrific, there were few workshops that addressed the *Manifesto* or anything about Marx.

We did enjoy a workshop entitled "Women and Liberation: Seneca Falls to the Present," although it also failed to live up to its name. At least it discussed theoretical problems, with young activists who seriously analyzed problems within their own movements.

Sofia Quintero talked about women's roles in liberation movements, such as her own anti-police brutality work. There is a problem of seeing women only as victims, she said, even when they are the spokespeople of the movement, like the mothers of youth killed by the police. The mothers speak at every demonstration, and yet they are not treated by the movement as its leaders. "Women's issues" are also treated as separate, she said; rape is considered a subject for women only, whereas police brutality is a "community issue."

Anannya Bhattacharjee discussed her ten years of work with South Asian women in New York struggling against domestic violence. She critiqued her own work, saying that counseling and aid fails to challenge the individualism that negates collective action and reinforces dependency on someone else, the counselor.

Two older feminists also spoke and raised theoretical questions directly. Ros Petchesky, who has worked and written extensively on reproductive rights, said we have come full circle from the women's groups of 25 years ago that struggled with the relationship of Marxism to feminism. Referring to the *Manifesto*, she said the process of globalization it describes continues today, but the opposite is not the union movement, but rather the women's movement, "a movement full of contradictions but demanding women's human rights and economic justice, and having a vision of a sustainable world."

Leslie Cagan of The Same Boat Coalition discussed the need for theory in order to fight the continuing war against women. How do we develop a women's movement that is part of a broader movement, she asked, and how do we break with identity politics?

—Anne Jaclard

sibility for Slepian's death. Attorney General Janet Reno said only after Slepian's murder: "If I find a need to send marshals out, I'm going to send marshals out." Why weren't they sent before? That Slepian was a target was obvious.

Slepian's death was the seventh since 1993. Why did it take until the end of 1997 before a task force was formed to investigate the killings? It was only after the AMA and five other medical groups pushed for a meeting with the Justice Department that they announced that a task force to coordinate investigations of clinic violence would be created.

Dr. George Tiller of Kansas, who was wounded by an anti-abortion fanatic in a 1993 shooting near his clinic, called Slepian's murder and other attacks on abortion providers "a well orchestrated political Armageddon against women and their freedom." He is right. If the emerging neo-fascist anti-abortion and militia movement can control what happens within women's bodies, it has made a giant step in moving forward its entire inhuman agenda. The absolute opposite to such a monstrous plan is a totally new society built on new human relations.

—Terry Moon

## Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

Some 20 practitioners of female genital mutilation in the west African country of Ivory Coast have put down their tools and joined the growing campaign to end that horrific practice. "They are coming to the understanding that human life is more important than traditional and economic interests and are helping to weed out this social evil," said Constance Yai Kipre Tape, president of the Ivorian Women's Rights Association. Pressure from women's groups forced the government two years ago to set up a commission to outlaw the practice, headed by 75-year-old Guei Bah Agnes Kone, a mutilation practitioner for 40 years.

The Burmese government is using rape as a systematic weapon to suppress opposition, according to the UN Commission on Human Rights. Women most likely to be raped are refugees, internally displaced women, and women belonging to ethnic minorities—all primarily in inaccessible areas of the country.

—Information from off our backs

## Protests reverse Kaiser ER shutdowns

**Richmond, Cal.**—Activists from this predominantly Black community, Kaiser service workers, nurses and doctors are celebrating another win in their ongoing battle against managed care. On Nov. 18 Kaiser officials announced a reversal of their original decision to permanently close the Richmond emergency room. Not only will the emergency room stay open, but it will be backed up by the opening of a full service hospital, a new state-of-the-art facility which has sat unstaffed and unused for three years.

In some ways this is even greater than the recent California Nurses Association victory, which gave them a contractual role in determining the quality of care. The outreach to the community was spearheaded by a Black Richmond emergency room nurse, Deborah Campbell. However, just as management has been dragging their feet in implementing the nurses' quality role, it insists that the opening of the Richmond facility will take a year to phase in.

Kaiser planners stubbornly cling to their master plan to close the flagship hospital in Oakland in June 1999. The same health care worker and community worker alliance also has the potential to reverse the plans for Oakland. Indeed, Campbell's reaction was to say, "If Oakland wants my help, then I'll be there and Kaiser will have another huge fight on their hands. And they'll lose again."

A big barrier continues to be the AFL-CIO bureaucracy which is still clinging to their labor/management so-called strategic partnership. From its top down inception the partnership was a betrayal of the cross-jurisdictional rank-and-file solidarity fighting for quality care by accepting all of Kaiser management's existing closure plans. This reveals the total hypocrisy of a statement made by Sal Rosselli, President of SEIU Local 250, who claimed that Richmond's reopening shows how

well the labor/management partnership is working.

We rank and filers who stood by the nurses and continued the struggle against Kaiser's red-lining health care at Richmond know that only our dogged persistence overcame Kaiser management. The only thing that can keep today's gains from being reversed is rank-and-file vigilance.

—Kaiser rank and filer

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## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

Constitution, that youth are "builders of the new society" when they refuse to just accept this existing adult society which they didn't make and when they are energized by their "idealism" to try to make the idea of freedom a reality.

For me this means we have got to get involved with young people more and help them get a better understanding of our history. I didn't get much Black history when I went to school, only during Black History Month. Since I've known *News and Letters*, I have learned about people like Denmark Vesey. If you look at our history you ask questions. If Martin Luther King, Jr. and so many others gave their lives to change things, why is Mississippi so corrupt today? Why is there so much racism and mistreatment of Black workers? Why did the fire burn out? We need the younger generation to keep it going. This movement for a new society and for freedom has got to be passed down, like racism was passed down through the white generations.

The Civil Rights Movement is an unfinished revolution today because we still have so much of a struggle of the mind ahead of us. We have been damaged in our minds as a race. Over the centuries, there was so much torment and so many killings. So even today there is an afraiddness there for a lot of us.

We have had daring leaders from among our people, but we still suffer from the stereotype that the white man is superior. Some workers see the white man as a pedestal and say, "If I cross him I won't survive." Other workers see it differently, because once you break that barrier and recognize that "I am somebody," then his hold on your mind is gone. All of us, the youth too, have to go through this struggle of the mind.

**And then after you lose that fear, you still have to go on to develop your mind. When I became a Marxist-Humanist I saw you could develop in a way that gives you the strength to keep going, even when that unfinished revolution is all around you.**

When Dr. King was killed in Memphis in 1968, it wasn't the end of our movement for freedom as a people. To me, it was a new beginning. As I got involved with union organizing, I felt that Dr. King had died for the freedom of Black workers in the South. I knew that what he and the sanitation workers started in Memphis, it was up to us to finish.

I have a dream, too. My dream is that one day Mississippi will be a place of freedom. I mean this for the whole world, but I say Mississippi because it is the boiling point of America. If the state of Mississippi could be changed, it would spark a change in so many other places.

**For this we need the youth, especially young workers. They are the ones who have a chance, to make sure that the fire does not burn out. Just imagine what we could do if hundreds of youth like the ones at Lewis Grocery put their minds in struggle for freedom.**

When I read Raya Dunayevskaya, I saw that what I call "not letting the fire burn out," Karl Marx called "revolution in permanence." You have to go through all these battles of the unfinished revolution, what Marxist-Humanists discuss as "transformation through stages," one after another, searching for freedom, so that one day we can live in peace. This is what we are trying to do in Mississippi.

## On the roots of today's global economic crisis

by Andrew Kliman

To understand the current crisis, we need to return to the world economic crisis that erupted in 1973. Since then, there has really been no recovery worldwide. Rather, the growth rate of per capita GDP (gross domestic product) has consistently fallen, never rebounding. The major exception had been in Asia, with its tigers like South Korea and upcoming tigers-to-be, like Thailand, growing at a phenomenal rate. But with the crisis they are reeling back.

Indeed, economies that together produce 40% of world output are already in recession or stagnant. But capital flight from Third World countries outside of Asia is still in process, so the crisis is still spreading to the rest of the world. An indication of how much capital is fleeing can be seen from the interest rates to obtain capital. A year ago, Third World governments needed to pay only three percentage points more than the U.S. Treasury paid. By October, the spread had become 15 percentage points!

In addition, commodity prices have fallen by 30% in real terms since mid-1997. In real terms, they're at their lowest level in 25 years, and industrial commodities'

prices are at their lowest level since the 1930s! We could be heading for a world deflation, which could trigger bankruptcies and a financial collapse. Retail prices in Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Japan are falling, and wholesale prices in 13 of the 15 advanced industrialized countries are now declining.

### AS JAPAN GOES...

The Japan situation is really the key one. Japan's is the second largest economy in the world, producing 7.7% of world GDP, and the hub of East Asia. Much of the present crisis has its origins in the collapse of the bubble of the 1980s in Japan. For the first time since statistics have been kept (the mid-1950s), Japan's GDP has now fallen for three consecutive quarters.

As for the U.S., the major trouble signs—besides the widening foreign trade deficit from the crisis abroad—are the declines in corporate profits and the saving rate. Corporate profits, which are a key "leading indicator" (their movements tend to precede movements of the whole economy), peaked in mid-1997 and have fallen by 2% in the past year. Because of this, as GDP figures for the third quarter show, business investment has started to drop. As for the saving rate, it has fallen to all-time lows, and is now actually negative—U.S. consumers are spending more than their entire incomes on goods and services. This situation is completely unsustainable.

As the system undergoes its convulsions, capitalists are abandoning free-market ideology. Controls on capital flows and foreign exchange markets, which had been all but abandoned, are back in vogue and are winning some acceptance even among supporters of free markets. It is not an exaggeration to say that capitalists and their press are veritably pleading to be saved through government intervention. That seems to be why there's been such jubilation in the financial markets now that Alan Greenspan and the Federal Reserve have stepped in three times in two months to lower short-term interest rates. But as capitalists such as George Soros and financial economists such as Allen Sinai themselves concede, the policy-makers have no solution.

### RETURN TO UNDERGROUND

This situation has led many on the Left to return to theories of underconsumptionism. They weren't very prominent during the economic crisis of the 1970s, but they are now undergoing a revival. Underconsumptionism works, such as William Greider's *One World, Ready or Not* and Robert Brenner's *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (published as a special issue of *New Left Review*), are getting a lot of discussion.

According to these writers, capitalism is supposedly experiencing a "crisis of overproduction." The term "overproduction" is more or less a euphemism for "underconsumption." As Marx pointed out, however, "overproduction" is a tautology, not an explanation of crisis: if one says that more has been produced than is demanded, one is merely restating the bare fact that there's a crisis, not explaining what has caused it.

But those who invoke the concept of overproduction usually want to imply more. They want to imply that overproduction occurs due to endemic underconsumption in capitalism, because production tends to grow faster than consumption. The latter is limited by the low incomes of the workers. So those who make this argument usually conclude that a better distribution of income, in favor of workers, will do away with the prob-

## Chevron under fire

**San Francisco**—Standing outside Chevron headquarters before 150 local participants at a Nov. 20 demonstration organized by Berkeley-based Project Undergound, Nigerian human rights activist Uche Onyeagucha called on Chevron to account for the May 28 assault near the Niger River Delta in which Nigerian soldiers, hired by Chevron and flown in by Chevron helicopters, opened fire on unarmed protesters occupying an off-shore oil rig. Of some 30 young activists wounded, two died.

He began, "When I look at the Chevron towers what I see is blood..." Onyeagucha of Environmental Rights Action, former member of martyred Ken Saro-Wiwa's legal staff now living in exile in London, went on to condemn Chevron's practice of engineering internal ethnic conflict so that it is nearly impossible for local communities to agree on regional representation for corporate meetings. He noted how those ideas reflect the arrogance and insensitivity responsible for toxic pollution and its consequences on the economy and health in the Niger delta and elsewhere.

On a recent visit to North Richmond, just across the bay, he learned Southeast Asian immigrants and African Americans living in the back yard of Chevron's massive Richmond oil refinery suffer one of the highest rates of unemployment and cancer in the Bay Area. He told Chevron, "There's no difference between what you are doing in Richmond and what you are doing in Nigeria."

Other activists noted the same deadly connection. Karen Susag of Communities for a Better Environment reminded demonstrators that only a few weeks earlier, on Oct. 28, many of them had gathered at Chevron to kick off the fifth annual Cancer Industries Tour, led by women who had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Toxic Links Coalition chose Chevron because of the oil giant's infamous history of generating dioxin as a waste product. One organizer on the tour reported that in October Chevron gasoline customers were offered a free cassette recording stating that although no one knows what causes cancer, it is not caused by any Chevron products.

—D.M.

(Continued on page 5)

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

# Economic reality and dialectics of liberation

## Editor's Note

The following is a May 1968 letter Raya Dunayevskaya wrote to Alan Wallach in response to his critique of an early draft chapter for her *Philosophy and Revolution*, entitled "Economic Reality and the Dialectics of Liberation." The draft went through several stages of revision and reshaping. Material from the draft was later incorporated into chapter 7 of *Philosophy and Revolution*, "The African Revolutions and the World Economy," and section B of chapter 2 on Marx's *Grundrisse*. The original letter to Wallach can be found in full in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection* (RDC), 12998-13001. The draft chapter, completed March 20, 1968, can also be found in the RDC, 13103-13127. All numbered footnotes are those of the editor.

What has been happening ever since the death of Lenin is that no leader of revolution has faced that which first appeared with the Russian Revolution—the division between leaders and masses the day after the revolution. The administrative mentality...overcame even the most theoretical of Bolsheviks like Bukharin who were all too eager to once again make "objects" of these Subjects of revolution: "the masses." For years we argued with Trotskyists, Stalinists—and, yes, anarchists and syndicalists—on the question. When it comes to the question of the Third World we have entirely new types of revolutionaries and we wish to pose that crucial question, not as if they must bear the brunt of the past, but, rather, on the basis of the *new reality*.

You dismiss the new reality—isolation of the African leaders from the masses, the very ones who made the revolution. You say "Amen" to my analysis of the compelling objective forces, but what you do is the very opposite for you indulge yourself in a list of "probables," ranging from plots by CIA agents to international cartels "ganging up" on Ghana. This substitution of subjectivity for objectivity reaches its climax when you take official Soviet figures to arrive at some unfounded conclusion, to wit, that the Third World could show a comparable phenomenal growth "even without a massive infusion of capital." This flies not only in the face of reality but also in the face of such non-comparables as a pre-revolutionary Russia, occupying one-sixth of the world's surface, some 200 million people, and, though technologically backward as compared to Western Europe or the U.S., was still one of the biggest empires on earth, on the one hand, with such tiny newly-decolonized states as Ghana and Guinea, on the other hand.

To work out a *new* relationship between theory and practice, a methodology is needed which is independent of existing state powers but rather flows from THE greatest "energizing principle"—the mass quest for universality, the Third World fight for freedom, *total* freedom, [which] refuses to subordinate the fight against class structure *within* a country to any "two camp theory" as if the struggle between the "East" and the "West" is the one that will liberate "The Wretched of the Earth."

I began my comments on your thesis by asking who (except Marxist-Humanists) poses the questions relating to the Third World in a way that both objectively and subjectively takes its point of departure and return from where the masses are—what *they* do, what *they* think, how *they* propose to solve the contradictions, including those between leaders and ranks, intellectuals and workers?

May I now add: (1) Who (except us) holds that to plan or not to plan is no longer the pivotal question? (2) Who (except us) holds that affluence notwithstanding, not only do the poor countries get poorer and the rich richer, but *within* the technologically advanced countries the *crises deepen* since even the good old capitalistic principle (so profoundly analyzed by Marx as the lifeblood of capitalistic "progress") of new economic growth made possible on the basis of the destruction of capital only leads to a) unprecedented militarization; b) chronic poverty and unemployment (though attenuated from Depression days, it is so *organic* that it seems impossible to shake it off even at its most affluent points). Planning, even where denied, under private capitalism (whether this be De Gaulle's France or the U.S.A.), and planning where admitted (both in "socialist" countries and in the Third World), is helpless to resolve the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, private and state, since the law of value cannot be abrogated except through a total reorganization of relations of production at the *point of production*.

You glossed over asking these questions, much less looking for the answers, by, on the one hand, going into semantics rather than facing the reality of the *human* factor, and, on the other hand, asking your own "who": "Who is this 'it' who 'has a totally different concept of a human social order'?" Finally, what is meant by the 'struggle to break from the governing law of value operative in the world market?' This seems to imply some sort of transcendence of objective reality!

O.K., let's begin where you are. The "dominating force which governs also the still fluid situation in the underdeveloped countries as against the malaise in the developed countries" is the human being, the mass force, the masses not only as physical force but "as Reason," to use

Lenin's expression. If you had admitted that you knew all along that the *human* factor is the governing factor, is the social *vision*, is not only the future, *but the present*, then, first you could not have rated the Soviet Union quite so high [and] quite so different from the U.S., and, second, the answer to your question about how to break the law of value would likewise be obvious: THE HUMAN BEING.

And, in conclusion, instead of putting an exclamation point alongside the allegedly impossible "transcendence of objective reality," you would have answered: But, of course, *only when* human beings, the oppressed human beings who create all values, transform themselves from the *source of value and surplus value* into the SUBJECT WHICH the day after the revolution would abolish, or begin abolishing, the division between Notion and Reality, between Subject and Object, between Theory and Practice, between Philosophy and Revolution, between Mental and Manual Labor, and reconstitute the *wholeness* of the human being, [would] put an end to what Marx called "the pre-history" of humanity, so that (his and her, but not its anymore) true history can first begin and the new human dimension unfold.

This is what is known, in Hegelian terminology, as the *second* negation. (The first is "mere" overthrow of capitalism which looks so hard before the revolution, but the day after, that vanishes as a problem, and the second negation is what one must embark on.) In Marxian terms, it means the abrogation of the law of value, the beginning of a new unity of mental and manual labor, of which very nearly nothing is known. Historically, once the Paris Commune showed Marx that the whole fetishism of commodities, of value, is all in the *form*, the *value-form* which not only hides the exploitation of man by man, but, above all, is the fantastic form which is the *reality* of dead labor dominating living, of transforming the living worker into an appendage to a machine, of *making persons into things*—once all that became crystal clear to Marx, he summed up the heroism and achievements—all the achievements of the Paris Commune—in the simple statement that the greatest thing about the Commune was "its own working existence."

But there was no chance to concretize that "abrogation of the law of value" other than stating that "freely associated labor" would decide everything since (1) the law of value is a law of the world market whereas the Commune existed in a single city, and (2) it lasted only two months whereas that is a protracted and most difficult struggle full of all sorts of lapses and what Lenin called historical deformations.

But Lenin did live to see a successful proletarian revolution in a whole nation which, at his death, had lasted six years. He therefore had a greater historic experience and he concluded that (1) whereas that abrogation of value can *begin* on a national level, it cannot fulfill itself *unless* it [is] done on an international level; (2) while working for the world revolution, the single revolution cannot rest still but must *prove* itself in the lives, *conditions of working, of the most lowly paid, doing the heaviest work*; and (3) so simplify the affairs of state that any worker can and does do them so that "all become bureaucrats and therefore none are." Finally, and not by any means least, Lenin left a *Will* in which he not only asked for the removal of Stalin, nor only pointed to the administrative mentality of Trotsky, but also said that the most beloved of all the Party and its greatest theoretician, Bukharin, just "didn't understand the dialectic."

I'm ever so grateful for your critique which forced me to clarify my thoughts. However, I cannot let pass the assertion that Marx's statement about man's "totality," within the context I give it in the second section of the chapter on [the] *Grundrisse*, "is not a substantive conclusion."

Two questions were singled out by me to substantiate the question of "totality." One referred to Marx's concept of history—historical conditions, historical working out of contradictions, history as philosophy rather than "economics": "And 'economics' is not referred to except as economic structure, which, in turn, involves the totality of relations, the *conditions* of production, with a distinction

made between *material* transformation and philosophic ones."<sup>2</sup>

Further to concretize this statement about what "historical materialism" meant to Marx I bring in the question of today—how what Marx said on machine-ism in the *Grundrisse* was, on the one hand, (by the Stalinists) *reduced to scientism* and "working harder," increasing "labor productivity" by bending to the automation machine. And, on the other hand, [it was] transformed by Herbert Marcuse as leading to "One-Dimensional Man." [As I put it]: "The irony is that it isn't only the proletariat that thereby gets degraded, and not only the intellectual, but philosophy too. The original title One-Dimensional Man, when it was delivered as a series of lectures in France at the end of the 1950s and reproduced in *Argument* was: *From Ontology to Technology*. In a word, Marcuse is saying that technology has overwhelmed thinking, thereby denying the very soul of the dialectic, of development through contradiction, that the more abysmal the degradation, the more intense is the quest for universality."<sup>3</sup>

The whole point is that Automation, as the new stage of production, has produced two opposite *class* reactions. On the one side stands not only the capitalist but also the intellectual who thinks that all the productivity now comes from the machine, not man, that "scientism" is classless. On the other side stands the proletariat who not only shows that Automation has not lightened labor, not only has created the ever lengthening line of the unemployed even though, for the moment, hidden by militarization and actual

war,<sup>4</sup> but above all, tends further to separate the mental from the manual powers. He therefore asks: what kind of labor should man do? Why the division between mental and manual? How to reconstitute the wholeness of man?

We concluded that it was not accidental that the "backward worker," not the advanced, party-minded intellectual, even when he is a Marxist, raised the question of Humanism, made it the urgent question of the day. To summarize not only the chapter, but the whole of the book, I propose the frontispiece to be used be Marx's statement on totality from the *Grundrisse*. "[W]hen the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc. of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature—those of his own nature as well as those of so-called 'nature'? What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of the evolution—i.e., the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any *previous-*

*ly established* yardstick—an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?"

IT IS THIS "ABSOLUTE MOVEMENT OF BECOMING" THAT MAKES MAN INTO SHAPER OF HISTORY, THOUGH NOT OUT OF WHOLE CLOTH; A TRANSCENDER OF "OBJECTIVE REALITY" AS THE GIVEN REALITY OF A CAPITALISTIC SOCIETY THAT NEEDS TO BE TORN UP BY THE ROOTS; THE PRESENT RECREATOR OF A NEW POSITIVE THEORETICAL GAIN, A NEW HUMANISM, I.E., HUMAN POWER WHICH IS ITS OWN END.

2. See manuscript of "Economic Reality and the Dialectics of Liberation," RDC 13122.

3. "Economic Reality and the Dialectics of Liberation," RDC 13126-27

4. Dunayevskaya is referring here to U. S. imperialism's war in Vietnam.



1. This quotation is from the Dunayevskaya's rough draft manuscript, "Economic Reality and the Dialectics of Liberation," RDC 13108.

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759-C

# Rosa Luxemburg, feminism, and the struggle to be truly human

by Frigga Haug

Editor's Note: Frigga Haug, the noted German feminist and Marxist theoretician, wrote the following Preface to the recently published German edition of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. We here publish Haug's Preface, on the 100th anniversary of her famous Preface, on the 100th anniversary of her reform or revolution debate with Eduard Bernstein on "reform or revolution" and a month prior to the 80th anniversary of her murder following the 1918-19 German revolution, as part of our effort to encourage new discussion and debate on Dunayevskaya's writings on this crucial figure. To obtain the English language edition of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, see page 7.

In 1982, shortly after its publication in the U.S., I read Raya Dunayevskaya's book on Luxemburg, women's liberation, and Marx's theory of revolution. There were four moments that fascinated me and made me read the whole in one sitting.

First there was the author herself. Born as a Jew in Ukraine in 1910, she emigrated to the U.S. with her family at a young age and joined the revolutionary movement at age 13. Black people were her main interest. Due to her divergences, she was expelled from the Communist Party at the age of 18 and found herself with the Trotskyists. She became Trotsky's secretary during his exile in Mexico (1937-38).

Then the link to Rosa Luxemburg, who was still mostly under a cloak of silence in Germany at the time. Although she was known as being strong, rebellious, militant. Raya Dunayevskaya put her into the center, important in my both of the movements that were important in my life at the time: the women's movement and Marx's theory of social change.

I benefited greatly from reading the book, precisely because it altered so many ways of thinking that were regarded as correct. This began with her view of Rosa Luxemburg. As against the usual view, she does not examine what Luxemburg achieved concerning women's politics, where she intervened, what her parliamentary petitions regarding women showed. On the contrary, she puts Luxemburg forward as a human being and a political leader and proposes that feminists can learn from Luxemburg's attitude, her way of approaching problems, her politics. To inherit from Luxemburg—this is the message of the greater part of the book in which she works out and portrays very carefully the problematics of masses and leadership, of direct democracy, of the relationship between rationality and intuition, between reason and spontaneity. She shows a connection between the question of racism and the struggles against it, and the early connections and convergences throughout the world between women's liberation, the workers' movement, and immigration.

She proposes new criteria for political analysis, including the question of hegemony (That is not what she calls it, however) and, as a connecting line between groups, wherein the exclusion of politics unites precisely those who are the most oppressed.

She also proposes a new anti-economistic reading of Marx regarding the questions raised by women's liberation, a reading that does not search for oppression and early forms of domination, but rather moves gender relations and family forms into the center of historical-critical work. She strongly urges us to read Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*.

She discusses the women's movement of the late seventies and tries, in the sense discussed above, to influence it politically. At the same time she succeeds in bringing together the questions of social change, women's liberation, and permanent revolution. Finally, it is not only the problem of dismantling the old, but above all that of constructing the new. It is in this way that she brings problems of concern to political and cultural struggles into the discussion from early on.

What fascinated me was her linking of Marx and Luxemburg to current struggles in the Third World and to questions of women's liberation that were also discussed in a topical fashion. It was only with the final chapter, where a link back to Marx and to Hegel is being attempted in order to found a new humanist Marxism, that I could not get very far.

At the time I did not know that her own school called *Marxist Humanism* grew out of this new, if also changed, relation of Hegel and Marx. It is an active group that is working up through today around Raya Dunayevskaya's office in Chicago (that is managed as an archive), publishing a journal, is present at conferences, and tries to establish her ideas all over the world, and that also contacted me, who had reviewed Dunayevskaya's book on Luxemburg. Thanks to the persistent energy of this group, the book can be published in German 15 years later.

The themes—Luxemburg, revolution, Marx, Lenin, even the women's movement—seem strangely out of date, Hegel being the only one that seems to have endured unimpaired the turning points of 1989 and after. What then, or who, could still be interested in this book today?

Hence I read the work once again, this time the 1991 edition, published in the U.S. as a "Challenge to the post-Marx Marxists," with a preface by Adrienne Rich, that militant figure in the new women's movement, who certainly would not be characterized by anyone as antiquated. Adrienne Rich applies the same procedure Dunayevskaya had used for her rereading of

Luxemburg to Dunayevskaya herself. She examines her method of working with regard to its possible benefit for us living today. She discovers here the connection of experience and revolutionary thought and thus an actualization of the revolution in the sharing of political struggle. Rich focuses on Dunayevskaya as a political theorist who was at the same time also a scholar and a knowledgeable woman of learning, and in spite of that was never far from daily political struggles in the ghettos of the world, especially that of Blacks in the U.S. In short, she describes Dunayevskaya as an organic intellectual in the sense of Gramsci, who moreover could follow no party line, no Marxist-Leninism, and yet tried again and again to work out what is living in Marxian thought.

Adrienne Rich comes from the new women's movement and describes her mistrust of Marxian categories, her experience that women are being directly and systematically cast aside on the Left, so that the new women's movement began at first as a critique of the Left, a kind of shock-experience. She allows herself to be convinced by Dunayevskaya that the women's

movement is not only a force of change, but above all that the feminist theoreticians also contribute to the creation of new thought, new perspectives: "The first thing to strike a reader, ranging through Dunayevskaya's book, is the vitality, combativeness, relish, disembodied intellect. She argues; she challenges; she urges on; she expostulates; her essays have the spontaneity of an extemporaneous speech (some of them are) or of a notebook—you can hear her thinking aloud. She has a prevailing sense of ideas as flesh and blood, of the individual thinker, limited by her or his individuality yet carrying on a conversation in the world" (xiii).

How would it feel to be free and truly human? This question—put forward by Adrienne Rich, by Raya Dunayevskaya, by Rosa Luxemburg, yet certainly by all who are still alive—is what makes the book worth reading, far beyond any fashionable notion that would regard its subject matter as dated.

(Translated by Stephen Steiger)



Announcing the new German edition of **Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution**

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## On the roots of today's global economic crisis

(Continued from page 3)

lem. They also imply that overproduction has occurred because of the anarchy of the market, the unplanned nature of private capitalism, so that state control over investment would solve the problem.

Yet to say that the anarchy of the market causes overproduction is to imply that capitalists are pretty stupid. They never learn from their mistakes, never learn that they shouldn't produce so much. It is true that they can't know in advance how much to sell. But why, when they guess wrong, do they always overproduce instead of sometimes overproducing and sometimes underproducing? It must be that they never learn.

It is true that under capitalism, production tends to grow faster than consumption. The underconsumptionists want to argue that this leads to crisis: if production grows faster than consumption, it must snap back; production must fall to the limit set by consumption. But why? Capitalists don't produce in order to meet consumption needs, but to make profit. And profit can be gotten just as well by selling to other capitalists (who buy machines and factories and materials) as it can by selling consumer goods. So the fact that consumption tends to lag behind production does not constitute a barrier to capitalism.

Consumption in fact sets no limit to production. Marx's schemes of reproduction, in Vol. II of *Capital*, demonstrate that there is no such limit. Capitalist production isn't "ultimately" or "eventually" production for the sake of consumption, but increasingly production for the sake of production—as consumption lags behind production, more and more of the total production is production of goods that go back into production, like machines and materials. So if demand for these investment goods is sufficiently strong, the fact of underconsumption just can't cause crisis. And, thus, if there is crisis—demand for investment goods isn't strong enough—one just can't attribute this to underconsumption, since, again, the capitalists can and do sell to each other. It is important to recognize that underconsumptionism rests

on a very severe logical fallacy.

But then why is there insufficient demand, if the reason isn't underconsumptionism? Marx, as well as Raya Dunayevskaya and others, argue that the tendential fall in the profit rate makes investment demand decline. It is not a problem of demand in the market that is tending to depress the profit rate, but the reverse.

This also implies that the tendency of the profit rate to decline cannot be due to what's taking place in the market, which is its consequence. It must be due to what's taking place in production.

As Dunayevskaya wrote concerning Marx's theory, "The organic composition of capital produces, on the one hand, the decline in the rate of profit, and, on the other hand, the reserve army of labor. The inability of capitalism to reproduce its only value-creating substance sounds the death knell of capitalism." It is otherwise in Luxemburg's underconsumptionist theory, as Dunayevskaya wrote: "The socialist proletarian revolution, which, for Marx, is rooted in the material development of the conflicting forces of capital and labor, becomes a wish disconnected from the increasing subordination of the laborer to, and his growing revolt from, the capitalist labor process." (*Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, p. 45, emphasis in original). In light of the resurgence of underconsumptionism, it is important to return to and reread this chapter.

By exposing both the bankruptcy of free market ideology and the impotence of state action, the current economic crisis has brought new life to this perspective. For more than a half-century, Marx-Humanism and state-ownership capitalism are opposite sides of the same coin, and that neither variant of the system can overcome its crises. Capitalism's system of value production—which both variants have in common—must be abolished so that freely associated individuals can put production under their conscious and planned control.



It is enlightening to see how Raya Dunayevskaya foresaw what is happening in the world today and proposed useful ways to look at that. But while you continue to publish and meet and discuss, while the Greens are busy building a "third" electorally-focused party, the money and power continue to belong, not to the Republicans and Democrats (so often indistinguishable these days) but to the major corporations that run our world. To the fanatical and criminal fundamentalist Right and the pompous asses who oppose them without offering any tangible alternatives. And ordinary people in places like Nicaragua and Honduras continue to die by the tens of thousands, because their countries are so impoverished to begin with that when a hurricane like Mitch comes along, everything goes. And here in the U.S., record numbers of workers are losing their jobs, but the media continues to cry "prosperity." A gentle young man in Wyoming is tortured to death because he is gay; a Black man is lynched in Texas; an abortion provider is murdered in New York State, and this country can't even pass federal hate crimes legislation!

**Margaret Randall**  
New Mexico

I read an article in *The Tennessean* about the downsizing that's going on. Worker suicide is up 35% to 38%. Divorce, spouse and child abuse and accidents on the job are all also up. As the workforce is downsized, those left have to speed up. Today at Hood Furniture they want 200 workers to do what 400 did before. Sealy Mattress is another example. They are making workers work 14-hour days. No wonder some come home and kick the cat. We need to turn this situation around.

**Union organizer**  
Nashville

## FINDING THE ROOTS OF RUSSIA'S CRISIS

I appreciate the analysis of Russia's economic crisis that appeared in the October issue. What had been a big mystery to millions of international viewers of CNN and other capitalist multi-media was made crystal clear when interspersed through Marxist-Humanism. The question is: if things are so bad in Russia, why hasn't the economy collapsed by now? The answer is exactly what you wrote: "The prospect of resistance is never far from the minds of the rulers. They fear that if they close down the unprofitable industries, the mass unemployment will set off a social upheaval beyond their control." *N&L's* critique revealed many eye-opening facts that never filter through on the national newsbroads.

**Historian**  
Pennsylvania

The basic assumption of low productivity as a key factor of inefficient Soviet economy is certainly right, but there was no explanation in the October lead of the disproportions in capital allocation. A few lines would have unveiled the class character of the state-capitalist society to those readers who might not know Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on Russia. One point the authors did not pay attention to is the question of why, in spite of many single protests, there is no massive revolt in Russia. One of the reasons is the leftovers from the Soviet system of social assistance. Big firms still care for their workers as far as health care, accommodation, creches, etc. This does not make the workforce happy, but the situation is made more bearable. A point I challenge is the generalization that capitalism will again turn to the state to try to resolve its problems. While this is what has happened already in several cases, to say so in general may not be right. Will capitalism as a world-wide system turn to the state? Given the dimension of today's globalization, I doubt it. It needs a deeper probe.

**Stephen Steiger**  
Prague

The article on Russia correctly pointed out that the number one indicator of worker discontent under the Old Regime was the traditional working class

Here in the Delta, it's not the pay, even though you want decent wages. It's the dignity. The problems started over 100 years ago. The worst racism is in the South. I think Mississippi will have to lead the nation in breaking the barrier of racism. If we do it here, the rest of the country will follow.

**Black woman worker**  
Mississippi

Over 10 years ago, a social activist on the Toronto Council introduced a motion to declare homelessness a national disaster and provide resources as they would for a natural disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake. Though the motion was treated as little more than a joke by the council at that time, it inspired a nurse, who worked with the homeless, to form a coalition to pressure government to treat homelessness as a correctable human problem. She succeeded first with Toronto, then Ottawa. Now the mayors of all of Canada's major cities have declared homelessness a national disaster and are demanding immediate relief funds from the federal government.

**Observer**  
Canada

Who is the IMF actually bailing out with the hundreds of millions put at its disposal if not the corrupt investors, local politicians, and local bankers? The fact that millions of workers lost their jobs, as in Indonesia, is of no interest to the IMF. We are witnessing world colonization by a mega corporate Mafia. You don't have to be an atomic scientist to realize that this tragic situation cannot prevail and will increasingly lead to social upheavals in one country after another.

**Georgio**  
Canada

weapon of the slowdown. Low productivity is the key barometer for an observer to determine the degree of worker resistance. Another facet is the degree to which workers begin to internalize the true course of sociocultural evolution and see that it is not socialism nor communism which is at fault but the lack of these, and that the task is to get back onto the right road. There are no short cuts. But there are barometers to see what is going on where everything seems to conspire to hide the way. The low labor productivity analysis is definitely such a barometer and, as such, a great contribution.

**Jason Smith**  
Colorado

What's going on in Russia isn't that foreign. At my job, there is a parking lot of broken down vehicles being cannibalized. Whole support infrastructures are decaying while services are privatized.

**City worker**  
Detroit

## "GAY POLITICS"

A recent issue of *Time* magazine had a series of articles stating that gay politics are now mainstream. They didn't mention the movement's internal controversies that radically critique society, such as the nature of sexual preference, or whether marriage as a legal institution is desirable. Almost all who were interviewed about their personal experiences or political battles were white males. The issues, experiences and accomplishments of lesbians and the lesbian movement were left out, as were bisexuals and the transgendered.

**Artemis**  
Memphis

*Blade* calls itself a newspaper "serving New York's Gay Community." Using "gay" as an umbrella term subsumes lesbian women in a way similar to the patriarchal terminology of "mankind." Lesbians, bi-sexuals and transgendered persons are all populations of humankind.

**Sheila**  
New York

A very successful rally was held here on Nov. 24 against the efforts of Rev.

# Readers' Views

Phelps (the Kansas preacher who picketed Matthew Shepard's funeral) to picket a church that had performed a same-sex marriage. Hundreds turned out, but I was not happy with the way members of the International Socialist Organization monopolized the megaphone and later tried to take credit for "organizing" the protest. Ninety-five percent of those who came never heard of the ISO and don't care to. And the ISO has never placed any emphasis on work in the gay and lesbian community.

**Black and gay**  
Chicago

## SOJOURNER TRUTH'S NEW LANGUAGE



Jennifer Pen hit the nail on the head when she wrote that "Painter misses that 'drive to freedom...'" that characterized Sojourner Truth, while Marxist-Humanism is able to bring it out. Pen is demonstrating why it is a principle with *News & Letters* for people to speak for themselves. That is one way the "drive to freedom" is revealed. Pen's column demonstrates the importance of philosophy because Nell Painter's examination of Sojourner Truth's life obscures Truth's drive to freedom while Raya Dunayevskaya's writings about Truth reveal that she speaks "a new language of thought, Black thought." Raya made explicit what was implicit in Truth's life and works.

**Women's Liberationist**  
Memphis

## POLICE BRUTALITY

As part of the National Day of Protest against Police Brutality, between 1,200 and 1,500 marched against the L.A. Police Department headquarters. One youth wore a T-shirt that said Mussolini had Blackshirts, Hitler had Brownshirts, and the U.S. has Blueshirts. We heard various speakers, many of whom suffered police brutality firsthand. The crowd was overwhelmingly young, mostly Latinos, but with significant numbers of whites, Blacks and Asians. What wasn't mentioned by any of the speakers was that the court system rarely prosecutes the police, and that they often work together to convict poor, Black, Brown or political defendants even when evidence suggests they aren't guilty. The question I have is whether the national day of protest enlightened the public enough to end the brutality and bring justice to the guilty police?

**John Basho**  
Los Angeles

The movie *The Siege* which is being protested as anti-Arab was much worse than I expected. It should serve as a wake-up call for all Arabs, Arab Americans and their friends. It plays up gleeful and gratuitous high-tech police violence with no sense of human rights, the good cop/bad cop routine. Though it is full of talk about the Constitution, that document is completely trampled upon. I saw it as psychological and ideological preparation for police repression and war.

**Critic**  
San Francisco

Mayor Giuliani commands an army of 38,000 heavily-armed police, the world's largest police force. But it is the Corporation Counsel's 600 lawyers, quietly working behind the scenes that are his elite troops. When Giuliani orders the NYPD or other City agencies to prevent lawful demonstrations, arrest innocent people, spy on political activists, close legitimate businesses, target racial minorities, close public hospitals in minority areas, arrest homeless people, cut essential social programs, put defendants through the system for non-criminal infractions of obscure laws or force handicapped mothers into workfare, it is the Corporation Counsel that faithfully

defends these highlights in Federal and State Court. If we want to improve the quality of life for every New Yorker, I think two things should be done: Investigate the Corporation Counsel and Impeach Rudolph Giuliani.

**Angry**  
New York

## THOUGHTS ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The October issue would have had more impact if Sarah Hamer's article on "Workfare: slave-style forced labor" and Suzanne Rose's article on "Passions for freedom run high in women's lock-up" had been linked together as "Woman as Reason." That would have showed the continuity of slavery inside/outside prison, and with philosophy.

**Susan Van Gelder**  
Detroit

Coach purses are very expensive, well-made leather purses that sell for \$150 to \$500. I sell them at the store where I work. Last week we got a catalog for Coach, and there was Gloria Steinem modeling a bag that cost \$298 and a Coach watch that cost \$350. I guess it's OK to support capitalism as long as you donate to good causes and write about revolution. But somehow it made my stomach turn.

**Jenny**  
Iowa

## ABIOLA'S DAUGHTER

Hafsat Abiola, daughter of the late elected but imprisoned president of Nigeria, made a presentation at San Jose State University in November as part of a U.S. tour. She vividly described the government repression in Nigeria, stressing their fear of ideas and of "people speaking up." But the contradictions of her own father's capitalistic ventures (he was an African vice-president for ITT) limited her vision. She referred to the people of Nigeria as "human capital" and said her country could flourish because "we have an abundance of labor." It made me think how seductive but ultimately fatal is the desire to find a solution within the confines of market capitalism, when only a total uprooting of the society can create a world beyond exploitation.

**Jennifer Pen**  
San Jose

## NOT JUST PINOCHET

I have something to say to the State Department spokesman who said if Pinochet isn't released, nothing stops all kinds of government officials from being arraigned for engaging in "official" acts. Precisely. Let's bring Henry Kissinger to justice too, not just for the thousands that died because of his support for the coup in Chile, but the hundreds of thousands slaughtered in Vietnam and East Timor at his bequest.

**Angry as hell**  
Illinois

## JOYCE MAUPIN (1914 - 1998)

Many came to the celebration in Berkeley on Nov. 1 of the many and wondrous lives of Joyce Maupin, one of the original organizers of Union WAGE (Women's Alliance to Gain Equality). Joyce had many other distinctions in her activist life: she ran for Mayor of NYC as a socialist in the '50s, organized for health and safety for clerical workers in the OPEU while employed by Harry Bridges at the ILWU, pioneered for increases in the minimum wage, and organized Household Cleaners, Home Care Workers, and residents of the Oakland Housing Authority. Anyone wishing to make a donation in Joyce's name can do so to the Labor Archives and Research Center at San Francisco State University, which contains copies of Union WAGE and many writings by and about Joyce. They can be contacted at 480 Winston Dr., S.F., Cal. 94132.



**ON 'VOICES FROM WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS'**

Congratulations on the publication of "Voices"! I hope it receives massive publication. The Industrial Prison Complex is so insidious and growing at an amazing rate. The mainstream publication, of course, will not give it truthful coverage any more than they will implicate Chiquita Bananas for their absence of substantial aid to the people in Honduras during the aftermath of the hurricane. I'm enclosing payment for prisoners who want copies but cannot pay from their own resources.

**Gloria Joseph  
Virgin Islands**

*Editor's Note: Readers to—can you help us get this pamphlet to prisoners who have requested it? Our thanks to our many readers who have already contributed to this special fund.*

Thank all of you at *News & Letters* for publishing a letter I wrote on the "three strikes" law. I must have sent out 100 copies to senators, newspapers and talk shows. But you are the first to publish it and show somebody cares. It isn't easy to pay with your life so some politician can further his career.

**Prisoner  
California**

I recently read Alexandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and could not help comparing the vicious Stalinist prison system with the Texas system today and finding the former is the more humane in some ways. Stalinist Gulag prisoners were allowed to receive packages from relatives and friends; Texas prisoners are not. Some of the Stalinist Gulag prisoners were paid; Texas prisoners are not. Stalinist Gulag prisons used solitary confinement for a short, limited number of days; the Texas system calls it "administrative segregation" and the stays are for an unlimited duration. Theft from prisoners by prison employees seems to be about the same. Having created its own Gulag archipelago, Texas last year executed the same number of individuals as in all the other states combined.

**Prisoner  
Texas**

Yesterday only about 100 prisoners out of 1,300 showed up for chow, and there

was talk of a work stoppage. A menu change is one of the main grievances. For a little over a year, ground chicken bulk (beaks and feet) has been the main source of protein. Lunch now consists of a mystery meat sandwich, soup of leftovers mixed with water, and a salad bar of wilted lettuce. More recently, a quick cake and coffee has replaced a traditional breakfast of sausage, eggs or pancakes. The struggle continues.

**Prisoner  
Virginia**

I learned a lot from "Voices." I don't know much about Marxist-Humanism but if it is for the fair treatment of human beings, I'm all for it. When we are sentenced, it is to do time. They don't say anything about hard labor or being mistreated. The prisonrats take it on themselves to punish you more than what you are already going through. They try to make you feel like nothing. Now they are talking about requiring inmates to carry a prison identification card when they get out.

**Prisoner  
Texas**

**THE DESPOTIC PLAN OF CAPITALISM**

We're now seeing an extraordinary situation — mainstream thinkers saying the only way to avoid global economic meltdown is to have greater "planning" of the world economy. Alan Greenspan is applauded for trying to steer the market with interest cuts. George Soros says we need a "new international planning mechanism" to avoid financial panic. And any number of "leftists" thinkers are returning to the old idea that the basic problem of capitalism is that it suffers from "market anarchy" and "planlessness." In light of this, Dunayevskaya's piece in the November *N&L* on how the basic contradiction in capitalism is not "anarchy of the market" vs. "plan" but rather the despotic plan of capital vs. the plan of freely associated labor comes as a breath of fresh air. She shows that "planning" is not external to the capitalist mode of production but flows from the very nature of its despotic control over labor. Failure to see this

leads to falling into the trap of posing false alternatives and solutions to the inability of capitalism to meet human needs.

**Student of Marxism  
Chicago**

Dunayevskaya's article has some interesting things to say on the relation of essence and appearance. She is critiquing the tendency to reduce appearances to essences. Yes, capitalism's essence or nature is to expand, but if everything were reducible to essence, it would mean there couldn't be an economic crisis, since in an economic crisis capitalism doesn't expand. The deterioration of the capital stock in Russia which was discussed in the October issue is a case in point: the capitalists there have decided not to throw good money after bad and the system is in steep decline. It's important to understand that laws do not rule over appearances; rather, they are the laws of the appearances themselves.

**Radical political economist  
New York**

Dunayevskaya's column always sets the context for the entire paper. Her November piece did it in several ways. First, it tells us about the nature of the world we live in. Second, the fact that in this capitalist world, human beings are reduced to things shows how the racism, sexism, heterosexism (and the revolt against all these isms that many other artists deal with) are deepened by a system of production that reduces the human being to a commodity. You don't have to be a worker to be affected by the capitalistic thought that rules our age. Third, the economics and humanism of this article speaks directly to what the workers who write for *N&L* are expressing.

**Terry Moon  
Tennessee**

**CHALLENGES TO DIALECTICAL THINKING**

Of the three major streams of intellectual thought that Kevin Anderson discusses in his essay in the October issue, it seems to me that both scientific positivism and Bourdieu's "modified structuralism" reek of the kind of determinism of which Marx is so often falsely accused, and that pragmatism's denial of philosophy opens the door to the entire gamut of oppression

— from the capitalist welfare state to the dictatorial state capitalism of the former so-called Communist block, to third world clientism, to Islamic fundamentalism, to outright fascism. All the forms of consciousness Anderson analyzes, which deny the struggle of humankind for freedom as the subject of history, have one thing in common, and that is elitism. The inference is always there that some human beings are somehow fit to rule over others. Yet history is not to be denied. Masses in motion are far more concrete than Reagan's Contras, Bush's smart bombs, and Clinton's welfare "reform" — which are all only symptoms of the barbarous failure of the capitalist world "order," whereas the universal struggle for freedom transcends all forms of consciousness over the entire sweep of human history.

**Artist  
Ecuador**

**FOR SIMON TSEKO NKOLI**

We mourn the loss of an important anti-Apartheid activist, Gay and Lesbian rights activist and HIV/AIDS activist, Simon Tseko Nkoli, who died on Nov. 30 in Johannesburg. He was a courageous person who dared to declare his sexual orientation and HIV status at a time when few were prepared to do so. Through these acts he defied the notion that being gay is unAfrican. His greatest memorial is evident in the new constitution of South Africa, which, thanks to his sway in the African National Congress, is the only one in the world which outlaws discrimination based on sexual orientation.

**Simon Nkoli Memorial Committee  
South Africa**



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## Black/Red View Capitalist gold: prison labor

by John Alan

Last September at the University of California's Berkeley campus more than 2,000 people participated in the Critical Resistance Conference on how "to go beyond the Prison Industrial Complex." This meant, in the words of the organizers, going beyond the "symbiotic connection between the corporate economy and the punishment industry."

Many voices were heard at that conference. Presenters in the various panels generated lively discussions on how dangerous and dehumanizing was life behind prison walls. However, organized labor was not there with a defiant voice against the exploitation of convict labor. Let's take another look at why capitalism finds convict labor so enticing.

The 30-year political/ideological "war on crime," beginning with Reagan and reaching an even higher pitch during the Clinton administration, has essentially been a war to send large numbers of young Black and Hispanic males to prisons and then keep them there by enacting longer sentencing laws. The end result of this prolonged war is an available pool of cheap labor comparable to labor living in a Third World country ruled by a dictator. A capitalist like Pam Davis, who is president of Pride Enterprises, a company which employs 4,000 prison inmates, proudly told the press: "Part of our resources are the million or more people in prison. We got to use them in a creative way; consider this as a viable labor source rather than sending jobs offshore" (Dan Sewell, Associated Press, Nov. 11, 1998).

### DIRT CHEAP OR SURPLUS

Clearly, U.S. capitalism has found a golden supply of labor power from which it can extract an ultimate amount of surplus value. Not only is prison labor dirt cheap compared to free labor, but correctional departments, under the federal Prison Industry Enhancement Program, must deduct 80% of the prisoner's gross wages for room and board, family support, taxes and victims' programs.

This organized arrangement between capitalism and the state has had an appalling impact on African-American youth, who in the free labor market are capitalism's surplus labor pool. Researchers have shown that a whole generation of Black youth has been criminalized. Black youth between the ages of 15 and 24, representing only 6% of the population, are now 47% of the prison population. (See *African Americans At The Crossroads* by Clarence Lusane, South End Press, 1994.)

But converting free Black labor into convict labor is not new. From the post-Reconstruction period through the first quarter of this century, Black convict labor was generally exploited by Southern plantation owners. In 1921, William Picken, then the field secretary for the NAACP, wrote: "The large plantation owners exploited convict labor by paying the fines of Negro males who were jailed for an alleged vagrancy or misdemeanor and then were leased to any plantation owner who paid their fine. The cost of the fine had to be worked out on the landlord's plantation." All during that time, Picken wrote, "the Negro man was still a prisoner of the state and was kept in chains and stockades...on the landlord's private estate." If he attempted to escape, guards could shoot him and also whip him if his work did not suit the landlord.

### A SOCIAL SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION

William Picken's article on Black convict labor was published 77 years ago in a pamphlet published by the newly founded American Civil Liberties Union. Picken had no difficulty in relating the barbarism of convict labor and lynching to what he called "economic greed." But this oppressive, violent social relationship between the plantation landlord and Black convict labor didn't simply evolve from the personal greed of the landlord. It evolved from a social system of production, capitalism. Not only did the Black convict labor create the value to pay their fines and for their subsistence, but also a surplus value through work from sunup to sundown. The Southern landlords transformed that surplus value into new capital and revenue.

Today's convicts are not worked from sunup to sundown. Nevertheless, they do produce the surplus value

## Abolish death penalty

*New York*—"Brick by brick, wall by wall, we're going to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" shouted the 300 demonstrators crowding the sidewalk outside the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Nov. 24. Inside, at a dinner of the Committee to Protect Journalists, famous people were supporting journalists in other countries. We demanded that they come outside and protect one in Philadelphia who may lose his life. Screaming at the top of our lungs for two hours did not cause them to come out, but they surely heard us.

Also at the demonstration was a new group forming to demand the release of Lawrence Hayes, an anti-death penalty activist and former Black Panther who was recently sentenced to five years in prison for visiting his parole officer on the wrong days. You can contact the Committee to Free Lawrence Hayes at (212) 330-7059.

—N.Y. N&L participants

that capitalism badly needs. The state helps this to happen by permitting the capitalist to employ prison disciplined workers in a state supplied prison factory, thus reducing considerably the capitalist's cost of production and increasing his amount of surplus value. If this exploitation of prison labor in the interest of capitalism is not challenged and uprooted, it portends the future of Black and white labor in this country.

## Public testimony decries Detroit police brutality

*Detroit*—A parade of witnesses gave horrifying testimony of police abuse and brutality at a public hearing held the evening of Nov. 30 in the Detroit City Council chambers. The hearing, spearheaded by the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, exposed the daily experiences of police harassment, brutality and abuse of power practiced especially in the Black and Latino communities.

The charges ranged from failure to investigate complaints filed against the abuses to instances of completely senseless physical assaults, baseless incarceration and even murder. One white woman came to the defense of her son, who was being beaten by police, filed a complaint against the unjustified attack and became a victim of constant police surveillance, harassed by police when she drove her car, stopped and ticketed on trumped up charges.

A Black woman has never been able to find out why her son was shot in the back by police over a year and a half ago. A Black man, a former Detroit fireman, told of being verbally and physically abused by police, and thrown in jail, simply for asking two police who were harassing several Black youth on his block what the problem was.

One especially horrendous report came from a Black woman who had filed a complaint against the police for the wrongful death of her father and has been persecuted by police for years, including physical beatings, rape, fabricated charges, jailings and hospital incarceration, as well as psychiatric exams attempting to label her as mentally unbalanced. While both council members and police officers present declared that all complaints will be investigated, there were few who believed them.

—Andy Phillips

**News & Letters consistently reported the development of the 1960s Black revolt, ideas and action, South and North, in its pages:**

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- "Malcolm X and the 'Old Radicals,'" by Raya Dunayevskaya, April 1964
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## Black World

(Continued from page 1)

mind, pacing not of the cage, but of the psyche, jogging not in the pen, but in the open space Mumia calls 'reaching beyond.' We are privileged that he takes us with him on a liberating tour of his own freedom. Resolutely on a move within his own spiritual quest."

Mumia makes us understand that free men and women can imprison and arrest their own revolution just as "inmates can set free a boundless revolution of the mind." Mumia, if you read his writings, is clearly against all forms of murder of man or beast, and, I would say, in favor of self-preservation as the highest law.

His outspoken voice against the death penalty is clearly not a selfish act, but the act of a realist in the ongoing battle against capitalism, and for the self-destruction of a state which murders by law.

America today is Germany around 1933, when Hitler's state was on the rise. Who among us will speak against this vile image of a man? Who spoke out when Hitler

## 'New way of thinking' needed to fight toxics

*Chicago*—Rising to speak at a town hall meeting in the Altgeld Gardens public housing project Nov. 24, Hazel Johnson, who had called the meeting, declared, "I never thought I'd see this day after all I've been fighting for."

She and Cheryl Johnson, her daughter, had convinced officials from the Chicago Housing Authority, and the Illinois and the U.S. environmental protection agencies, and environmental health experts from



### PEOPLE FOR COMMUNITY RECOVERY

Northwestern University to meet with area residents. It was the first time the responsible parties had come to Altgeld Gardens, which has been plagued with cancer-related deaths, respiratory illnesses, skin conditions and other health problems.

The movement of Altgeld Gardens residents, People for Community Recovery (PCR), has exposed toxic chemicals such as lead-based paint in CHA buildings, PCBs in the ground and water, and airborne chemicals. Some 108 industries surround the area.

**At issue in the town hall meeting was the high concentrations of polyaromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, in the soil. Cheryl Johnson explained: "In 1863 this area was Pullman's sewage farm. Everything, all wastes from consumers and industry alike were thrown into the sewer." This is where Altgeld Gardens was built.**

"Now it's time to do something," she declared. "Millions have been spent studying the problems here, but nothing has been spent on cleanup. It's not about money. It's about our lives. This has been a dumping ground since 1863. If it's dirty, clean it up. Let the community participate. The life we're fighting for may be your own."

The Northwestern University environmental engineers backed EPA's program, namely planting grasses that would neutralize PAHs in the soil. But when pressed for further testing to make sure the whole problem is addressed, U.S. EPA regional director, David Ulrich, had the usual response: There are not enough resources to do everything that should be done.

**"Something that concerns our lives doesn't have to do with profits," answered Cheryl Johnson. Her point reflects 16 years of PCR fighting industry and the EPA as well as CHA, all of whom have hidden behind costs to delay remediation of toxics.**

Cheryl Johnson enumerated a list of "things residents want us to address." "The air quality is still bad," she said to the state and U.S. EPA people. Along 11 miles of polluted waterways "No fishing" signs have yet to be posted. In addition, CHA has yet to follow safety guidelines for rehabbing lead-painted apartments.

The City of Chicago recently completed installation of 110 sirens for emergencies like chemical accidents. None could be heard at the time of the chemical accident at a nearby plant—no sirens are in the area. Furthermore, PCR had to sue the Chicago Fire Department to obtain evacuation plans. Earlier requests were put in the "round file."

One resident after another from Altgeld Gardens, Concordia Park, Golden Gates, and Riverdale rose to discuss health problems. Many described children with severe asthma and others with mysterious rashes. "We are told that all our problems are related to drugs and alcohol," concluded Cheryl Johnson, and making others see the real problems has been difficult. "We need a new way of thinking."

—Jim Mills

## Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!

attacked the Jews, the intellectual, the Christian priest, the homosexual, the trade unionist, and on and on and on?

Those who spoke out were few and far between... until they came for me. By then all voices of reason were silent. No force of freedom could be heard, only the force of the state-machine's tanks, bombs and death.

Smoke can be seen on the horizon. In our day "justice" is a lethal injection, an eye for an eye. Today "justice" is Bosnia, Rwanda's ethnic conflict in Africa, home-grown American racism, the death penalty. Is this justice? No! Especially for freedom fighters, the innocent executed because of their ideas.

There must be an urgent campaign in the Black community to free Mumia "by any means necessary." Organize protests, write letters, make phone calls, to stop his execution.

**Free Mumia now!  
Or a little bit of all of us dies with him.**

## Interview with landless workers' movement activist

# The struggle for a new society in Brazil

*Editor's Note: The following is an interview with Monica Dias Martins, an activist with the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra, or MST). First formed in 1979, it now has over 500,000 members and has engaged in innumerable land occupations and protests. The interview was conducted on Nov. 2 by Peter Hudis.*

Could you tell us about the overall emphasis of the MST's work in this period?

The issue for the MST is not land reform per se. It starts with the problem of land but addresses a host of other questions—like production, education, socialism, and radical thought. We realize that we can't just occupy the land, we have to also change the production relations.

Goods like the machines, the trucks, cannot be divided; there has to be social ownership of the property by all the families. The land that is occupied doesn't

belong to the movement or the state, but to the group or family who are the direct producers.

Everything is decided collectively. First, the people have to plan how to use the land. Second, they have to create a fund to make various improvements. In the process of discussing this the people start thinking about what profit means in terms of the social process. Questions arise like how to share the profit. How much of it should go to schools? How much for health care and child care? The occupations have led to the discovery of a cooperative labor process. It has emerged from the struggle itself. This does not just happen on a small scale. Some of the settlements contain over 800 families.

When we take goods to the market other problems arise. We want to show that our system of cooperative work is better than the capitalist one. We want to have an alliance with workers in the cities. Sometimes the producers write small papers in their own hand and place them inside the bags of corn or beans to tell others about how they're trying to produce in a different way.

We understand that the Marxist theory is very important in creating a production process for a new society. So besides working, everyone has to have time for study. You work in the morning and study in the afternoon. What you study relates to what you do. The schools are in the settlements. You as a teacher have to work in the morning doing manual labor, since you have to provide for your own means of subsistence. But someone has to systematize the experiences, write everything down, so we don't lose all these experiences.

In addition to discussions in the settlements, we have local, state and national seminars each year, where we exchange knowledge about the different things that we have done. From these meetings, strategies are worked out concerning political change, governmental change and changing capitalism. We take those discussions back to the settlements and have a new exchange of ideas.

Would you say that the MST is consciously trying to break down the division between mental and manual labor in light of this century's failed revolutions?

I don't know if it was so clear from the beginning but now it is very clear. It's not only the landless who have to study but also the intellectuals by coming to the settlements and seeing how they work. The grassroots movement from the church has argued that you have to be poor, you have to be desperate, you have to abandon everything about being an intellectual and become a worker. But the landless movement does not have this prejudice. They accept intellectuals, but not to direct them. They direct themselves.

I used to be a member of a revolutionary party, but I couldn't remain with it. They thought it was good I was with the landless workers so that I could direct them. But I said, I'm not there to be a transmission belt between the popular mass movements and the party.

The educational process in the settlements, taking radical actions, engaging in radical thinking—these are the issues that interest me when I think of changing society. Many of the political parties say we shouldn't discuss these things now

because the important thing is the elections. First let's win the elections, they say, then we'll discuss the problems of women and the landless. I don't believe in this. Elections change so little.

We cannot wait. It's just like during the Spanish Civil War, when the masses wanted to change production relations right away but the parties told them to wait.

Is there discussion in the settlements about how to avoid the problem of a new bureaucracy emerging after the revolutionary seizure of power?

You can't teach someone to be revolutionary. You can have socialist ideas but if you don't change your process you can become as authoritarian as the others. In the educational work we study Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Che, Luxemburg and others. The landless have respect for these people because they had important ideas about social change. Even though they didn't succeed, they are part of the process of learning how to create a new society.

This is a very amazing and challenging movement, because every time we think we have a solution to a problem, another one emerges. It never stops. We cannot say: now I have socialist knowledge, so let me promote this as the model. It's never that. All the time we are so busy trying to figure out another problem, concrete social problems. We believe we are making the social changes now that could lead to socialism in Brazil.

Have problems been encountered in breaking down sexism and the sexual division of labor in the cooperatives?

Some think: I'm going to do revolution outside the house—but inside my house I'll be very traditional. All the time that we're together, we try to observe what is going on and discuss how to be different. It's part of making the changes from inside us.

The women were the first to act during the land occupations. Women working in the cooperatives receive as much pay as the men. Also, instead of women doing the food in each case, or men doing it for each family, there is some rotation. There are big changes that I've seen, but I don't see big changes between women and men in terms of the interpersonal relations.

Has the MST developed relations with the feminist and Black movements in Brazil?

Yes, and in an interesting way. I work in the Northeast of Brazil, which is very conservative. We were invited to a meeting of women in the South, where they are much more progressive in terms of women's issues. I helped coordinate a meeting with 400 other women. It was big; everything the MST does seems to be big. We met for four days in August 1997. We discussed things like what is the role of women, how do we organize a household, what should happen in the kitchen, what kinds of relations occur in the bedroom, and so on. We discussed the organization of society, the public and private relations between men and women.

The Black movement is strong in Brazil. Its roots go back to Quilombo [the independent republic founded by escaped slaves]. They had a cooperative production process as well. The MST has relations with several Black organizations. As with the feminist movement, it's not with one organization in particular. Many MST activists attend mobilizations put on by Black organizations in the cities.

Could you mention just a few of the theoretical issues being discussed by the MST recently?

The MST has a newspaper as well as a magazine that is more theoretical. There is also an internal journal for the activists. The question of neoliberalism has been raised and discussed in the MST newspaper. We are discussing whether this globalization process is really something new or is imperialism that has developed in a new form. We really are in a different and new moment, so we decided that we should study people like Rosa Luxemburg to see what she had to say on issues like imperialism. Some in the MST have criticized Lenin's views of this. There is a ferment of ideas.

## Editorial

### Hurricane's unnatural rage

For seven days, from Oct. 26 to Nov. 1, Hurricane Mitch poured rain in torrents on Central America. The imagination can hardly grasp the force of nature capable of wiping entire villages off the face of the earth. Factories, hospitals, prisons and whole shantytowns were swept away by the terrible floods and mud slides.

After the rain let up, 11,000 were counted dead, and 15,000 missing, with 2.4 million people left homeless—one-third of the population of Honduras and Nicaragua. Many others lack adequate food or safe drinking water, and numerous communities have been isolated by the destruction of roads and bridges. In place of the crops that were washed away now comes the bitter harvest of hunger and disease.

Moved by the vast suffering, people around the world began sending private contributions. Not wanting to be left behind, the politicians began their pledges and calls for aid. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter visited, calling for massive aid to atone for Ronald Reagan's Contra war against the Nicaraguan revolution. He was followed by former President George Bush, who appeared to be less troubled by the actual floods than by the flood of "illegal" immigrants he foresaw if there were not sufficient aid. Next came Tipper Gore and Hillary Rodham Clinton as emissaries of the administration, whose initial \$2 million pledge drew outrage and was raised to \$300 million.

#### BLOOD-SOAKED HYPOCRISY

Do the politicians think we have forgotten the \$4.5 billion in "aid" sent to Central America in the 1980s? Do they think we have forgotten that the aid was guns and dollars sent directly to the death squads that massacred not only guerrillas but peasants, workers, students, priests, nuns? Where were Carter's tears in 1980, when he sent \$5.7 million in arms to the government of El Salvador, whose death squads killed 4,000 civilians and left mutilated bodies in streets and ditches? Where was George Bush's humanitarian impulse in 1989, when his troops invaded Panama, killing 2,000 civilians by bombing densely packed shantytowns?

What tears will all these benevolent exploiters shed today for the one billion people the global capitalist system entombs in the permanent disaster of absolute poverty and for the billion more who toil and suffer for a few meager dollars a day?

Even before the hurricane, Nicaragua and Honduras were among the poorest countries in the world. What most of the hurricane's victims had in common was poverty. Most working-class houses in Central America are poorly built, and many of the poor are forced to build on marginal land close to rivers or on unstable mountain slopes stripped of trees.

#### NOT NATURE'S FORCE ALONE

This havoc is not the child of nature alone but is equally the child of capital's limitless hunger to devour everything in its path. The damage was concentrated in deforested areas. Trees are logged for export to earn money to pay off national debt; land is cleared for cattle ranching and plantations. Peasants pushed off the best land by plantations are often forced to clear forest, farm it to exhaustion, then move on. The forest holds the soil, and the stable soil holds the water. Deforestation swelled the flood waters and multiplied the deadly mud slides.

Opposition to the ecological waste is mounting. In the 1990s indigenous peoples in Honduras and Nicaragua have joined with environmental groups to defeat government logging deals with U.S. and Taiwanese corporations. Two Honduran environmentalists were shot dead for campaigning to save the rain forest.

Even the weather can no longer be considered a purely natural phenomenon. With global warming, more and bigger hurricanes, more and bigger floods, more and bigger droughts are to be expected. But the humanitarian imperialists are loath to do anything about it. Nor did they lift a finger to stop the ecological and economic devastation of Central America that set the stage for the hurricane's destruction.

In 1902, when 40,000 people were killed by a volcano on Martinique, the great revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg, observed the hypocrisy of that day's ruling "benevolent murderers," and warned them:

"But a day will come when another volcano lifts its voice of thunder: a volcano that is seething and boiling, whether you heed it or not, and will sweep the whole sanctimonious blood-spattered culture from the face of the earth. And only on its ruins will the nations come together in true humanity..."

First English translation of  
Rosa Luxemburg's 'Martinique'  
available from News & Letters  
59 East Van Buren Street, Room 707, Chicago, IL 60605

50¢



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# Middle East crises simmers: from Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

(Continued from page 1)

(2) The Arab-Israeli conflict contains the seeds of nuclear conflict. Israel has possessed nuclear weapons for some three decades, but both Iran and Iraq may soon have the technology to do so.

(3) The Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the issue of Israel's determination to control in perpetuity the whole of Jerusalem, involves the entire Muslim world, which claims Jerusalem as a primary religious center, as do Christians as well. It is above all the question of Jerusalem that has been a rallying cry for Islamic fundamentalists the world over and for the terror campaigns of some of them against Israel and its chief backer, the U.S.

(4) Finally we should not forget that the Middle East is a region where a number of authoritarian regimes face the prospect, sooner or later, of overthrow by their own masses. This is true not only of opponents of the U.S. such as the brutal Ba'thist regime in Iraq or Iran's reactionary clerics, the latter challenged both from below and by a less conservative faction that won the 1997 presidential election. It is also true of U.S. allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

While the U.S.-Iraq confrontation was in the headlines for only a brief period in November, no one should mistake its seriousness. The U.S. called off its planes and missiles only hours before they were due to go into action. Nor was this a pinprick assault of the type used against Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic, a U.S. opponent viewed as more congenial.

According to the *New York Times* (11/17/98) "Pentagon estimates" suggested that a very serious attack indeed came within a hair's breadth of being carried out, one where "several thousand Iraqis, including civilians, would be killed in the air strikes, a death toll far greater than from any other American military strike since the Persian Gulf War in 1991."

## U.S.-UN SANCTIONS DECIMATE IRAQ

The effects of the U.S.-UN economic sanctions since 1990-91 cannot be overestimated. These effects are rarely discussed by the U.S. media, which has engaged in a conspiracy of silence. In order to keep it that way, the Clinton administration has recently denied permission to CNN to set up a Baghdad bureau.

Listen to Irish-born Dennis Halliday, a high UN official who resigned in protest this fall, in an interview with the London-based journal *Middle East International* (11/13/98): "The cost of the sanctions was completely unacceptable—killing 6-7,000 children a month. Sustaining a level of malnutrition of about 30% for children under five leads to physical and mental problems. It's incompatible with the UN Charter, with the Convention on Human Rights, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and probably with many other international agreements. I just found that impossible to accept as the head of the UN in Iraq."

To its credit, the French press has prominently covered the situation. Listen for example to the noted cancer specialist and human rights activist Leon Schwartzberg, writing in *Le Monde* Aug. 25. Schwartzberg is one of France's leading supporters of Bosnia and has also spoken out frequently against racism and anti-Semitism. He reported, after a visit to Iraq, that "the number of patients stricken with cancer has increased six-fold since the war" because due to the sanctions, "the drugs needed for their treatment are for the most part lacking. As to surgical strikes, with which the American president and Congress regularly threaten Iraq, they can reassure themselves that these strikes take place daily and with precision on children uncared for, on adults denied treatment."

The economic sanctions, which have resulted in up to 500,000 deaths since 1991, have also had a dire effect on the country's cultural and intellectual life. The Ba'thist regime has been stifling enough, with its brutal repression of all political activity and of minority rights, but today the noose has tightened even further, thanks to the "democratic" West! As reported also in *Le Monde* (11/14/98), the head librarian at Al-Moustansiriyeh University in Baghdad notes that they hold 273,000 books, but almost none of them published since 1990. None of the 2,000 international journals to which they had subscribed have arrived for the past eight years either.

## THE IRAQI OPPOSITION AND THE U.S.

Ever since the Gulf War, the U.S. has claimed to support the Iraqi opposition and to favor a democratic Iraq. As he called off the air strikes, Clinton announced publicly that the U.S. would give more support to the opposition. Given the hatred of the U.S. in Iraq and the region, and the U.S.'s own record of duplicity toward the Kurds, the Shiites, and other oppositional groups, such news will probably serve to weaken rather than help the opposition.

U.S. actions, as opposed to its rhetoric, show a fairly clear pattern over the past decade. In 1991, for example, the U.S. held back from even ordering the regime to ground its helicopters, allowing it to crush a Shiite uprising in the South as well as a Kurdish one in the North. Together, the Kurds and the Shiites comprise a clear majority of the country, yet U.S. policy has favored continued control by the Sunni Arab minority in the center of the country, some of whom form Saddam Hussein's base of support.

Dr. Ahmad Chalabi, a leader of the exile Iraqi National Congress, a group that attempts to unite Kurds, Shiites, leftists, and liberals, stated last spring:

"For too long, U.S.-Iraq policy has been decided by a small group of so-called experts who view the Iraqi people as incapable of self-government—as a people who require a brutal dictatorship to live and work together. Such a view is racist....The Iraqi National Congress rejects the CIA's characterization of a small group of ex-Iraqi army officers as a major opposition party. The INC deplores recent CIA-sponsored radio broadcasts promoting military rule of Iraq" (cited by Christopher Hitchens in *The Nation* 4/13/98).

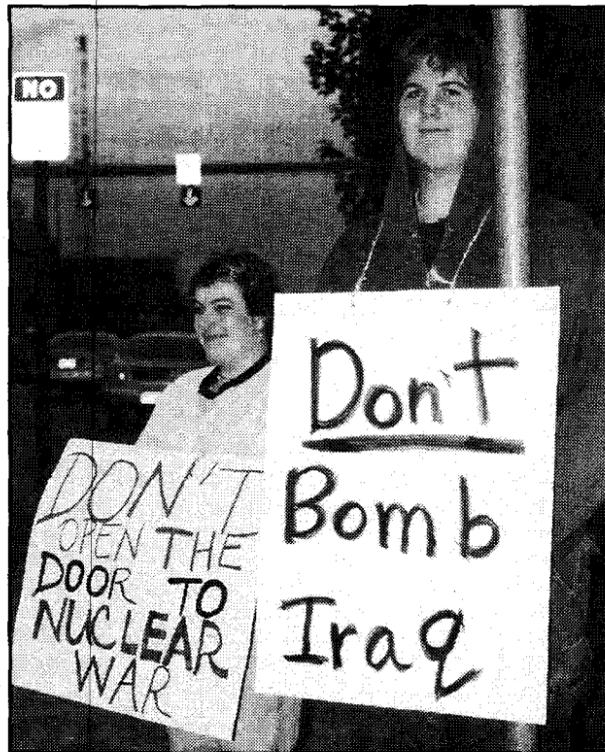
Nowhere is the U.S. support for authoritarian rule clearer than in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The recent Wye Plantation peace agreement is no exception.

## AFTER THE WYE PEACE AGREEMENT

The agreement promises to return to the Palestinians a tiny portion of the West Bank, calls for Israel to release political prisoners, to allow a Palestinian airport and access road between the West Bank and Gaza, and calls on the Palestinian Authority to crack down on terrorism and (once again) to delete from its charter language calling for the destruction of Israel.

So intransigent and duplicitous was Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, both during and after the negotiations, that even the Clinton administration seemed to be shocked at a few points, leaning more than ever before toward a measure of even-handedness toward Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority. This was especially true after Netanyahu returned home and announced that he would add several new conditions before carrying

## Stop Clinton's war drive!



Memphis, Tenn. — We didn't want to wait until after Clinton killed women, men and children in Iraq. We wanted to keep it from happening. That's why dozens of us stood at two busy intersections for two nights with signs and leaflets saying "Don't Bomb Iraq!" and "A bomb doesn't know the difference between Saddam Hussein and a six-year-old child." Our signs made clear that we oppose bombing Iraq and also oppose Saddam Hussein. Groups represented were the Humanitarian Action Collective, News and Letters Committees, the de Cleyre Co-op, the Industrial Workers of the World and other individuals. Most were young and all were determined to do what we could to prevent Clinton's war plans.

It was clear at both intersections that more people opposed the bombing than were for it. Some people who drove by yelled "Bomb them all!" or "Turn Iraq into an oil slick!" It was amazing to us that people would yell such unthinking things. It showed how successful government propaganda has been in making the Iraqi people seem less than human to many in the U.S.

What was also clear, as with all things in Memphis, was the difference race made. Not one Black person yelled anything at us that wasn't supportive. One man opened a bus window so he could stick his arm out and give us the thumbs-up sign. On the corner where we stood, African Americans walking by stopped to talk and express agreement with what we were doing.

At one point the police started harassing two women. After keeping everyone's ID for over 30 minutes, no doubt frantically checking their records to find something to charge someone with, the cops let us all go. In Memphis the cops make sure that the KKK has the right to spew hate from the courthouse steps but we can't speak of peace on the public sidewalk!

Our protest was covered on three of the four TV stations. This was important because we not only wanted to show solidarity with others in Memphis who oppose war against the Iraqi people, we wanted Clinton to know of our opposition too. This struggle is just beginning and we are continuing to meet to discuss what our next action should be.

—Participants

out his side of the agreement.

To be sure, Netanyahu's minor concessions to the Palestinians at Wye outraged the neo-fascist fringe of the settler movement and the religious extremists, but he seemed to have broad support for his policies not only among the secular Right, but also from many parts of Labor. That policy seems to be shaping up as follows:

The Palestinian Authority will be given a few more slivers of land on the West Bank, but these pockets of land will be divided by highways limited to Israelis and by a network of Jewish settlements. The U.S. will pay for the highways. As for Jerusalem, this will never be given up, not even in part.

Most of these policies have the support also of the Labor Party, which is why there is talk of a Likud-Labor unity government at some time in the near future. For example, Leah Rabin, the widow of Yitzhak Rabin, the martyred architect of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, has recently attacked Netanyahu for "slandering" her husband by suggesting that he would have been willing to give up part of Jerusalem to the Palestinians. For his part, Ehud Barak, the present head of the Labor Party, criticized Netanyahu for giving up too much land at Wye!

Other voices within Israel are of course more willing to face reality, but they are marginalized vis-a-vis a growing Israeli consensus that a West Bank permeated by settler camps and highways preventing direct contact between the various Arab communities would provide "stability." Longtime peace activist Adam Keller recently attacked such notions: "But it is impossible to stabilize a situation in which fanatic settler enclaves will remain stuck as thorns within self-governing Palestinian territories, which will themselves constitute enclaves within an outer ring of Israeli settlements" (*The Other Israel*, 10/25/98).

Another set of stubborn facts the Israeli government and public are being forced to confront is in Lebanon, where Israeli soldiers continue to die defending a swath of territory they have illegally occupied and dubbed a security zone. Even hawks like Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon have called for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal.

University students have also gone on strike demanding the lowering of exorbitantly high tuition rates, gaining the support of the labor movement. The students have attacked massive spending on highways and religious schools rather than secular public universities.

For its part, the Palestinian Authority has gained a bit of support through the dramatic opening of an airport in Gaza, but its crackdowns on dissent have alienated still further a population that has already begun to run out of hope. This can only strengthen the rejectionists and the fundamentalists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Given the record of financial corruption of Arafat's Authority, the Arab masses will also wonder where the billions of dollars in aid pledged in Washington Nov. 30 will end up.

Nor will the open role of the CIA in enforcing the agreement win much support among either Palestinian Arabs or in the Middle East more generally. The people of the region remember all too well the CIA's toppling of the democratically elected Mossadegh regime in Iran in 1953 and its installation of the Shah, its aid to Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party during the 1960s against the leftist Qasim regime in Iraq, its betrayal again and again of the Kurdish movement, to name just a few examples.

Recently, the Clinton administration, without any debate, gave the CIA its greatest budget increase since 1983, a whopping \$1.8 billion in a total intelligence budget of \$29 billion, in order to, among other things, "undertake more covert operations" (*New York Times*, 10/22/98). This is a far truer indicator of Washington's moral compass than the sanctimonious debate over impeachment.

Future months are sure to see further crises over Iraq and in the Israeli-Arab negotiations. Living under U.S.-UN sanctions and the murderous Ba'thist regime will mean continued death and suffering for the people of Iraq. The Palestinian masses will also continue to experience the oppression of occupation and denial of their democratic and human rights, while the Israelis will continue to live in insecurity and as a hated occupying power in the region. Only a mass movement for freedom throughout the region can alter in any fundamental way this bleak reality. That is why, since the Gulf War, we have raised the slogan, "To the barbarism of war, we pose the new society."

Dec. 2, 1998



We mourn the untimely death of Kwame Toure (Stokeley Carmichael). His life and times will be covered next issue.

## Youth

## Prisoner solidarity movement has link to history

by Kevin Michaels

There was evidence of a new spirit among youth at a recent event I had the opportunity to attend on a Saturday evening in Bloomington, Ind. Friends and supporters of Khalfani X. Khaldun, a young Black inmate of Indiana's large prison system currently fighting a false charge of murdering a prison guard, organized a benefit concert and cultural event to draw attention to his case and to raise awareness about the racist nature of the U.S. criminal justice system. The program included a ska band, an exhibition by an Afro-Brazilian martial arts group and a talk by Ramona Africa of MOVE, who has had firsthand experience with the savagery of racist police and courts. Khalfani's Bloomington supporters, who have organized themselves into a group called Unite!, became aware of his case in organizing activity which took place around this spring's Jericho '98 march in Washington, D.C.

The spirit I mentioned is one I've seen at a number of activities throughout this year—an active identification on the part of many white youth with those inside the

U.S. prison system who are struggling for their dignity, for their sanity, for their right to live like human beings. This spirit was what was responsible for the success of Jericho '98, although that event was officially limited to support for those who were politically active before their incarceration. It has been evident as well in the nationwide response to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's denial of the appeal for a new trial for journalist, activist and death row inmate, Mumia Abu-Jamal. For example, an entire contingent of students from Earlham College in Richmond, Ind., made the trip to Chicago to participate in a rally for Mumia on Nov. 7.

Khalfani's supporters are distinguished because they recognize the importance of those for whom their brutal experience inside the prison walls has been the catalyst for a rethinking of themselves and their relationship to a society which has generated the contemporary prison-industrial complex. Khalfani himself is quite frank in admitting that he only became politically conscious inside prison. In this sense, the members of Unite! typify this new and growing movement.

New, yes, but not without precedent in American his-

tory. Today's prisoner solidarity movement provides an attraction for white youth not unlike the pull of the Civil Rights Movement on northern student youth of the early 1960s. And the participation of whites in the Civil Rights Movement, in turn, drew inspiration from that great integrated movement against racial oppression of the 19th century: Abolitionism. The prisoner solidarity movement has as much potential for greatness as both of its ancestor movements. It represents the possibility for the development of an integrated anti-racist movement which, like that of the Abolitionists, can represent an intimation of a new society existing within the old one. The Abolitionists did not simply limit themselves to opposition to slavery, but instead developed within their ranks the beginnings of the women's and labor movements in the U.S. This kind of universalism reflected in the contemporary prisoner solidarity movement can perhaps overcome the dearth of an active and creative anti-racist movement since the close of the Civil Rights era. It has the potential to develop a wide range of critical activities not limited to simply confronting open demonstrations of violent racists.

Bloomington, Ind. was a stop on the Underground Railroad in the era of Abolitionism. Khalfani's supporters may not have made the connection to that freedom movement explicit, but they represent an organic link to its legacy.

## New forms of organization confront heterosexism

**San Francisco**—The hideous murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming this past October, far from silencing les-bi-gay-trans people, has seen a vivid re-awakening of queer activity and thought around the country.

In New York and San Francisco, marches were called for Halloween night. Traditionally a night for partying, it was transformed into righteous anger and deep pride, against both anti-gay violence and police abuse. In both cities, the groups called themselves the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Liberation Front, harking back to the earliest revolutionary groupings of 1969-1970 period, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). In San Francisco, the group has since renamed itself the Queer Liberation Front, and is planning a series of actions against gay bashing and corporate targets. Unfortunately, the energy of the QLF has also been diverted by having to fight off the International Socialist Organization's attempt to hijack the group and limiting the goals of the group by censoring the word "queer."

The same weekend as Mathew Shepard's murder, a Queer Theory conference took place in Reno, Nevada that showed more than mere resistance to assimilation. In a session on "That Queer Word," Dean Pierce explored the "conversational closet" that wants us to blend into conventional society. University officials had objected to the word "queer" as not being "polite." But Pierce countered that the word "queer" not only covers a range and fluidity of sexuality, but uncovers the radical nature of our "deviant" sexualities.

Speakers at this conference drew living links between movements, connecting Queer identity to feminism, environmentalism, anti-racist work and the need to overthrow capitalism. Danne Polk urged the audience to consider "radically different concepts of human subjectivity which open us up to creativity" and move us away from the devastating effects of capitalism. Mitchell Halberstadt (who is also active in the Queer Liberation Front in San Francisco) raised the question of how to move forward from the incomplete and failed revolutions

of the 1960s and '70s, and how to incorporate a constant questioning of the norms of gender and sexual identity.

In San Jose, anger over the passive candlelight marches sponsored by mainstream gay/lesbian groups led students, faculty and staff at San Jose State University to form a new group, Queer Revolution. One of the students who helped to found the group, Whitney, said it was necessary to combine the words "queer" and "revolution." Another founding participant, Kevin, urged us to "think outside the triangle" to combine queer concerns with all social issues and identities. Queer Revolution also took on a corporate target, Carl Jr.'s restaurant, which had withdrawn from campus because of controversies over the anti-gay politics of its founder Carl Karcher. In response to a series of disgusting homophobic letters to the student paper, Queer Revolution set a different ground for an open forum: "The Right to a Burger vs. Homophobia!" Drawing over a hundred people, participants demanded to know why the free flow of capital is so often given precedence over people's lives, and reiterated that we had the power to transform our lives, our campus, and our society. Queer Revolution followed this with a forum on the continued presence of ROTC on campus; the military used extortionist methods to return to campus in defiance of a school non-discrimination policy that includes sexuality. Queer Revolution plans more events including a conference on the Queer Left Legacy.

These movements, combining theory and activity, arising in the wake of this horrific butchery, reveal the revolutionary impulses in the queer dimension. The active participation of youth, people of color, and transgenders in these movements demonstrates that a new generation is ready to negate the limitations placed on love. The second negation, to build a new world, will demand the patience, suffering and labor of dialectics. It is a good sign that these new forms of organization, unlike their immediate predecessors of ACT-UP and Queer Nation, appear eager to combine thought and activity, rather than relegating theory to the margins of their meetings and public events.

—Jennifer, Julia, and David A.

## Chicago protest slams anti-gay reactionaries

**Chicago**—On Nov. 22 over 2,000 came out to a spirited demonstration against a small group of neo-fascist homophobic pickets led by Rev. Fred Phelps of Kansas. Phelps had earlier picketed the funeral of Matthew Shepard, the gay man brutally murdered in October in Wyoming, on the grounds that Shepard, not his killers, was the real "sinner." Phelps came to Chicago with a small group of supporters to picket a church in the heart of the gay community, which had earlier performed a same-sex marriage.

Phelps and his supporters were completely shouted down, as hundreds of people chanted slogans ranging from "bigots out of our community" to "Hey Phelps, take a hike don't you know that God's a dyke!" A division was evident from the start of the event, however, in that church officials had asked the protesters to walk silently around the church and not confront Phelps directly. Several hundred refused to heed this advice, and lined the street corners around Phelps' group. They were prevented from forcing Phelps from the premises only by the Chicago police, who formed a cordon around him.

After several hours Phelps and his supporters were "escorted" away for their "safety" by the Chicago police. The crowd went into a jubilant celebration upon seeing this, many assuming that it meant that Phelps and his supporters had been arrested. This was not the case, however, and Phelps' supporters returned two weeks later to continue diatribes against gays and lesbians.

The rally nonetheless showed a promising determination by some to take directly to the streets to oppose today's homophobic reactionaries. —Peter Wermuth

## Editorial

## Christian Right held at bay, but not for long

Coming at us like a locomotive, the veto-proof Congress, primed to impeach Clinton and ready to act on a socially retrogressive agenda—that's what big media, many progressives, and Republicans themselves saw on the eve of the 1998 midterm elections.

Here we are weeks later, and the right wing has been stalled. In Congress, Republicans lost five seats and failed to take other seats in state and federal elections. In almost all of those elections, the incumbents, including a great many Democrats, retained their seats. Their expectations deferred, the Republicans made sure heads rolled, most notably Newt Gingrich's.

Things would have been different, in favor of the Christian Right, were it not for the rise in turnout of Blacks, Latinos, women and unionists. The Black vote was responsible for sealing Democratic victories for governors in Georgia and Maryland and for U.S. Senate in North Carolina.

These constituencies may have given us a very small breathing space if we don't lose sight of what's in store from the Far Right which has only been stopped for now but not turned back.

## NEW HORSES, OLD LOAD

Change of leadership in the House of Representatives doesn't mean an end to tax cuts for the rich, favors for capitalists like tobacco and gun companies, erasure of social programs and health and safety standards for workers and the environment, and writing policies friendly to the Christian Right.

The political demise of Newt Gingrich began in 1995, in the two government shut-downs during the first months of Gingrich's Contract on America, a program of social retrogression. Clinton and the Democratic minority in Congress successfully portrayed themselves to the public as defenders of Medicare and Medicaid, although these programs had already been slashed in Clinton's budgets prior to the Gingrich "revolution."

After the failure to sell its program following the 1994 and 1996 elections, the Christian Right is now attempting to repackage social rollbacks. The top four Republican positions are filled by Southern conservatives, and they epitomize Mark Twain's adage that "Congress is America's only genuine criminal class."

New House Speaker Bob Livingston of Louisiana was party to illegal contra funding, according to Oliver North. Majority Leader Dick Armey of Texas reportedly sexually harassed female students when he was an economics professor. Majority Whip Tom DeLay was implicated in illegally funneling money to a Congressional campaign. And the new GOP conference chairman, J.C. Watts of Oklahoma, for years concealed paternity of his children out of marriage.

Impeachment hearings have continued even though the midterm elections revealed a public unwilling to stomach the hypocrisy and sexism of Clinton's persecutors. The Far Right is pursuing sexual McCarthyism for the whole country. The only two women called before the House Judiciary Committee hearings on impeachment made public confessions relating to sex, their testimonies bearing a chilling resemblance to Stalinist show trials.

The truth is that exposure of Committee Chairman Henry Hyde's illicit affair long ago with a married woman and his self-named budget amendment that cut funding for abortions for poor women 20 years ago show that Clinton's sexist and unprincipled persecutors have much in common with the president's objectification of women, from his welfare repeal to not defending Black women cabinet members and nominees.

## BATTLES LOOMING

Though clipped in the election, the Christian Coalition and Heritage Foundation promise not to let up their drive to win battles over Congressional redistricting, private

school vouchers, affirmative action and abortion rights. In the case of redistricting, whoever controls state legislatures and governorships will redraw districts after the 2000 census determines who is represented in Congress and how federal money is apportioned to communities.

In 31 states, the Right has succeeded in experiments with school vouchers, which are simply state support for private schools. Voucher schools can evade open meetings and records laws, releasing wage and benefit information, statewide student testing, and releasing student performance, suspension and dropout information. The ultimate goal is to replace meaningful public education for all with private education for the well-heeled.

Unstopped in the midterm elections was the assault on affirmative action. Passage of Proposition 209 in California in 1996 ended affirmative action in the state university system. In 1998, Washington state passed a similar initiative, with reactionaries now ready to challenge university and government programs in Michigan, Nebraska and Texas.

A relatively strong showing by Democrats in the 1998 midterm elections hardly means life will be any easier for women seeking abortions. In fact, the unfoldment of regressive social policy, advanced at the expense of addressing real social problems, led to the murders of abortion provider Dr. Barnett Slepian and gay youth Matthew Shepard.

On the other hand, mass demonstrations and a connected sentiment of solidarity with those victims of right-wing reaction were a backdrop to the elections. Furthermore every major city in the nation and untold rural communities now feature networks of people, especially Black women, speaking out against police brutality, unfair legal systems, and prison torture. If there's a breathing space, we must take advantage of it to ensure that these sentiments and networks grow.

## Our Life and Times

# Protests grow in Indonesia, East Timor

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Indonesian students have opened a new chapter in the movement to uproot the structures left intact after they toppled the dictator Suharto last May. They marched by the tens of thousands, joined by a significant number of the unemployed and poor, through the streets of Jakarta on Nov. 12 and 13. Their destination was the Parliament building where Suharto's hand-picked successors, led by B. J. Habibie, were drawing up plans to electorally perpetuate their rule.

## Occupations in Nigeria

The Nigerian government's lifeline—the oil-rich but economically and politically oppressed delta—has been rocked by an open rebellion. In late summer, Ijaw youth started to seize and occupy oil stations along the coast. They demand that the \$10 billion a year which Shell and other oil companies produce in government revenues be returned in the form of roads, schools, health care, sewer and water systems. By mid-November, over 20 oil stations were occupied, halting the flow of nearly one-third of Nigeria's oil.

While some reports hint that the Ijaw, Nigeria's fourth largest ethnic group, harbor a secessionist agenda, and armed clashes have erupted among Ijaw and other delta people, the oppression of the area by successive Nigerian governments is incontrovertible. Ever since the region struck out for self-determination during the Biafra war in the 1960s, it has been deliberately underdeveloped by the military ruling class.

This reached new extremes under the regime of the late dictator Abacha, who allowed state-run oil refineries to deteriorate so much that petroleum had to be imported into the world's fourth largest oil producer, where it was controlled by Abacha. Chronic fuel shortages in the delta have driven prices to over \$3 a gallon and produced an "illegal" market. Among the 700 people who were incinerated in the delta near Warri in October, when a pool of fuel from a ruptured pipeline ignited, were many women and children who came with plastic cups and jugs to take back a miniscule fraction of the oil wealth which oppresses them daily.

## Russian assassination

The Nov. 20 murder of Galina Starovoitova, one of the most prominent women politicians in Russia and the first woman to seek its presidency, has sent shock waves through the country. She was an early supporter of Yeltsin but later broke with him, and was as an outspoken critic of ultranationalists and anti-Semites. Most consider her murder to be politically motivated. Both Communists and neo-fascists have been blamed for her death. The Communist Party, which refused to send a representative to her funeral, had great disdain for her, as did the far right-wing nationalists who the Communists work in tandem with.

Now Starovoitova was no revolutionary and was a firm believer in "free market" capitalism. Yet her death reflects the extent to which the fall from power of Russia's free market reformers has emboldened the Right. At the same time, revulsion over Starovoitova's death is leading many to stand up against the forces responsible for her murder. One expression of this was the Dec. 7 city council elections in St. Petersburg which resulted in a strong showing for the parties favoring liberal democracy. Whereas only 14% of the populace turned out for the previous local elections, this time 40% went to the polls. It is highly unlikely, however, that the liberal democrats will prove capable of developing a serious pole of attraction for the masses.

More than 30,000 soldiers were ordered into the capital to prevent the students from occupying Parliament as they had done in May. On Nov. 13, soldiers opened fire on demonstrators and launched an attack at Atmajaya University, firing volleys at students through the campus fence. At least 16 students were killed.

The massacres did not halt the demonstrations, as the next day even more students took to the streets. The protests moved out through Jakarta as the urban poor torched the edifices of their oppression, from glitzy shopping malls to police stations. Students also ignited demonstrations, street clashes and occupations in other cities.

All during the November demonstrations, the students organized around a core of demands. First and foremost is an end to the military structure—the Dual Function of the Armed Forces doctrine—that permeates Indonesian society. It not only guarantees the military nearly 10% of Parliament seats outright, but seeps into every ruling structure down to the village level. The military, led by Gen. Wiranto, was quick to dump Suharto and purge their ranks of his cohorts when he became a liability to preserving capitalism in Indonesia. Now they are just as quick to turn their guns on the people.

The students also demanded the disbandment of the Parliament which is still stoked with Suharto-Habibie cronies, and the creation of an interim civilian govern-

ment capable of organizing fair elections. Many also want Suharto to stand trial for crimes committed by his regime and demand the recovery of the billions of dollars that were looted from the Indonesian people by Suharto and his circle. Instead, with military backing, Habibie & Co. set up a rigged schedule for naming an electoral assembly to appoint the next president by the end of 1999.

The regime's greatest fears now are the new alliances which the students have begun to establish with Indonesia's poor and working class, who are the most unwavering in rejecting the conditions imposed on them by the economic debacle. For now, the militancy of the student protests has forestalled any compromise deals between Indonesia's current rulers and those in the established political opposition who aspire to rule, primarily Megawati Sukarnoputri and Amien Rais.

The self-determination movement in East Timor has also gained momentum since Suharto's fall. Over 15,000 people demonstrated in Dili in October, rejecting the Indonesian-appointed governor's demand that all state employees sign on to Jakarta's policy of hollow "autonomy" for East Timor and no referendum on their own future status. The majority of East Timorese people want an immediate end to Indonesia's 22-year brutal occupation and full independence.

While the November protests were growing, the Indonesian army in East Timor went on a reprisal rampage Nov. 9, slaughtering over 50 East Timorese in a district it claimed supported anti-government guerrillas. Over 1,000 students occupied the Parliament building in Dili to protest the massacre, and the former colonial ruler, Portugal, withdrew in protest from UN-sponsored negotiations with Indonesia over the fate of East Timor. A number of student groups in Indonesia denounced the massacres and have voiced support for East Timor self-determination among their demands.

## Chileans demand justice



As we go to press, the former Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet remains under detention in Britain, and the world's freedom forces wait to learn if he will be extradited to Spain to stand trial on criminal charges for his guilt in the murder and disappearance of Spanish nationals in Chile, who must now stand in as mute witnesses for the thousands that Pinochet jailed, tortured, and executed.

When the "new" Labor Party government of Tony Blair, allegedly including members who protested against the Pinochet regime in the 1970s, postponed an immediate extradition ruling, it was clear that all parties involved were looking for the "diplomatic" way out of avoiding justice. What an inconvenience for all butcher dictators who still live and travel the world with impunity to be called to account! It is unfortunate that Pinochet's 1973 coup co-conspirators in the Nixon administration and the CIA cannot wait in detention with him. The international demands for justice, especially from the Chilean people, are the most potent force for inspiring the Blair government to send Pinochet to justice.

## More hot air on global warming

The UN-sponsored conference on global warming held in November in Buenos Aires took a big stalling step backwards in achieving any meaningful measures to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. The talks were held to establish a working agenda for steps established at the conference last year in Koyoto where industrialized nations agreed to cut back at least 5% on 1990 emission levels by the year 2010. This minimal program is now dubious, as studies back in 1990 were calling for a 50% reduction by 2050.

The Clinton administration agreed in Koyoto to cut back U.S. emissions 7% from 1990 levels within 15 years. The U.S. is key because it produces 25% of the world's greenhouse emissions. But this has been a hollow promise. The U.S. supported "emissions trading" at Buenos Aires, a crass mechanism which allows a country or private company to "buy" emission reduction "credits" from another entity below its quota or by sponsoring "emission-cutting" programs.

The phony "green" U.S. Vice President Al Gore stated that the U.S. would not sign on to the Koyoto plan without large developing countries, like China and India, also knuckling under. No one expects the U.S. to even look at global warming legislation until after the year 2000 elections. Meanwhile, proof mounts of the damage being caused right now by global warming.

## 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*.