

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Inequity in the workplace



by B. Ann Lastelle

Keebler Cone Company issued a new attendance policy at the beginning of April, which they claimed was in response to workers' complaints that the old policy was "subjective" and "unfair." The new policy assigns points for each absence, each late arrival and each early go-home. It also designates point levels at which workers are due for verbal and written warnings, suspensions and termination.

What could be more "objective"? And yet the workers were incensed, so incensed that they signed petitions on all three shifts demanding that the union call a meeting and do something about the policy. What they said to me was: we are not all the same; some of us have young children or care for sick parents; emergencies do arise.

These conversations reminded me of a talk I had with a young Black woman at Eckrich, a meatpacking plant in Chicago, about the fact that the contract had no provisions for seniority in shift preference, departmental seniority or job rights. The company switched people around at whim. She began by saying that the company should have to abide by some basic rule on seniority and apply it equally to everyone.

Right away, however, we came up against the limitations of that approach. This woman was a mother with a five-year-old daughter, and she had to deal with arranging child care. She also didn't drive and had trouble getting to and from work on public transportation early in the morning and late at night. She said, "Seniority is hard on people who don't have any, but at least you know what to expect." But she added, "There should be some way that they could get together with us and see where we can fit in, where we want to be and what hours are best for us."

When Karl Marx projected his vision of a new society in his Critique of the Gotha Programme, he criticized

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Black World

Ideological crisis in civil rights



by Lou Turner

The same weekend in early May that President Bush gave his anti-civil rights commencement address at the University of Michigan, the Latino section of Washington, D.C.'s Mount Pleasant neighborhood erupted, following the police shooting of an unarmed resident. While there is not a direct relationship between these two events, taken together they point to the current malaise surrounding civil rights in American society.

Bush's speech was pure Orwell: demagogue against Black civil rights while upholding the so-called "three freedoms of speech, spirit and enterprise"! The free speech of a white bigot supersedes the right of a Black person to exist free of racial restrictions. In Washington, D.C., the largely Central American emigrant population of Mount Pleasant produced by the Reagan-Bush imperialist policy in Central America, faces the neglect and repression of predominantly-Black city administrations. And even worse conditions prevail in D.C.'s poor Black communities, under the same administrations.

Rights denied in the name of abstract arguments for "free speech," and civil rights made into an abstraction by being realized in the form of Black empowerment in the state, have revealed new contradictions in civil rights.

LIMITS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Because we have experienced a decade of Reagan-Bush attacks on civil rights, simply recounting the facts of the latest stage of retrogression will not suffice to explain the ideological crisis in civil rights. Instead, we must begin to dig into its philosophic meaning.

The recurrent episodes of government attempts to overturn the civil rights gains of the 1960s are not only the result of this era of Reagan-Bush retrogression. The inner core of the problem resides in the conceptual limitations of civil rights.

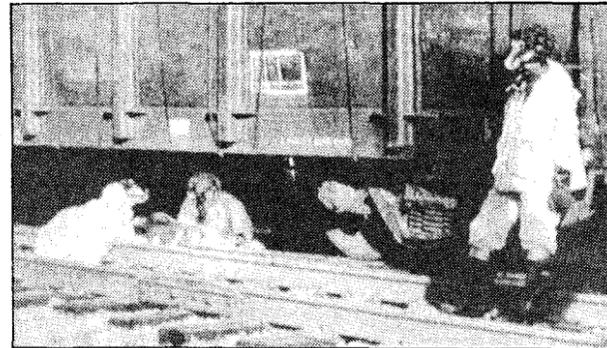
Historically, the ongoing unrest of the revolutionary Black dimension had liberated the principle of civil

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Bush's environmental terrorism endangers humanity's future



Two visions of the future: left, an abandoned oil field near New Orleans; right, protesters in Sumter, S.C., block a train carrying hazardous waste.



by Franklin Dmitryev

Having self-righteously denounced Saddam Hussein's "environmental terrorism," meaning the burning oil wells of Kuwait and the massive oil spills fouling the Persian Gulf, President Bush has unleashed policies that threaten the environment globally, especially in the U.S.

Bush's postwar domestic agenda puts the heavy hand of state power behind an all-out drive for production of energy, from the projected sacrifice of Alaska's last great Arctic wilderness at the altar of big oil, to the push for dozens of new nuclear power plants and for extension of the lives of aging ones. At the same time, other environmental matters are entrusted to the "power of the marketplace," from the proposal to deregulate millions of acres of wetlands to the blocking of any real actions to limit global warming.

BUSH'S DEADLY AGENDA

● When Bush announced a new national energy strategy in the midst of the war, his one non-negotiable demand was to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas drilling, a demand to which the Senate Energy Committee bowed in May in passing its national energy bill.

The ANWR is the last area that, according to the Dept. of Energy (DOE), "protects, in undisturbed condition, a complete spectrum of the various arctic ecosystems in North America."

Bush also wants to open tens of thousands of square miles of outer continental shelf to offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and off the East Coast, parts of Southern California and vast areas of Alaska. The administration tried to hush this plan up because the public—especially Native Alaskan peoples and others whose

livelihood depends on wildlife—are outraged at the thought of more drilling, which raises the specter of another Exxon Valdez-type spill.

● The Bush administration celebrated American Wetlands Month in May by proposing to change the definition of wetlands, deregulating construction on 10% of the surviving 100 million acres of wetlands. Despite Bush's campaign promise of "no net loss" of wetlands, over 300,000 acres are destroyed every year, increasing flood damage, pollution of drinking water and extinctions of species.

● Bush and his chief of staff, Sununu, have sabotaged five international global warming conferences since 1989. At the Second World Climate Conference last November, after 700 scientists unanimously adopted a resolution stating that a "clear scientific consensus has emerged" and that immediate action must be taken to limit global warming, the U.S.—supported by Russia, China and OPEC countries—insisted that further study was needed and blocked any substantive agreement on taking action.

When the U.S. Science Academy released a report in April calling for prompt action to limit global

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On the Inside

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Humanism p.4
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Women and organization in South Africa

Editor's note: Nkele Ntingane, a founding member and current education officer of the Alexandra Women's Congress, talked with News & Letters during her visit to Chicago. She is assistant general secretary of the Alexandra Civic Organization and is employed at Work Place Information Group which services unions in South Africa with health and safety information. Her visit to Chicago was sponsored by the Chicago-Alexandra Sister Community Project. Below we print excerpts of her discussion and will print part two of her article in the next issue of N&L.

We have been organizing inside Alexandra township, the Alexandra Women's Congress, the Alexandra Civic Organization (ACO) and other groups. But recently our work has been handicapped by the violence that tore our township. Since it erupted, we, as women, have been in a difficult position, unable to organize. We have now been responding to this crisis.

HEALTH CARE CRISIS

We have been organizing shelter for people displaced by the Inkatha warlords. We are using churches inside the townships and in the neighboring suburbs to house these people. We have also been asking the community and other people, charity organizations and the Red Cross for assistance for food, coats, blankets and so on. Many have babies and young schoolgoing children. Their schooling has been disrupted.

We live in a very small area—one kilometer square. About 200,000 people are crammed into that area. We have insufficient, if any, electricity and no running water to the houses. In the yards we have ten families or more all sharing one communal tap. We use communal toilets. The Township Council is now trying to install a sewage system and toilets.

Disease is a problem, coupled with poverty and an unemployment rate of about 55%. Of the employed, we have a large proportion under-employed—not earning a

living wage. We still have measles and TB. Recently, we as women have taken on the AIDS campaign. With TB on the rise, we don't know if it could be due to HIV. When we first knew about AIDS in South Africa, the information came from the government. It was very propagandist and negative and people just didn't want to believe it. We felt that as a credible organization, it would be our duty to go to these people and perhaps they would listen.

We try to have a health awareness day. Our latest was last year. We had a doctor from the clinic who knew of STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) to say what the situation was—how many cases they were seeing of abused women and so on. The statistics are so appalling.

We didn't even bother to get statistics of women who were 16 years old and over because we were so shocked with the statistics we got of children two years old to 15. Two-year-olds with gonorrhoea, five-year-olds.... About 61% of the cases in the clinic had seen were about violence that happened in the home—not outside of the home. We felt there is a need not only to educate the women, but we should go out there to educate our men folk as well.

WOMEN, AUTONOMY AND ORGANIZATION

In the Women's Congress we are also dealing with education. Education is a broad thing. We felt that it cannot be the single preserve of the women. We are saying, "Educate a man and you educate an individual, but educate a woman and you educate everybody." We should go right into the schools, have these PTsAs (Parents-Teachers-Students Associations) and set up committees of all the other organizations where each organization in the township can appoint a person to it.

We have about 5,000 women in our organization. We

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Woman as Reason

by Michelle Landau

There were moments at the May 3-4 conference at the University of California-Los Angeles on "What Ever Happened to Women's Liberation?" Rethinking the Origins of Contemporary Feminism when the evocation by the speakers of their lived experience of the revolutionary years of the 1960s to early 1970s came palpably alive.

I had been awaiting the conference with hopeful anticipation. Not only was it bringing together an important array of feminist activists and writers, white, Black, and Latina,* but its very title was provocative: "Rethinking Origins"; "Women's Liberation," i.e., women's freedom—not "equality," not "pro-choice," but **FREE-DOM**—a concept that sometimes seems to have vanished from the feminist agenda.

At the conference itself, each speaker recounted a personal memoir of her pathway to involvement in Women's Liberation; the recollections were of that historic time when, in Charlotte Bunche's words, "everything was open to question; we thought everything would change."

When Paula Giddings spoke of seeing the Freedom Riders on TV, you could feel the "determination on their faces" that she recalls so vividly to this day. When Linda Gordon told of the hundreds of new women each week who came out to learn how to start a Women's Liberation "consciousness-raising" group, you could grasp the experience of that moment when Women's Liberation was transformed from an Idea whose time had come into a Movement.

And yet...these stirring accounts of history-in-the-making were all left largely as a retelling of the bygone days rather than a rethinking; it was not a retrospective as perspective, a reaching for the future.

THE PRESENT IS ABSENT

In fact, not only was the future absent, but also largely, the clamorous, crisis-ridden present. There was barely a breath of gutsy feminist anger about women dying, still, from poverty, and rape-murders, and illegal abortions; barely a mention of today's climate of militarism and war.

The speakers opted instead for an amorphous optimism, with generalized references to a greater emphasis by feminists now on the voices and lives of poor women and women of color. Yet, I wondered: if we have, indeed, learned to hear these voices, how is it possible to hold two days of discussion, in which today's urgent reality barely penetrates the academic walls? And how can we rest content with such a vague optimism about the "future"?

By the conference's end, some of the panelists were expressing a sense of unease. Charlotte Bunche objected to the very title chosen for the final roundtable session: "From the Streets to the Classroom: From Women's Liberation to Women's Studies."

THE CONCEPT OF REVOLUTION

The future emerges from the past and the present. The conference's highpoint was its evocation of the historic moment of the emergence of Women's Liberation as Movement. That was a moment when revolution—the possibility of human, social transformation—was "in the air."

Yet it's the very idea of revolution that some conference panelists attempted to dismiss or marginalize, and others treated as misty goal ("we were naive back then"), rather than concrete historic task. But once we leave out revolution as the process of uprooting the old and creating the new, we both reduce the concept of "Women's Liberation," and leave all of humanity within the violent, dehumanized, capitalist framework.

I question the very direction of the "rethinking" at the conference, when no panelist challenged the equation from the platform of "revolution" with the narrow ideologies of Maoism, Fidelismo, guerrilla warfare, rather than with what was genuinely revolutionary in

* The speakers were: Charlotte Bunche, Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, Paula Giddings, Linda Gordon, Gloria T. Hull, Alice Echols, Beatriz Pesquerez, and Hestor Eisenstein. The convenor was Ellen DuBois.

What happened to Women's Liberation?

the 1960s: the mass-based Black freedom movement, and the newborn Women's Liberation Movement, which, at the highpoint of its origins, posed a deepening of the very concepts of both process and goal of revolutionary transformation.

Today, in 1991, the ideological offensive of the rulers—their hard-core racism, sexism, death mongering—is intense, deliberate and vicious. Our response cannot be a retreat from the concreteness of the Idea of Freedom, cannot be the erection of an infinitude of barriers between "ultimate" goal and "immediate" tasks.

In her Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, Raya Dunayevskaya entitled Chapter 8, "The Task That Remains To Be Done: The Unique and Unfinished Contributions of Today's Women's Liberation Movement." There she discusses the new Women's Liberationists' raising of questions not only of today, but of tomorrow: "first, the totality and depth of the necessary uprooting.... Second, the dual rhythm of revolution...not just the reorganization of objective, material foundations but the release of subjective personal freedom, creativity, and talents..."

There is no program or even theory that can answer this problematic for us, yet it is the urgent need if Women's Liberation is to be made real. That is why Dunayevskaya emphasized the philosophical perspectives opened up by Marx's Marxism and her own philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. If we allow today's retrogressive reality to curtail our very concepts of the vistas open to humanity's self-development, rather than digging deep into a philosophy of history, freedom, organization and revolution, then the task will surely forever remain undone.



Women-Worldwide

More than 10,000 women brought the Niger capital, Niamey, to a halt on May 13, paralyzing schools, communications, health centers and the civil service with a march demanding a greater voice in politics. They protested the fact that few women would be involved in an upcoming national conference to debate reforms in this West African country ruled by Ali Saibou's one-party military government.

Gabriela Network—Sisters in Support Across the Pacific is protesting the increasing rapes of Sri Lankan and Philippine women in supposedly "liberated" Kuwait. Over 50 women have reported rapes since late February and American officials hear of a rape or attempted rape every other day. Kuwait's police dismiss the complaints as "exaggerated," blaming Palestinians for "spreading these rumors to give us a bad name in the rest of the world." Letters of protest can be sent to the Kuwaiti Ambassador, 2940 Tilden St. NW, Washington, DC 20008.

—Information from Gabriela Network

Shouting "Women unite against violence and war!" the United Women's Day Committee in Sri Lanka protested March 8 against a civil war that has torn the country apart since 1983. As a result of the war, 1 out of 16 persons in the country are homeless, and 1 out of 250 have "disappeared."

—from Asian Women Workers Newsletter

The Polish government, on May 17, rejected a Catholic Church-supported ban on all abortions that could have imprisoned both the doctors and women involved for up to two years. The government angered women across the country by eliminating subsidies for birth control pills. The women were outraged when the Pope dared to compare abortion to Nazi death camps. Blaming the Catholic Church, one Warsaw feminist said "We have traded a red regime for one that wears black robes," while another maintained, "It is amazing to see that our rights have grown as humans but shrunk as women."

Women and organization in South Africa

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have divided the organization into four branches. We have weekly meetings so that each one of us attends a meeting of our branch. Once a month we come together and just share what we have been doing and give ourselves tasks for the next month. It helps to reach out to everybody because we are doing it small.

After discussion and debates it was decided the UDF (United Democratic Front) should disband. But the structures that formed that federation still should continue to exist, like the Civics. And the Civics should take on a new form. The ACO had adopted the Freedom Charter. But other organizations did not. This was a problem because the Civics were supposed to be dealing with everybody's problems inside the community; everybody, every resident should be a member of the Civic Organization.

We decided to set up this network of the Civics, just a Civics network so there is coordination of activities.

Even when the UDF doesn't exist any more, the continuation of activity should be there.

When the ANC was banned and the leadership was harassed, the ANC Women's League was banned, too. But the women in the ANC Women's League were also members of the Federation of South African Women. We still needed a Federation that would take on all women, that would be an umbrella organization of all women in South Africa, irrespective of their political or religious affiliations.

When the ANC was unbanned, we had a very big debate in Alexandra. Some women said we should disband and be members of the ANC Women's League. Others were saying no, we still need these other women who are not members of any political party. We are going to lose them if we just disband and move into the ANC Women's League. We still saw the need to continue to let all women in Alexandra be part.

—Nkele Ntingane



Supreme Court decision an outrage!

Los Angeles, Cal.—I am outraged at the May 23 Supreme Court decision banning doctors and clinicians from discussing abortion with women in clinics that receive federal funding. It insults women who have already made up their own minds about their pregnancies and go to these clinics for medical information and referrals. Many women will not know where to go for a safe, legal abortion.

This decision insults health care providers, denying their right to provide information about a legal, medical procedure. It means thousands of unplanned births for women without private insurance (a stunning number), without a map of the few clinics and hospitals still providing abortions—some that won't even treat you without a referral!

This isn't an erosion, it's a deep gash in our right to reproductive freedom. It's so telling of the hypocrisy of this system that preaches against teen pregnancy, doesn't want to feed poor babies, but fears women making our own decisions.

It has put our Republican Governor Wilson in a real quandary. He opposes the decision because he knows what it means—more hungry children, more mothers on welfare. It's not "cost effective." He's pro-birth control and pro-Norplant, which he may provide free to teens and poor women. Gee, that sounds so cost effective—he may make it mandatory for drug abusers and welfare mothers!

I see the Supreme Court decision as a drastic measure aimed directly at controlling our lives, at pushing women back into "their place," a place of poverty, sexism and every other burden this insane society heaps on women, children and men. It is a place we will not go willingly—and it is a place we will not stay!

—Mother by choice

Pregnant women face inhuman conditions

DeKalb, IL.—At the State Food Service I work at, there were three pregnant women. Although we are supposed to have medical insurance that includes maternity coverage, Equicor seems to have run out of money to pay the rest of the claims this year. Their story is, when they get funding in the summer for next year, they will pay off the unpaid claims for last year. They have been telling us employees that we should pay our own doctor bills and be reimbursed by the company when they get more money.

One woman, who just had a Caesarian section to deliver her baby, does not have the money to put out even if she gets paid back this summer. So when she wanted to take her oldest child to the doctor for a pre-school checkup and immunization, the clinic told her she would have to pay for that visit ahead of time because her account is so delinquent.

Another woman who is pregnant now found out only one month ago that her apartment will be rented to somebody else starting June 1! She will be eight months pregnant and she, her husband and their two young children, will have to move. But they still haven't found a place that is comparable size and price. It especially stinks because they have been managing this home for their landlord, but the landlord decided to kick them out anyway and rent it for more money to people who "don't have kids."

The third woman at work who is pregnant is single and the father-type-character won't even talk to her anymore now that she is showing.

I can't believe what inhuman conditions pregnant women have to face! The only support at work is from co-workers who always pitch in to buy baby presents. But everyone knows that no one who would work full time here has much of anything to spare, no time, no money, nothing. And now that the insurance is all messed up women are really scared and wondering how everything is going to work out.

—Angry serviceworker

Recession: workers suffer first, longest

by Martin Almora

Chicago, Ill.—Now that the U.S. has brought "peace" to the Persian Gulf region, many of the soldiers that were in the Gulf "kicking ass" for the ruling class and the government will find out, when they return to the work force here at home, that these same rulers are "kicking the asses" of the working people with this recession. Many "experts" are saying that this will not be a long recession, but even if it ended tomorrow, most workers would not be any better off economically than they were before it began.

Workers who have been laid off are finding the usual hassles of the unemployment office with its long lines and "compassionate" personnel, but also are facing a maximum of six months in which to collect. If they are not working by the time their benefits are exhausted, they are left the choice of welfare or nothing.

STRUGGLING TO LIVE

It seems very unlikely that there will be more money from the government for benefit extensions or for the growing number of unemployed. Financing a war that is in the best interests of the government is OK, but spending money on its working force is not.

Job hunting is a painful experience, not only because there are so many other workers looking for work, but because anyone who was earning a decent wage before is not likely to get another job paying that wage. Another slap in the face is the fact that many of these low-paying jobs have complex hiring practices with applications that ask very personal questions and have added clauses, rules and regulations that make it more discouraging to look for work.

Toys-R-Us

No more bosses games

Chicago, Ill.—There has been a heavy cloud over all who are trying to change this society in the time of the so-called "victory" of Operation Desert Storm. This can be seen at my job at Toys-R-Us. Over the last three months the contradictions have gone from bad to the worst I have seen in years of working in retail.

First off, the number of workers has been cut to the bone. Not only must we do the same amount of work, if not more, we have less time to do it. In the past few weeks we have had to get ready for a tour by a big boss from the main office, which we need like a hole in the head. The bosses in this store have been on our backs night and day to make the store look good so that they can get promotions.

The bosses try to divide us from each other by treating us in a very subjective way in relation to our jobs. Some workers called a meeting with the boss to cut down the bad feelings with management and with each other. What happened? The boss stonewalled them on all things. One thing good came out of that meeting. The main person behind it now knows what's what with the lies of the bosses. Along with that, some people are coming together, people who up till this time did not speak to each other.

A person at another store has started to write an underground paper about Toys-R-Us, which is called "The Underground Giraffe." When I visited that store, all were talking about it, and one person made sure I had some copies.

We cannot play at the company's game anymore because we cannot win at their game. We must play our own so-called "game" when dealing with capitalism and the persons standing for it and with it. This new type of "game" can be seen in that off-the-wall paper and in that meeting that started as a meeting to try to get the boss to come up with solutions to the problem, then we see the real problem is the boss. —David L. Anderson

Workshop Talks

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the concept of "equal right" born under capitalism as "a right of inequality." He wrote that:

"Right by its very nature can consist only in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one definite side only, for instance...are regarded only as workers and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored."

Isn't this one-sidedness—seeing people only as workers, not as individuals—exactly what the young woman from Eckrich and the people at Keebler reject?

"We have a life outside this plant," my Eckrich friend said. Our lives in capitalist society are fragmented between working time and our time. During our working time, we are valued only for how fast our hands move, how strong our backs are, whether our feet and legs will let us stand in one place for eight hours a day. Our ideas and emotions are totally separate from our physical activity in the process of production. We move our limbs whether we feel like it or not.

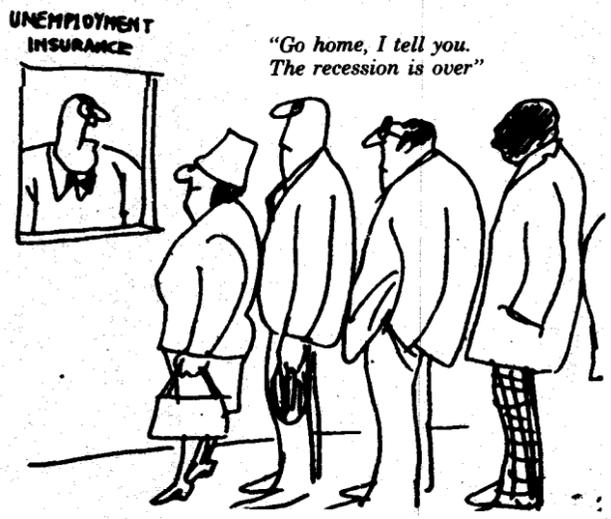
Marx envisioned a new society where work would be totally different and integral to our lives; a society where the self-development of the individual would be the measure of freedom. Since the capitalists don't need our minds on the production line, can't we use "their" time to think about how to reach such a society?

Those workers who are still on the job are struggling to make ends meet. Things weren't much better before the recession, but they are even worse with the threat of losing your job hanging over your head. Living from pay check to pay check with the threat of an illness or accident wiping you out financially is now the way of life even for workers with good-paying jobs.

MENTAL ANGUISH

The worst part of the recession is the mental anguish it causes. A recession amplifies the feelings of hopelessness, frustration, anger and depression always on the minds of workers: the anxiety of waiting for the mailman to deliver your unemployment check, feeling let down when he or she doesn't have it, feeling rejected when unable to find another job, humiliated when creditors call your home demanding payments and not caring about your situation at all. Loss of pride, feeling less than a human being, and the reality for some that they are close to joining the ranks of the homeless—alienation from life itself sums up the feeling of a worker in a recession.

The bourgeois media coverage of the recession is not the whole story, because they cover it only when government and big business are hurting. Workers suffer long before and after big business and lending institutions do. The government economists and experts place the blame on everything and everybody but themselves and big business. I heard a report on TV that the country can pull out of the recession when people start spending more money. I've never considered myself a genius, but I am certain that you have to have money before you can spend it.



Punishing the unemployed

Fewer than three out of every eight "officially" unemployed workers in the U.S. now receive unemployment insurance benefits. This is the lowest coverage rate during any recession since World War II. Indeed, the benefit coverage rate today is lower than at any point between 1955 and 1983, even though coverage rises during recessions, when laid off workers comprise a bigger share of the unemployed. The purchasing power of the average unemployment check has also fallen about 10% since 1972.

The reduction in benefit coverage stems partly from rule changes adopted during Reagan's first year in office that severely restrict the ability of states to provide extensions of unemployment benefits beyond 26 weeks—thus punishing the long-term unemployed. Also, unemployment "spells" are becoming longer, so that a greater share of the unemployed exhaust their benefits.

During the 1981-82 recession, Congress passed "emergency" legislation that extended unemployment insurance payments to 52 weeks. When the unemployment rate failed to rise this past April, Democratic leaders in Congress shelved a similar proposal.

Their reluctance is only partly due to the enormous federal budget deficit, which benefit extensions would have increased by less than \$5 billion (or about 1½%). Equally important is that reductions in unemployment benefits and the rest of the "social safety net" are part and parcel of the Reaganite attempt to break the resistance of labor through fear and intimidation. —A. Anielewicz

ARCO

A 600-acre time bomb

Carson, Cal.—Here at ARCO's Los Angeles Refinery the struggle for parity with wages at local Chevron and Mobil refineries (where workers earn up to \$3 per hour more) continues. Management has finally given an answer: ARCO is number one in so many categories, such as Southern California market share and profits (\$2 billion in 1990), that we shouldn't expect them to be number one in everything.

One area the company claims to be number one in is safety. It's true that, as of April, we had gone two million work-hours without a Lost Workday Injury. Equally true is that various foremen and supervisors have not reported, have under-reported or have otherwise covered up incidents.

Here are two examples of how "seriously" ARCO takes our safety:

● On May 5 there was a release of deadly hydrogen sulfide (H2S) and sulfur dioxide (SO2) gases at the Sulfur Unit. These gases are deadly at very low concentrations, but making the area safe was secondary to keeping the unit running full tilt. When H2S was sucked into the control room through the air conditioning, the operators were forced to wear fresh air packs and continue with their work.

● OSHA requires we have an ongoing safety training program. Mostly this consists of videos shown at 2:00 a.m. We have to sign off that we've seen this week's installment. Usually the foremen just hand out the sheet to sign off. Other times you walk into a control room, see people going about their jobs and a TV playing a tape with the sound down.

Not everybody co-operates with this scam. One operator requested to actually see a tape on benzene hazards if he was going to sign an official paper. He was told the TV didn't work, so he didn't sign off. After getting chewed out, he looked at the sheet and found somebody had signed for him.

ARCO's two-faced attitude to safety is terrifying to those of us who work in this 600-acre time bomb.

—Member, OCAW Local 1-128

Amtrak

Budget cuts, layoffs

Los Angeles, Cal.—I am a member of the Los Angeles chapter of the Transportation and Communications Union. I'm employed by Amtrak as a train attendant. For the most part I enjoy my job, and I try to infuse a sense of pride and accomplishment in what I do. There are times I find myself annoyed at some of Amtrak's management policies.

I've worked for Amtrak since 1989, and at times the passenger count is so high that we don't have enough space for all the passengers to have seats. I find it interesting that management is slashing the budget by decreasing the stock of supplies we carry on trains and laying off workers, while W. Graham Clayton, the president of Amtrak, is under Congressional investigation for \$80 million in missing government funds.

Upon the train's arrival in Los Angeles, each train attendant is required to pick up any trash in the car. I understand having to do this while traveling en route, but Amtrak has employees hired to clean the trains at the end of a trip. Many of my co-workers feel the company has us picking up trash at the end of our trips in order to cut back on the car cleaning force. Individual car cleaners have expressed to me that they are understaffed and at times the trains are inadequately cleaned.

Amtrak has instituted a policy on certain trains where one train attendant is responsible for maintaining two cars. May I add that the extra duties don't include an increase in salary. The railroad workers went five years before the company hesitatingly gave us a new contract and raise.

After a great deal of negotiating, Amtrak has decided to provide private hotel rooms to all On Board Service employees. Amtrak has always provided lodging for On Board Service, but we are still having to share rooms. Having your room alone may not seem like a lot to those of you who don't have to travel in your jobs, but after working for days on a train with the public, we need our space. —Joseph Lee

to grasp the origins of today's economic decline:

MARX'S CAPITAL and TODAY'S GLOBAL CRISIS

by raya dunayevskaya

"The capitalists may not be ready to 'agree' with Marx, that the supreme commodity, labor-power, is the only source of all value and surplus value, but they do see that there is such a decline in the rate of profit compared to what they consider necessary to keep investing for expanded production, that they are holding off—so much so that now their ideologists are saying low investment is by no means a temporary factor that the capitalists would 'overcome' with the next boom. There is to be no next boom."

—"Today's Epigones Who Try to Truncate Marx's Capital"

"The end result of this relationship of capital to the lot of the working class is the great, the insoluble contradiction which is wrecking the entire system—the unemployed army. Marx calls this 'the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.' The greater the use of machinery, or constant capital, the lesser relatively the need for variable or living labor power. There may now be 30 million workers where formerly there were half as many, but the investment of capital is sevenfold. And with it will always come unemployment."

—"The Humanism and Dialectic of Capital, Vol. I"

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From the writings of Raya Dunayevskaya Marxist-Humanist Archives

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Founder of Marxist-Humanism

Editor's note: In September 1957, Raya Dunayevskaya addressed the national gathering of News and Letters Committees with the galley proofs of Marxism and Freedom before her. The book had been assigned one year earlier at the Founding Convention of the Committees. (The fourth edition of Marxism and Freedom has recently been published by Columbia University Press.) Her speech was entitled "The American Roots of Marxism in the World Today and Our Development" (The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, microfilm #2596). There she projected the needed "Organization of Thought," calling Marxism and Freedom "the theoretic foundation, the new ground for Marxist Humanism in this native soil..." The final section of her presentation was entitled "Our Development: Philosophic Innocence and New Humanist Proletarian Maturity," and is presented below.

Somewhere in the Phenomenology (p. 770-71 Baillie edition) where Hegel speaks of the Garden of Eden and the eating of the apple, he uses the expression that it may be called "innocence," but it is "not good"; at least religion presents Man as if "it happened once as an event, with no necessity about it... and was driven from the state of innocence, from Paradise... and from nature offering its bounties without man's toil."

Now, as you know, never again, if then, except for the favored rich, has man got food, whether to eat or to think, except by his sweat of the production line. But I do have something I can tell you about the sweat of thought, especially when it is not empty fancy, but the organization of thought, which must have as its point of departure and point of return proletarian thinking and doing as well as the general development of thought. And I would like to give you here, at least a brief idea of what went into so simple a question as deciding to publish News & Letters.

1) The story begins in 1941 when the theory of state capitalism was elaborated. From 1941 to 1949-50 you could call the development of that political tendency as a development from theory to practice. Not that the theory wasn't tested in practice all along, but, on the whole, it was built on a) figures—development of Russian economy and politics, b) past theory—Marx's concept of capitalism's development and the revolt of the workers, and c) it was all within the radical movement itself. That can even be shown by what our attitude was to the labor bureaucracy. We were already against the labor bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the policy during that period was, since [Walter] Reuther did come from the workers' ranks and since he was once a worker, maybe he could be given a push to the Left. We were working in caucuses, trying to push him to the Left. All you did was push yourself far away from anything.

Now, as you often heard, 1949-50 begins a new epoch, for with Automation in the form of the continuous miner and the miners' strike, something totally new appears: the movement from practice to theory. It isn't that it was just a strike. It is that the most left-wing of all the left-wing leaders (because if there was anyone in the trade union movement you swore by, it was [John L.] Lewis; he always went on no contract, no work) when he said go back to work, the miners said NO. That is a very high stage in development, because it is not only a new stage in the fight against the labor bureaucracy, it says "I, the miner, have something to say about this and I have a thought about it."

"I say this damn continuous miner not only throws me out of work, and those towns are all becoming ghost towns, but what kind [of labor] am I doing? What is a human being? What kind of labor does he perform anyway? I'd like to know a couple of things on that." So it wasn't merely a class struggle and a very exciting strike that lasted nine months. It was that they themselves had a new theory. They didn't call it a theory, but it was there, so you could have the movement from practice to theory. Now you can say in a certain sense you couldn't have development before you have developed. Not that there wasn't always that movement in life, in history, but no theoretician was fully conscious of it. a) Even the founder of modern humanism, Marx, who broke with the bourgeois concept of theory, and reconstructed his major theoretical work on that movement from practice, nevertheless made a separation between theory and practice.* It could not have been otherwise until the proletariat itself matured philosophically. b)

From state-capitalism to Marxist-Humanism

On the Organization of Thought: from Marx's age to today

The proof of that is that 32 years after Marx's death, when the proletariat was readying for the greatest revolution in history—overthrow of Tsarism—and Lenin came to philosophy, he saw the essence of the dialectic in the unity of opposites, the transformation of one into the other, and not the Absolute Idea, or new society.

So that it is not only that what to Lenin's works was implicit—philosophic foundations—must become to us explicit. It is far more than that. What must become explicit to us is not contradiction, but the Absolute Idea.

2) The second period of our development covers 1950-1955. The new impulses from Automation take a long time to get organized. The break from totalitarianism signalled by the June 17, 1953, revolt in East Germany seems easier to comprehend. But, as we know from the necessity to break with Johnson,** we had first to break from this totalitarian, who resisted the return back to theory on these new grounds, as we have found from our own experience and hence for a unification of theory and practice, including our being tested by the outside world where we were found wanting.

3) Now the third period, the actual birth of News and Letters Committees or Marxist Humanism as the new theory, 1955-57 has compelled us to shed our philo-

sophic innocence in the face of the workers' demand for a total approach, but we have just begun. He who thinks otherwise will never build an organization, which cannot be built seriously without first of all being based on organization of thought that is both new and continued from Marx's day.

back the organization which meant serious preparation for 1917, which illuminated what it is the Johnsonites were running to escape. But having finally accomplished the writing of the book [Marxism and Freedom], and gained our philosophic wings, does not mean we have finished the task, not even though it took us 16 years to reach here. We must now become so practiced in philosophic analysis of the actual that it is second nature to us. Letter writing is one way, but it is the path only if it gains us an extra dimension in all things.

First and foremost it will determine our organizational life.... Here I am dealing, not with the particular, but with the general, although with Marxists the general too is not abstract, but concrete. For example, take the Absolute Idea, not merely in its result as a synonym for the new society, but as a process: first objectively, for thought too is objective, that is to say, the attitude to objectivity itself becomes part of that objective historical development. The idealist Hegel was so solidly based on the actual world that even his "world spirit" becomes actual. Thus he says: (Phenomenology of Mind, p. 129, Baillie trans.) "It is the nature of truth to force its way to recognition when the time comes, and hence it only appears when its time has come."

The time is now. Truth has forced its way up and it



Let me deal with organization of thought first negatively, that is to say, from the bourgeois point of view. Thought is something reserved for the elite and, if you do not bow before it, like before the cross in the church, you nevertheless end by endowing man-made institutions with eternal, unchangeable laws of their own, taking them out of their historic, human determinateness, and thus make a fetish of it.

The most common and vise-like fetish is what Marx called the fetishism of commodities. Not only is the whole capitalist world a world of commodities, but everything can be bought, including the human being. That the capitalist buys only his capacity to labor, not the laborer himself, has never had any except a juridical meaning to him. That is true not only of the capitalist himself and his intellectual hirelings, but even when bourgeois political economy was a science, and discovered that labor was indeed the source of all value, the classical political economist did not go beyond "source" to subject, the human gravedigger of his exploitative system. In a word, classical political economists remained a prisoner of the fetishism of commodities.

That is why Marx opposed not only the capitalists as a class and their ideology as rationalization for their exploitation of the working class, but insisted that all human consciousness up until then was a false consciousness. Only he who had nothing to gain from this exploitative system could gain a true consciousness and that is why the worker could see clearly. Not because he was a hero but because, needing to throw all exploitation from his back, he straightened up as man, ended the pre-history of humanity, because in his straightening up, his head too was raised, and he became conscious of all around him as a historic, that is, passing phenomenon. Gaining a mind of his own meant an entirely new, unprecedented organization of thought, and this organization of thought was elaborated by Marx in the Communist Manifesto, which determined the organizational life of the Communist League.

Without such an organization of thought, organizations are nothing but factional groupings to be manipulated by unscrupulous politicians, big and small... Today [in the first part of this talk] we have traced

will be heard. That is where the sales of the book comes in. You will recall from the Logic that Hegel always insisted that, "The Idea is not so impotent as merely to have a right or an obligation to exist without actually existing."

HOW TO ACHIEVE THAT WITH MARXIST HUMANISM IS THE QUESTION

We have two advantages: 1) Ours is real, not only in thought, but in the outside world for we live in an age of absolutes, where the counter-revolution is in the innards of the revolution, "and no ghost need come from the grave to tell us that," since not only every child can understand the Hungarian Revolution; every Hungarian child participated in it and suffered the blows of the Russian bloodletting.

2) Ours is native. Marxist Humanism originated in the period of the Civil War, but it has come of age now in the period of Automation, where its very form took shape. But, we must be under no illusions—neither because founders of a new movement sounds so poetic that we forget the trials and tribulations that the capitalists, labor bureaucracy, and old radicals will throw our way and as often as possible try to hit below the belt; nor because we felt that since it came from the workers, we can shift to them the responsibility that belongs with us.

Not being an elite doesn't lessen that responsibility. It heightens it. Although we are not an elite and we are not out "to lead" the masses, we do have a serious role to perform that no one else is doing, although now that it is done, everyone will challenge. The intellectual sloth that has accumulated these decades since Lenin's death has created a quagmire that will have a pulling effect on us too if at any moment we relax our vigilance and the confidence in our new point of departure. For it cannot be too often repeated that Marxism is not what Marx wrote in 1843 or 1883, but what it is today. What 1843-1883 created were the theory and the method. We must unite theory, method and practice, so the workers can actualize it and make it real, or there will be no new society.

We repeat: how to actualize Marxist Humanism is the question. We can say simply by selling Marxism and Freedom. That is true, but it is not the whole truth. The follow-through is the whole truth and it is a continuous process. It begins before you have sold, continues when you have sold, remains to be done after you have sold and until the person has joined us. Between the "after" and the "until" they join us, we become a part of the marketplace of ideas which is more like a battlefield where powers no less than the American and U.S.S.R. administrations, Reuther's Labor Bureaucracy

(continued on page 10)

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...from 1776 until today

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* [See "Critique of Political Economy: The Limits of an Intellectual Work" in Chapter V of Marxism and Freedom.]

** [C.L.R. James]

Essay Article

by Bob McGuire

"The movement of 1989 has left a job unfinished; somehow its goal must be achieved." This was the conclusion of Beijing students in a ten-page document which they passed out secretly on university campuses this past April to commemorate the start of the Spring, 1989 movement for freedom and democracy in China.¹

Then at the end of May, students risked arrest at police-occupied Beijing University by throwing hundreds of leaflets from dorm windows calling for acts of defiance on June 3-4 to commemorate the second anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre and the bloodbath in Chengdu. They even unfurled a 15-foot-long banner that read "We will never forget June 4."

Acts of defiance in the face of martial law or its equivalent have never ended in the two years since the Deng Xiaoping regime tried to drown the voices of revolt in the blood of thousands of workers and students. The counter-revolution resorted to immediate executions, especially of workers, then to show trials which ended just this February and to secret trials before and since, as well as firing workers and expelling students who could be identified.

The ten-page document which Beijing students handed out in April, an act of defiance in itself, told of the continuing resistance: first-year students who had had to serve a year in the army burned their uniforms after service; memorial meetings held in spite of police vigilance on the first anniversary of the June 4 massacre had ended with the singing of the Internationale.

Moreover, the Public Security Bureau had uncovered over 70 underground organizations across the country, arresting 200 from one group in Xian alone. There are at least three popular underground newspapers. What has united the opposition is a determination to protect the democracy activists. Many who appeared on police "wanted" lists have been sheltered throughout China, or even spirited out to refuge abroad.

It comes as no surprise that George Bush has chosen to honor the butchers of Tiananmen Square by pushing for another year of most-favored nation status without conditions. Bush has lent support to Deng, his fellow state-capitalist ruler, from the beginning by sending the secret Scowcroft mission to Beijing weeks after the bloodshed.

When China gave a free hand in the UN to Bush to pursue his own bloodbath in the Middle East, the last pretense of sanctions disappeared. If Bush gets his way, the welcome mat will continue to be out even for imports made by prisoners in labor camps, the ultimate in the "democratizing" effect of trade and U.S. capital which Bush has predicted.

We must, of course, oppose Bush's continued white-wash of the repression ongoing in China. But we need at the same time to explore the depth and multidimensionality of the 1989 uprising and see that, though the army tanks crushed the open revolt in Tiananmen, they by no means crushed the Idea of freedom, which is finding ever new expression within China.

Many reporters looking at Spring '89 rightly put their focus on Tiananmen Square, but disregarded huge demonstrations in Chengdu, Xian, Shanghai and cities throughout China in at least 21 provinces. Some saw the tens of millions of demonstrators as emerging almost from nothing after the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15, 1989—others paralleling the official line credited a handful of manipulators, either a faction of the Communist Party opposed to Deng and Li Peng or a group of non-Party intellectuals like Fang Lizhi, for the whole mass uprising.

Nor can the meaning of Tiananmen be distorted to a wish to transport "American-style democracy" into China. To do so would be to disregard the vision of revolutionary democracy that the Chinese youth posed and to ignore the key role played by workers in the developments at Tiananmen Square.

China's economic restructuring of the last decade, which was borne on the backs of the peasants and workers, in some ways paralleled and anticipated the Reagan economic retrogressionism. Thus China's revolt has raised a fundamental challenge not only to its ruling class, but to the retrogressionism that is characteristic of capitalism worldwide. It is for that reason that we want, with the eyes of 1991, to look back upon the origins and development of the Chinese movement.

THE PROLETARIAN DIMENSION OF TIANANMEN SQUARE

In the Spring of 1989 university students were hardly isolated from workers and peasants in economic crisis. Their standard of consumption was so low that over 500 of those who became hunger strikers on Tiananmen Square, beginning May 13, needed to be hospitalized within three days.

On the streets of Beijing were an estimated 450,000 former peasants, part of the 50 million or so who were forced off the land and into the cities as state agricultural policy consolidated plots of land in fewer hands. These peasants were so visible that some activists, veterans of the 1978-79 Democracy Wall movement, considered homeless people possible allies in confrontations with the state.²

In the factories, the state as employer was measuring labor productivity against world standards. Given the generally much lower technological level, the difference would be made up out of the workers' sweat. A model

Two years after Tiananmen Square Massacre

China: Battle for the Idea of Freedom continues

program in Shenyang in 1988 was to lay off a large percentage of a plant's workers, especially the women, and then promise a wage increase to the remaining workers—if they became more productive.

Elsewhere, confronted with worker resistance to the decade-long campaign to eliminate guaranteed jobs, state industry had begun implementing in 1986 a labor contract system for new hires, who would receive less



Demonstrators march in Hong Kong to mark the second anniversary of the Massacre at Tiananmen Square.

pay and benefits and have no security beyond the length of the contract. That is the kind of two-tier system that workers in the U.S. have become all too familiar with.

The government's answer to this tide of rising unemployment was that all those who lost their jobs would look for work in officially encouraged private stores and enterprises. But even workers who still had steady jobs had to look for a sideline to support themselves.

As one China researcher reported: "The official rate for inflation from December 1987 to December 1988 was 27%; the real rate was undoubtedly much higher. China's official statistical agency reported that surveys indicated a drop in real incomes for over a third of urban

households in 1988....Many stayed off that threat only by exhausting themselves moonlighting; and young people felt they faced a dead-end future of low pay and boring work—if they could find a job at all."³

The death of former party chairman Hu Yaobang (ousted after 1986-87 student led democracy demonstrations) on April 15, 1989 provided the date for a movement waiting to re-emerge. Students quickly erected posters and marched to Tiananmen Square, then formed the first autonomous students' organizations, in a parallel to the challenge to Mao Zedong during mourning ceremonies for Zhou Enlai until the bloody suppression of the Tiananmen Incident on April 5, 1976.

Only four days later came the first call for a workers' autonomous federation. When Deng by April 26 emulated the example of Mao 13 years earlier and dictated editorials calling the demonstrations of students counter-revolutionary, it was the 400,000 or more workers and townspeople who lined the route who made it possible for the huge turnout from Beijing universities to reach Tiananmen Square through police lines.

When students dared to make the occupation of Tiananmen Square permanent by beginning a hunger strike on May 13 and refused to leave even during Gorbachev's visit, there were also thousands of workers in the Square supporting the students. It is significant that Prime Minister Li Peng declared martial law immediately after leaders of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation (BWAFF) boldly went to the government to register their federation.

Echoes from Tiananmen, issued from Hong Kong, has interviewed surviving members of the BWAFF, including Zhao Hongliang, who escaped the massacre and fled China.⁴

"After the establishment of the BWAFF, they called for a general strike in Beijing in support of the students. But student leaders persuaded them to go back to work. The students did not want to provide any excuse to the government who might say that the students were disturbing the order." He said what the Chinese Communist Party fears most is the collaboration of intellectuals and workers.

What the workers did do, as part of millions of Beijing (continued on page 10)

3. Kathleen Hartford, "The Political Economy behind Beijing Spring," in Tony Saich (ed.), *The Chinese People's Movement*, M.E. Sharpe, 1990.

4. *Echoes from Tiananmen* #5, March 1991, published by Friends of Chinese Minzhu, c/o HKTUEC, 2nd floor 101-107 Portland Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Editorial

End of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May marked the end of the Nehru family dynasty, which has ruled India for virtually the entire period since independence from Britain in 1947. The crisis of Indian society, building for three decades, seems to have reached the breaking point.

The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty began with the rule of Pandit Nehru, a reform socialist and nationalist. Nehru took over the leadership of the Congress Party independence movement after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by a rightist Hindu fundamentalist who objected to Gandhi's alleged "catering" to Muslims and other religious minorities.

Under Nehru, who was a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, India became a voice for Third World liberation and disarmament on the international scene. But by the time of his death in 1964, his mainly rhetorical reformist socialism had done little to change the age-old oppressions based on caste, class, gender, ethnicity and religion at home.

In 1966, Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi was elected. With her vicious repression of the Sikh revolt in the Punjab in 1984, Indira Gandhi effectively dropped the Congress Party's claim to be an essentially secular movement, and she increasingly attempted to compete with the Hindu chauvinists for votes in the Hindi-speaking belt of northern India.

CAPITALISM OF CONGRESS PARTY

In addition, the Congress Party had embarked on an openly capitalist road of "development." According to the well-known Indian Marxist, A.R. Desai, by this time: "In the context of the capitalist path of development pursued by the Indian rulers, the classes comprised of rich farmers and landlords as well as traders and businessmen are made the linchpin of development." Desai also wrote that, in addition to horrendous caste violence directed mainly against Dalits (untouchables): "There is a growing all-round increase of violence. There is growing violence against the exploited and oppressed poor, against working class, ordinary consumers, footpath [homeless] and slum dwellers, against adivasi landless or land-hungry people, against women and against the oppressed nationalities, whose oppression had increased."

All of these problems only intensified under the rule of Rajiv Gandhi, Indira's son, who came to power in a landslide syndicalist vote right after his mother's assassination. Rajiv Gandhi then embarked on a supposedly hi-tech modernization program, prompting some to compare his policies to those of Reagan.

Under Rajiv Gandhi, India began more than ever to throw its weight around South Asia as a regional power, intervening with military force in the civil war in Sri Lanka between Tamils and Sinhalese. In fact, it may have been this intervention which sparked the attack in which Rajiv Gandhi was killed.

Today the splintered Congress Party is a shadow of its former self, and its prospects to continue ruling India are dubious. Yet the character of the largest opposition group, the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party, suggests that its coming to power would be a still further retrogression. Their politics of religious bigotry touched off riots last winter in which over 300 people were killed.

The other main contender is V.P. Singh, who has campaigned on a platform of uprooting India's caste oppression by use of stronger affirmative action laws. He is trying to appeal to the 85% of the population who are not members of the dominant upper-caste Brahmin group. Singh has allied himself with the Left, including the Communists, but his chances are regarded as slim, since the big media are virtually ignoring his candidacy.

India's crisis also stems from the fact that it, like all Third World countries, is cruelly victimized by the capitalist world market. With nearly one billion people, India's Gross National Product is calculated to be about the same as the Netherlands, whose population is only 15 million. Its people do excruciatingly hard factory and farm labor, and this cheap labor enriches both world capitalism and domestic ruling classes, while the population is mired in poverty, with an illiteracy rate of at least 50%.

FORCES OF REVOLUTION

The objective and subjective obstacles to the needed revolutionary transformation of India are great indeed, but so are the anger and determination of India's women's liberationists, tribal and ethnic insurgents, workers, peasants and student youth. At the same time, Hindu fundamentalist and neo-fascist parties are increasingly gaining the upper hand, attempting to turn the legitimate anger of the Indian masses not against the rulers, but against the oppressed castes and minority religious groups.

As our correspondent from Bihar, one of the poorest and most oppressed regions, wrote recently: "For 5,000 years India has been ruled by the higher classes. Indian society will not change without a storm. Its structure is very strong and will not break easily. Reservation [affirmative action] is only a small step ahead. Upper castes have to be defeated."

1. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 1, 1991.

2. *Shen Tong*, *Almost a Revolution*, Boston (1990).

IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR: AT HOME AND ABROAD

The aftermath of the Gulf War is as grim as the war itself. Saddam Hussein's terror against the Kurds and Iraqis who tried to win their freedom is mirrored by the abductions, tortures and murders committed by the vengeful Kuwaiti rulers against the Palestinian working class. Although the "safe havens" are a necessary emergency measure, there is every danger that they will become permanent, miserable fixtures in which the Kurds will be trapped. I'm glad that N&L intends to campaign for the Kurds. The tragic events of recent weeks have awakened a lot of basic human sympathy which needs to be developed into active solidarity. It is a test of how to express philosophy in practice in the face of very adverse objective realities.

Refugee activist
Oxford, England

Some areas of Chicago, Detroit, New York and Los Angeles were devastated long before Kuwait was. Black youth did not so much "volunteer" for the army, they were driven—by poverty, racism, poor education, unemployment, drugs and violent crime. And when the ticker tape parades are over and the bands stop playing, all these conditions are still there. That is why the Coalition of African-American Religious Women in Chicago plans to launch a Martin Luther King Peace Initiative in July. We were incensed that M.L. King's birthday was designated as the day Bush went to war. We are determined to increase the options open to young Black men and women.

Jamilla Muhammad, Director,
Clergy and Laity Concerned
Chicago

It's clear what George Bush means by "new world order." He means "You are the world, we give the orders."

A. Fortunoff
Los Angeles

When Chicago held its "victory" parade in May, hundreds of the onlookers were U.S. government employees who were paid to stand on the sidelines for two hours. (While this is new for Chicago, it has been routine procedure in Washington, D.C., for at least 25 years. The American "free press" has never seen fit to notice, though they've never failed to chide Moscow for doing the same in Red Square.) A week later when Quayle spoke at a high school on the south side, three federal agencies were given quotas of employees to send so he'd have an audience.

Jan Kollwitz
Chicago

Why should I have been surprised to read that in order to make sure the parade Chicago organized to welcome home Operation Desert Storm veterans in May had enough funds to "do it right," Russell Anderson, the parade organizer, froze funding for a late-summer job fair, counseling and other services planned to help veterans adjust to civilian life. He said he was sorry about that but "one thing at a time." In fact, why should anyone have been surprised. Priorities are priorities!

Disgusted
Chicago

A recent War Resisters League (WRL) event I attended attested to the harassment of the military resisters. Over 2,500 soldiers filed for conscientious objectors discharges and thousands more just didn't show up. Two prisoners at Camp Lejeune face the death penalty. (Murder for refusing to murder!) The WRL presented Peace Awards to three of the resisters. One of them called the Gulf War "the first in many situations to come," another declared, "We need a parade for COs," while the third described an instructor's racist comments. She told the military, "Hell, no. I won't support an unjust system." Two of the three awardees were women, one of them Black. All were brave, courageous, thinking activists, struggling to keep the anti-war movement alive.

Sheila
New York

I decided to join the Army Reserves at age 17. I thought then that I had reached the end of a very long search for a means to pay for my education, gain skills for the outside world I was being thrust into and enlisted in the service of my country. I now realize that I lacked the maturity necessary to make a decision of that magnitude at that time. I am now 22. I am not a killer and I cannot facilitate an organization whose means for reaching its ultimate goal requires the death and destruction of many human beings, as well as the destruction of our environment. It is unconscionable to me that a nation as strong as the U.S. would take such a route to gain whatever it is they hope to achieve. I have filed for conscientious objector status because it goes against my very soul to kill my human brothers and sisters.

Black working woman reservist
Los Angeles

Editor's note: To obtain conscientious objector newsletter write to: the Anti-Warrior, 48 Shattuck Square, Box 129, Berkeley, CA 94704.

SPONTANEITY/ORGANIZATION

Raya Dunayevskaya says Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme "remains the ground for organization today" but that after 112 years and "all the aborted revolutions of the post-World War II world" this "ground" is not enough: "we have to finish the building—the roof and its contents." I don't know of any other Marxist who had a concept of "building" on Marx's ground for organization and was doing it at the same time.

Puerto Rican youth
Los Angeles

I've been thinking about spontaneity and organization. The creativity of mass spontaneity shows that there is something inside human beings that underlies all of our social conditioning, some Absolute of what it means to be human. Otherwise, people could only react on the basis of how they've been socialized to think; they would not be able to come up with something creative and new.

A revolutionary organization has to be consistent with the meaning of human freedom structured by the understanding of what you're striving for. Yet what happens with the revolutionary political parties with their programs is that when they take power, it's not as one with the spontaneous movement of the masses. Organization is necessary, but what is likewise necessary is the spontaneous problem-solving of all the masses who are striving for socialism and freedom.

Young activist-thinker
Los Angeles

For those like me who have just been introduced to Marxist-Humanist thought, I recommend studying American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard. The word "pamphlet" does not do the work justice. The text shows what masses as Reason means. With that understanding of history, we can then extract a theory of what freedom really is, and hope to go about organizing the theory for our age.

Student
Illinois

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

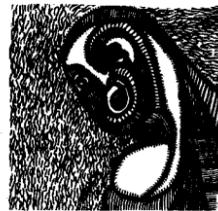


This reactionary decision banning clinic workers from discussing abortion reveals what we already knew: this Supreme Court cares nothing for the Constitution and less than nothing for women's lives. Chief Justice William Rehnquist's opinion reveals his twisted mentality, which is so arrogant that he can write that these new regulations do not "significantly impinge upon the doctor-patient relationship" because women in the clinics should not expect "comprehensive medical advice."

Readers' Views

It took a revolutionary Civil Rights Movement to turn Blacks' right to vote from a right on paper to a reality; it will take nothing short of a revolutionary Women's Liberation Movement to make the abstract "right" to abortion become the actual control of our own bodies.

—Terry Moon
Illinois



THE LATINO DIMENSION

I was listening to an international news report on channel 47 about last month's rebellion in the Latin American community in Washington, D.C. The right-wing station had businessmen on complaining about the "negative publicity" produced by the images of the street fighting between the community members and the police. But the report also featured street interviews with young people who said they had been treated as second-class citizens, while at the same time the social and economic conditions were nearly the same as the ones they left in Latin America. Ordinary people spoke out against the curfew imposed by the mayor, whose main response to the crisis was to set up a commission to study the problem.

The images of the anti-riot police, armed to the teeth, and the mostly young Central Americans, some of their faces covered as in El Salvador, battling right in the middle of Washington, D.C., were quite startling. But I don't want to put it just in terms of Washington, D.C. I think it has to do with the racism and the cutting of social programs throughout the whole country.

Latino student
New York City

The writings about Marxist-Humanism that are available in the Spanish language are of great importance for an increased dialogue with Latinos. That dialogue can help revolution take root within Latin America, but it is tied closely to the U.S. For that, the Black dimension is crucial. How can Latinos see a possibility for a "third way" (or is that now back to "second way"?) without seeing that there is revolution here, both past, present and future? Isn't the Black dimension crucial for answering such questions as "What choice did Castro have but to align with Russia?" That wasn't the only choice, as can be seen in Philosophy and Revolution where Raya Dunayevskaya quotes Castro's 1959 declaration for a new "humanism" that is not "red" but "olive-green." I hope we can get the Spanish translations of Dunayevskaya's works into bookstores where Latinos can meet her important ideas.

Marxist-Humanist
Los Angeles

CLR JAMES

C.L.R. James put the words of the man of the street into literature, but not the thought of what that person represented. When I hear the phrase "an original character," I think of Charles Denby. "Thought" to James was the thought of an intellectual, not a Black worker like Charles Denby. Raya Dunayevskaya gave voice and Reason to Labor and the Black Dimension. This Reason is what Bush and Reagan want to erase from our minds.

Gene Ford
Los Angeles

Lou Turner's article (May N&L) on the C.L.R. James Conference in Wellesley—especially the last section, "Narrative of Emancipation or Bonapartism" was very persuasive in showing that James' fantastic bonapartist conclusion in 1983 was connected to subsuming the real "narrative of emancipation" and the actual dialectics of liberation. I hope the issue is widely distributed among the Jamesians.

Shelley
New York

GLORIA JOSEPH ON 'WHY READ N&L?'

When you subscribe to News & Letters, you can rest assured that you will truly be receiving world news. Whether your interests are student activism, the superpowers, economics, global feminism, Blacks in America, the European community, African unity or people of color around the globe—it's all there! And it is presented from an analytical and ideological perspective that differs markedly from the romanticized, superficial fluff that is presented in the mainstream presses.

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Gloria Joseph
Virgin Islands

DOMINICAN ANNIVERSARY

Last April marked the 26th anniversary of the Dominican Revolution of 1965. Those who lived those moments remember it with happiness and sadness at the same time. With happiness because we had the desire in that moment to obtain our genuine freedom from our domestic and international oppressors; with sadness when the internal and external counter-revolutionary forces united their effort to stop the full development of a genuine peoples' revolution when U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered the landing of 50,000 Marines, armed to the teeth against a small nation. Today the penetration of foreign capital through the International Monetary Fund has resulted in huge budgetary deficits. The real wages of the workers have decreased drastically and pauperism and hunger are deeper than before. The prices of all commodities have increased rapidly and the workers today are unable to meet the most minimum human needs. Many infants and mothers have died of hunger, diseases have spread rapidly and the whole nation has retrogressed to the situation of 60 years ago.

Manolo
Los Angeles

ISRAELI PROTESTS

More than two months have passed since the termination of armed hostilities between the U.S. and Iraq; it is now clear—as, indeed, anti-war activists in many countries said in advance—that the war solved none of the Middle East's problems, and that it created serious new ones. There can be no peace and quiet for this war-torn region until its problems are addressed in justice and reconciliation. In particular, the rights of oppressed peoples, such as the Kurds and the Palestinians, must be recognized, respected and implemented.

In Israel, we have organized demonstrations against the settlements which the Shamir government are creating in the West Bank. A big demonstration is planned in Tel-Aviv on June 5, the anniversary of the occupation, with a giant petition calling upon the government to adopt the "Territory in return for peace" principle. We find support among many who were misled into supporting the Gulf War, but who are opposed to occupation and oppression.

Abie Nathan, of the "Voice Of Peace" radio station, is entering the third week of his hunger strike against the law forbidding Israelis from meeting the PLO. He is 64 years old and the hunger strike could severely damage his health. He had already served six months' imprisonment for breaking this law, and he now faces a new trial in which he may get as much as four years for having participated in a press conference with PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Please ask your readers to write to Abie Nathan, at P.O.B. 47099, Tel-Aviv 61470, Israel

Adam Keller
Tel-Aviv

PHILOSOPHY IN THE AGE OF STATE-CAPITALISM

Why make state-capitalism a whole world stage? Why wasn't it enough to refute those who thought that enough state intervention and planning could avoid crises and raise the living standard of the workers? Isn't the state-capitalist tendency's critique of totalitarian Russia provide an example? Why is it important to know what stage of economic development we're in? Is it possible that without a theory of the stage that capitalist development has reached on a world scale, one could not know how to prepare for revolution, nor where to look for the forces that could bring revolution and the reconstruction of society out?

B. Ann Lastelle
Chicago

This philosophy seems to take a lot of work and a lot of time. I'm not ready for the responsibility. I know that working out the ideas will sharpen my feelings of anger. I don't want to think about my powerlessness in the world. But I'm attracted to Raya's writing. I haven't the intellectual stimulus like this since college. Actually nothing in college comes close to the challenge of this philosophy. Raya is one of the greatest thinkers ever and I can understand how, at least ideally, a philosophic organization can help release some of that sense of powerlessness and help you think.

Musician/Intellectual
Washington, D.C.

I want to tell you how I read N&L. Since I am a worker I start on the labor page. I find a close relationship with the people who write the stories of the pain of the workshop, whether I know them personally or not. I then move across the paper to the women's section, a section that to me is most important because, in this world, women are treated at best with tolerance and at worst, lower than animals. I feel that before any kind of a revolution can be attempted, women must be equal in all ways to men. Then and only then will a revolution have the foundation it needs to accomplish its objective. I then move back to the first page—the lead, Workshop Talks and Black World—the heart of N&L. I continue through the paper skipping over From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya until the last. That is the part that in my opinion requires the most thought. That is why I save it for last, simply because I will still be trying to figure it out by the time the next issue of N&L is out.

Working man
Chicago

POVERTY IN AMERICA

Recently in Detroit, homeless senior citizens have been getting onto the bus:

(1) it's air conditioned; (2) other homeless senior citizen entrepreneurs are selling discarded Salvation Army clothes and vegetables, for 5¢ and 10¢ each. Then they get off and wait for the next bus.

Bus travel has deteriorated markedly in Detroit in the last few months. It used to take you an hour to get where you were going; now you are happy if the bus comes in an hour. Since the buses are becoming ineffective as a means of transportation, the economy has forced senior citizens to use them as a marketplace.

Steve Fletcher
Detroit

LABOR TODAY

Felix Martin powerfully addressed the relationship of science to labor today in his Workshop Talks column, "Capitalism denies labor pay, skills" (May N&L). He shows how, at the beginning of mass production, science was taken out of the hands of the workers, who became mere appendages to the assembly line, and was put into machines, into management and into weapons. Now that capitalism is in crisis, the capitalist ideologues blame the workers for their lack of skills. And what is it really all about? Productivity! As Martin concludes: "Capitalism cannot solve the problem of production. The workers' problem is not their lack of 'skills,' but that they are forced to work under capitalism."

Production worker
Chicago

At the Post Office where I work, I'm not supposed to accept mail from people, but I do it anyway. Otherwise the customers get mad. When the war started they took away our mail cans and closed the mail slots. I can see they'd want to do this during the war when there might be a threat of mail bombs, but it doesn't make any sense today. And even when they did it, management didn't bother to tell the workers about it. We just came in one day and the cans were gone. Wouldn't you

think they'd put up a big sign so customers would know why they're doing this, like "Because of the ongoing war in the Persian Gulf..."? Instead they just taped over the slots, saying "Out of order." How can a slot be out of order! You can imagine what a mess it was at the end of the tax season. It's all so irrational. Here the war's been over for three months and nobody has even bothered to ask whether we can have our cans back.

Postal worker
Chicago

I strongly disagree with the article on "Drugs and the alienation of labor." Firstly, the very category of "drugs" is a category of the ruling class and cannot be appropriated by workers. "Drugs" are any substance or thing which the ruling class declares immoral or illegal, and alcohol or even sex could be next. Secondly, these things called "drugs" do not have the external power to dominate the human mind which this article attributes to them. What gives "drugs" their addictive power is capitalism. Drug addiction is the fetishization of the experience which some substances offer, just as capitalism and bourgeois thought are bound up in the fetishism of commodities. We must not fall into the trap of this bogus "Drug War," and we must give workers far more credit than to portray them as passive victims of this bogeyman called "drugs."

Revolutionary
Berkeley, Calif.

I wish all my students could read "What do those unemployment statistics mean?" (May N&L). Textbooks only give definitions. The Black students are the most interested in unemployment—not surprising in light of a recent study of Black and white job-seekers showed at least 20% discrimination against the Blacks, and virtually no "reverse discrimination."

Economics teacher
Michigan

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Bush's environmental terrorism endangers humanity

(continued from page 1)

the contrary, his energy plan speeds the planet's plunge towards potentially catastrophic climate change, spurning recommendations to raise gas mileage and appliance efficiency standards and to increase Federal support for conservation, solar and wind power, and mass transit.

Rather, mass transit is near the top of Bush's hit list, though it already suffered massive cutbacks under Reagan. Faced with the near-bankruptcy of the Philadelphia transit system, with other urban systems not far behind, Transportation Secretary Skinner remarked, "Most places run service where it's a luxury rather than a necessity." Let them eat cake!

● The main element of the administration's energy plan that dovetailed with the Science Academy report was the call for a new generation of nuclear power plants. The operating license is to be issued at the same time as the construction license, preventing the second round of hearings, which was previously held after the plant had been built and people had had time to find out what was being done to them and organize against it.

Industry is running a slick propaganda campaign for such deregulation, touting new reactor designs being developed with DOE subsidies of \$160 million this year alone. However, claims of improved safety run up against public awareness that the whole nuclear industry has been shrouded in lies and secrecy since its inception. Resistance to nukes is so widespread that every reactor ordered in the U.S. since 1974 has been cancelled.

Equally ominous is the proposal by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to extend the lives of nuclear reactors 20 years beyond their intended 40-year lifespan—at a time when it has been discovered that reactor parts age far faster than expected, growing brittle from radiation. How long will it be before a U.S. reactor blows up, spewing deadly radioactive materials?

Underscoring the predominance of production over safety, the NRC allowed the Browns Ferry Unit 2 reactor in Alabama to be restarted in May. To do this, the NRC granted the plant exemptions from crucial safety guidelines that were first made into law as a result of a 1975 fire that shut down Browns Ferry and nearly led to a disaster.

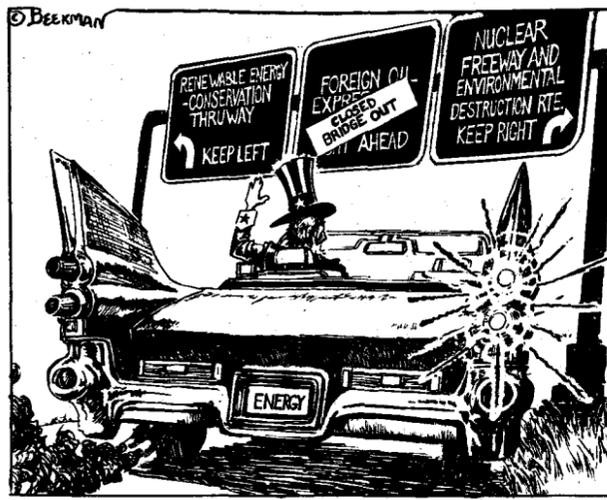
PRODUCTION VS. NATURE—AND HUMANITY

Indeed, what characterizes the self-proclaimed "environmental president's" policies is the single-minded drive for production and more production, towering over any pretense of concern for nature or the quality of human life. The energy plan is based on a projected 35% increase in energy demand by 2010, which is defended as if it were a question of maintaining our standard of living.

Hiding from view is the fact that the drive to exploit energy sources more and more completely is rooted in capital's drive to accumulate through exploiting labor more and more intensely. It is not a question of domination of human self-interest over nature; it is a question of the despotic plan of capital dominating both nature and humanity, sucking the life out of both.

Reflected in government policies is the fact that, in capitalist society, nothing counts as "useful"—including nature, including workers—except insofar as it serves as a force of production. As Marx wrote 124 years ago, capitalist production only develops "by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker." In Bush's "new world order," this is spelled out as the accelerating destruction of our very future.

To see that environmental degradation flows from the unbridled drive for production, and not mainly from consumption, one only needs to look at the state-capitalist Russian empire, where consumer goods have long been scarce, yet pollution ranks with the world's worst.



One month after the anniversary of the April 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the Ukraine, Russia announced that its forthcoming energy plan will call for about 20 new nuclear reactors. Not wishing to close its 16 other reactors of the same design as Chernobyl, Moscow still claims a death toll of 31 from that accident, though the senior scientist at the site puts the toll at 7,000 to 10,000, many of them miners and conscripts who were sent to clean up the radioactive aftermath.

U.S. biophysicist John Gofman projects 100,000 to 500,000 fatalities worldwide in coming years. Many will have died as a result of the cover-up that kept precautions from being taken after the explosion. But so crucial to state-capitalist imperialism is the nuclear enterprise that its bureaucracies, whether in

Sweetheart deal for Exxon falls apart

Anchorage, Alaska—An outrageously low settlement—reached in secret in Washington, D.C., between the Justice Department, the State of Alaska and Exxon—which called for Exxon to pay only \$1 billion for the 11-million-gallon oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound on March 24, 1989, has come apart. To almost everyone's astonishment, U.S. District Court Judge Russell Holland rejected the \$100 million criminal fine, together with the \$900 million in civil damages, on the grounds that it was too low and would send the wrong message to corporate polluters.

The crude oil from the spill contaminated 1,200 miles of shoreline, four national wildlife refuges, two national parks, a national monument and a national forest. It destroyed bird habitats and salmon hatcheries, as well as several hundred bald eagles, 500,000 birds and several hundred thousand chicks. As many as 5,500 sea otters and 200 harbor seals perished. Serious harm was done to the hunting and fishing lifestyles of at least 15 native villages and at least 26 archaeological sites were damaged.

Exxon's chairman, Lawrence Rawl, was pleased with the proposed settlement. He assured his shareholders that it would have no significant effect on corporate earnings and explained that the \$1 billion expense was a "mere cost of doing business." It allowed payment of \$900 million in civil penalties to extend over 11 years with tax deductions allowable for part of the settlement. This cut Exxon's actual costs to about \$508 million in 1991 dollars. Given its ability to pay, indicated by the company's average profits of \$4.7 billion a year over the past four years, and the enormous destruction, the fine is minute.

The settlement was opposed by several local and national environmental groups, among them the Natural Resources Defense Council, Greenpeace, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Alaska Center for the Environment, Trustees for Alaska and the Prince William Sound Conservation Alliance.

Some of the other major flaws in the agreement:

- Scientific and economic studies gathered by Exxon, the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of Alaska over the last two years have not been released. This has led to a suspicion that more is known about the extent of the damage than the public is aware of. While Exxon and the Coast Guard claim that the information is being withheld because it may have to be used in court, it is impossible to decide if the settlement is adequate without having access to the data.

- The agreement failed to address unresolved claims against Exxon from native villages, fishermen, food processors and environmental groups, leaving them all to fend for themselves.

- Lastly, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., a consortium of the five oil companies operating on Alaska's North Slope, escaped without penalty because of the focus on Exxon. Yet, Alyeska did not have properly functioning equipment on hand at the time of the spill and badly bungled the initial response.

On May 24 Exxon decided to withdraw its guilty pleas to the criminal charges. It hasn't said whether or not it intends to negotiate a new plea bargain. Alaska's governor Wally Hickel, a libertarian/Republican, is now willing to push ahead for another settlement, claiming that given another chance he will do what is right for Alaska and its natural resources. Presumably all the parties want to avoid litigation, but so far no date has been set for another meeting.

—Ruth Sheridan

Russia or the U.S., have always felt justified in sacrificing innocent lives to it.

Again and again we hear the refrain, "Chernobyl happen in the U.S." The physicist Hans Bethe sang in the May 2 New York Times—days after anniversary of the 1986 disaster—writing, "the accident at Three Mile Island (TMI) and Chernobyl were different." But as Grigori Medvedev writes in "Truth About Chernobyl, at one point TMI's situation "resemble[d] Chernobyl 20 seconds before the explosion."

Bethe notes that Chernobyl's "operating crew was retired and given only a short time to conduct the experiment." Precisely the point: it is not just the re-design but capital's relentless drive for ever more activity that guarantees nuclear reactor accidents.

ANTI-ENVIRONMENT IS ANTI-WORKER

Even when there's no accident, workers are constantly irradiated or poisoned. As one Chicago worker N&L, "the most dangerous environment is in the place. You don't know what they're doing to you. I have company doctors who will tell you it's okay."

Poisoning workers comes so "naturally" to capitalism that, while federal law requires many manufacturers report releases of certain toxic chemicals into the water or ground, labor unions and environmental groups have not yet succeeded in their fight to have them also require reporting toxic chemical use in the workplace. (See "A 600-acre time bomb," p. 3.)

Under Reagan/Bush cutbacks, the situation par what Marx saw in England in 1860: "[The Mines, Inspection] Act was a completely dead letter, owing to a ridiculously small number of inspectors, the meagreness of their powers, and other causes...."

That is certainly the case in the coal mines, where, despite the long, hard fight waged by the miners against deadly conditions—the devices that measure coal are in the hands of the companies. When it was discovered that at least 500 companies routinely vacuum the dust out of the devices, anti-Labor Secretary Martin loudly denounced them and proposed fines. Meanwhile, most mines are not monitored and 4,000 retired miners die from black lung disease every year. Still, every time the contracts come up, companies try to cut back the health benefits.

Whether in coal mining or oil drilling, in building shopping malls or supplying electricity, the Bush administration sees economic growth and environmental protection as fundamentally irreconcilable—because in capitalism they ultimately are. Capitalism's free reign is hindered by nature's refusal to submit placidly to its despoliation, and is determined by the rebelliousness of workers, workers of color and youth who insist on thinking for themselves.

From the high school youth who said, "It makes me sick to see all the forests being cut down and all the natural resources being depleted," to the protesters blocking a train carrying toxic waste, to hundreds of small groups organized by women to defend their working-class or minority communities from yet another waste dump or polluting industry; from coal miners questioning their conditions of labor and what kind of labor they must do, to the protesters who tried to stop the Seabrook, N.H., nuke from opening, all are seeking new human relations compatible with the health and safety of human beings.

As one student activist put it, "They're not only blocking our future in terms of what will be left for us, they're limiting the way we think about it—they're saying the fact that things could be done differently, since it's in business' interest to keep big oil and nuclear going."

That is why the rulers work so hard to depict the position between economy and ecology as a law of nature. They project their own vision of the future as a continuation of this exploitative, militaristic, racist, sexist society—which represents the destruction of humanity's future. The opposite to that is the struggle of thought and reality to find pathways to a future where human beings can establish their relationship to nature on the basis of servitude to the process of production but of full humanity, that is, freedom.

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Black/Red View

by John Alan

The Middle Passage was the nautical route (about 20 degrees north of the Equator) taken by slave ships from West Africa to the New World. For hundreds of thousands of Africans who made that passage unwillingly, as human cargo, it was a nightmare of suffering and death, which ended, for those who survived, in a lifetime of wretched slavery.

Middle Passage, the recently published best-selling novel by Charles Johnson, has re-created the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade. It is a book that can be taken as a mysterious, bizarre sea saga or an interestingly fun novel. But Johnson, like many novelists, has a philosophical point of view he is trying to convey to the readers. In Johnson's case it is the meaning of "being." Those who have read Johnson's philosophic book, **Being and Race**, will know that his critique of the black novel is that it is confined "to misery-filled protest stories about sorry conditions of being Black in America..." It is a naturalistic literature, in his opinion, which closes off real consciousness of Black self. He argues that a pathway out of this exists in the phenomenological philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger, where the "truth of being" is found in the consciousness of experience only and not in existing reality.

JOHNSON'S 'WORLD'

Middle Passage is a story of the adventures of a young Black former slave, Rutherford Calhoun, who res by his "wits" in New Orleans. One day in June of 1830, he unknowingly stows away on the slave ship **Rebelle**, bound for the Gulf of Guinea, to avoid being forced to marry a prim, puritan-trained Black school teacher, Isadora Bailey. In its journey through the Middle Passage the **Rebelle** has to battle bad weather and a raging sea that threaten to tear it apart. On board, the ship is rife with social conflict. At the top of this desperate little world is the ship's captain, Ebenezer Falcon, a dwarf-like person who is an empire builder, a looter of Third World cultures, a puritan and a survivor against all odds. In the middle of this social hierarchy is the ship's dutiful crew, a collection of "cutthroats, black-throated rakes, traitors, drunkards, rascalion thieves..." And below the deck, packed in like sardines, are the **Allmuseri**, members of a legendary African tribe, to be sold into slavery in the New World.

Johnson sends Rutherford Calhoun, ex-slave and now kitchen helper, to experience "being." But Johnson is stacked the cards in this "world" by establishing in only two abstract concepts of "being" open to Calhoun. The first is the absolute dualism of Falcon that parates "subject and object, perceiver and perceived, if and other," signifying a "transcendental Fault in the mind itself." In Falcon's "being" this meant that the mind was made for murder and slavery.

Police 'gangs' exposed

Los Angeles, Cal.—On May 18 a meeting was held in South Central Los Angeles sponsored by the Equal Rights Congress, a group that is active around the Rodney King beating. This meeting was a workshop centered around knowing your constitutional rights such as search and seizure and police warrants.

What the meeting turned into was a discussion of how law and racism are intertwined and how law lays the ground for the police to beat, shoot, and falsely imprison the innocent, who many times are people of color, mostly Blacks and Latinos. In other words, for the police to stop, search or arrest you, there needs to be a "probable cause" to justify it. In many cases it turns out to be the color of the individual's skin, as in the Rodney King case. That beating was racist.

What has become even more shocking is the **growth of organized white gangs within the Sheriff's Department and the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department)**. The person who spoke to this issue was part of an investigation of police misconduct. These racist police gangs are "raping and pillaging the black community" and represent enough of a power base in the police department to threaten the life of any supervisor who doesn't go along with their beliefs.

In Lynnwood, a south suburb of Los Angeles, they are called "Vikings" and are said to represent 80% of the white police officers. They have hand signals, do graffiti and have tattoos to identify themselves against the other gangs. In the Firestone area of Los Angeles they are called "Pirates," and in East L.A. they are called "Cavemen" and have a tattoo of a caveman's head on themselves. They add a fly to this head to represent a killing or beating they were involved in.

Within the LAPD you can find the Klan, as well as the fascist Aryan Brotherhood, and there are many more vigilante gangs that go beyond the "law" in the name of white lynch mob justice.

Many at this meeting agreed that only a movement of tremendous social impact can stop this racist growth within the system that is attacking the minority community daily. It brought to mind the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. in his fight against the Southern segregation laws in the 1950s:

We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal," and everything the Hungarian Freedom Fighters did in Hungary was "illegal"...This calls for a confrontation with the power-structure.

—Gene Ford

The Middle Passage

The other concept of "being" is the pure unity of "being" in the practice and thought of the **Allmuseri**. This is told to Calhoun by their leader, Ngonyama, at the moment when Calhoun is suffering pangs of guilt for having revealed a mutiny plan of the crew to Falcon. What the **Allmuseri** fear most is not slavery, but to be thrown into the "mad multiplicity" of "being."

Out of isolation and guilt Calhoun rushes to embrace the **Allmuseri** concept of "being." Johnson has Calhoun say that the **Allmuseri** concept of "being" is nothing less than the "pure essence or Parmenidean meaning" of "being."

In order to give some reality to this bizarre allegory, Johnson has the **Allmuseri** actually break from their unity of "being" and engage in an **Amistad**-type slave revolt, killing many of the **Republic's** crew.

However, this backsliding (revolt) of the **Allmuseri** brings forth not freedom but a spiritual crisis. It is a crisis that can only be transcended by acts of repentance. Thus Falcon still holds them in slavery.

RETREAT FROM REALITY

Now Johnson is not totally engaged in philosophic fantasy by interjecting from the outside Parmenides' ancient Greek concept of "pure Being" into the life of Calhoun and into the history of the American Black struggle for freedom. However, the unity of pure "being" was not the philosophic problem of the slave trade nor of the Black movement today. Rather it is an expression of the ideological bankruptcy of Black intellectuals who make a fetish of the "invariability of culture."

Hegel, whom Johnson doesn't like, wrote that "if Being is indeterminate and therefore true Beginning, it lacks whatever could transform it into an Other; it is End as well as Beginning. Nothing can assault it from without; but also, nothing can sally forth from within..." (*Logic*, Vol. 1, p. 107).

Charles Johnson's **Middle Passage** is the expression of this pure "being," which, as Hegel says, is an empty intuition lacking determination and therefore lacking reality, negativity and self-movement, from which no new beginning can be made. It is the Black intellectual's retreat from history and Black reality.

Poland through African eyes

Editor's note: The following report is excerpted from recent correspondence we received from an African studying in Poland.

Gdansk, Poland—I am a Kenyan student studying in Poland, and I want to convey information about what foreigners, especially Blacks, are subjected to in the East. We, as Blacks, have been virtually dehumanized. It's not a matter of being looked upon as second-class citizens, which is the grievance of many minorities living in the West, but a matter of being looked upon and treated as subhuman.

Racist insults, physical attacks, bigotry and all forms of oppression are so common that most of us have accepted it as a part of life. In certain towns, especially in Wroclaw and Gdansk, the latter of which is Lech Walsza's home town, having to defend oneself from racially inspired attacks is nothing new.

Three years ago, when the state-capitalists were still in power, most people feared the police, who were well known for their human rights abuses. Now the people of Poland have gotten "freedom" under capitalism. The rich are free to exploit the poor. The white supremacists are free to fill the youth with their devil-philosophy. Neo-Nazis, skinheads and other racist organizations are free to increase their numbers, to walk the streets from dusk till dawn, beating up any non-white who has the bad luck of crossing their path.

Most of us limit our movements and avoid going to any recreation centers. Our life is simple. We wake up, go to school, buy food and go back home. For a 21-year-old this type of living is frustrating virtually to the degree of mental torture.

I watch the growing racism among Poland's youth, and I then reflect on the growth of Nazism in Germany during the 1930s and see a dangerously similar trend. First the racists build up, then the violent attacks, and finally... We all know what happened next.

I sympathize with what many of the Latinos, African-Americans and poor people are undergoing in the States. I've read with pain of the murders of Michael Griffith in Howard Beach and of Yusuf Hawkins, the 16-year-old killed because of being Black. I know how it feels to be subjected to so much hatred, because I live in one big Bensonhurst called Poland.

—African student



On the 15th Anniversary of the Soweto Uprising why not read the Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought

By Lou Turner and John Alan

The Soweto revolt, in its opposition to the Afrikaans language, literally emerges out of the 'Black mind,' in defense of its own mind, resisting an absolutism which wants only to see its own image reflected in the minds of the people it is oppressing...

—Lou Turner & John Alan

The boldness, dedication, sense of purpose, and clarity of analysis of the situation—all of these things are definitely a result of Black Consciousness ideas among the young generation in Soweto and elsewhere.... They realize that we are not dealing with mere bread and butter issues.

—Steven Biko

So great is the power of the Idea of freedom that it has shaken apartheid South Africa to its foundation. The point now is: ...How to recognize the freedom idea itself as a great force of Reason in this life and death struggle? What can be done internationally to solidarize with it?

—Raya Dunayevskaya

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Umsavola Unrest Paul Sibisi, South Africa, 1981

Black World

(continued from page 1)

rights of its bourgeois limitations. This has been manifested by the persistence of urban unrest and the fact that the masses now, more than ever, speak in an altogether different language than the leadership.

The contradiction here arises from the mistaken assumption that Black representation in the state presupposes Black civil rights in society. Not only is the former erroneously taken as "proof" of the latter, but Black empowerment in the state obscures the real state of things. The existence of Black political empowerment in the state does not in any way contradict the nature of the state. On the contrary, Black participation in the state falsely "humanizes" the violent contradictions between the state and the Black community.

Today, it is self-evident that the Civil Rights Movement, and the subsequent empowerment of Black political leadership in the state, have left the state of Black liberation unfinished. Indeed, Black civil rights exist in so precarious a state that they can be restricted at any time, as is now the case with Bush's threatened veto of a more watered down Civil Rights Act than the one he vetoed at the end of last year. While in theory, the political life of American society "ought to" guarantee Black civil rights, in practice, Black civil rights are overturned as soon as they come into conflict with the prevailing political life of society.

BLACK PARTICULARITY

Which is why the struggle of African-Americans for civil rights is not contradicted by their refusal to renounce Black politics. It is not contrary to the political freedoms African-Americans demand to divide their social existence into non-racial citizenship rights, while maintaining the particularity of their racial/historical individuality. However, Black politics reach their limit when they don't pass beyond the particular to their inherent universality, i.e., to the idea of full human liberation.

Thus the attainment of civil rights does not free African-Americans of the racism of American society, it only gives them the "freedom" to exercise their Black historical particularity in society. Nor does it free society of its racism, but rather gives it the freedom to imagine that racial segregation is "democratic pluralism" (sic).

Had American Marxism comprehended the dialectic of the Black particularity embedded in the general class contradiction of American society, it would have understood that the duality in Black civil rights expresses the fundamental contradiction between the state and society. A revolution in the former (i.e., the Black dimension) ferments revolution in the latter (i.e., American society).

When Karl Marx warned President Andrew Johnson, in September 1865, to declare African-Americans "free and equal without any reserve," it was in defense of Black civil rights. The consequences of not doing so were as unmistakable as de Tocqueville's warning that "If ever America undergoes great revolutions they will be brought about by the presence of the black race on the soil of the United States: that is to say, they will owe their origin, not to the equality, but to the inequality of condition." Likewise, Marx had written to Johnson: "If you refuse them [Blacks] citizens rights while you exact from them citizens' duties, you will sooner or later face a new struggle which will once more drench your country in blood."

Surely some 200 years of Black freedom struggles, experiences and social thinking exceed the limitations of Black electoral politics, and the conceptual parameters of the present debate over civil rights. However, while there is presently no civil rights movement on the scale of the 1960s, nevertheless, the social conflict over the civil rights has been transposed and dispersed, like the gods of Epicurus, into the interstices of American society. No longer enclosed in a political movement as such, the civil rights struggle has been atomized and dispersed into the pores of American society. It is these "thousands points of light" George Bush wants to put out.

China: Battle for the Idea of Freedom

(continued from page 5)

ing citizens, was stop the tanks surrounding Tiananmen Square and give the movement two more weeks to breathe before the June 4 Massacre. As Zhao Hongliang noted, "This was not simply a student movement. Every student in the Square must have eaten sesame seed cakes and rice cooked by individual households, as well as steamed buns and eggs cooked by farmers." Even farmers forced by the government to demonstrate in favor of the army during martial law would then send food to the Square.

Zhao stressed that workers cared most about inflation: "If you asked one of the workers with a Mao portrait why, you found what they missed was not Mao, but the prices of Mao's times. The so-called 'improvement of composition' scheme also caused great discontent among workers in Beijing. The scheme claimed to try to cut down the number of redundant workers, but in fact it only aimed at kicking those who are old, weak or sick out of the factories."

It was this fundamental type of questioning on the part of the workers and the students, as well as by the peasants who had been drawn into Beijing, which the Chinese leaders feared was reaching a new stage in the Spring of 1989. In response Deng Xiaoping used the most Maoist of weapons when, with no other base to call upon, he used the army on June 4 to drive the democracy movement underground.

For many of those who had until then called themselves Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members, June 4, 1989 represented the final bankruptcy of the rulers' ideology. They tore up their party membership cards by the thousands.

A BATTLE OF IDEAS IN PERMANENCE

This was of course not the first mass challenge to China's state-capitalism calling itself Communism which the rulers had suppressed, from voices of revolt during the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1957), to a challenge from the Left within the Cultural Revolution (1966-68).

When Deng Xiaoping returned to power at the end of 1978, he felt the need to create a momentary breathing space, bring back from prison and exile dissidents from as far back as 1957, such as Lin Xiling. As a 21-year-old student she had answered Mao's call to speak freely—"Let 100 flowers bloom, let 100 schools of thought contend"—but was declared instead one of "1,000 poisonous weeds" for demanding that true socialism replace the current undemocratic class structure of China.⁵

One of the intellectuals returned to party posts was Wang Ruoshui who, from his position as deputy editor of *People's Daily*, would spearhead the debates on alienation persisting in China in a supposedly socialist society. This would develop into fuller discussions on Marxist humanism which issued a powerful challenge to the ruling ideology.

Unofficial newspapers, posters and organizations sprang up in a battle of ideas. Many activists had been Red Guards in the earliest days of the Cultural Revolution, then had studied Marx to grasp how Mao could have manipulated them with revolutionary slogans into counter-revolutionary positions.

5. See Ch. 17, "The Challenge of Mao Tse-Tung", in *Marxism and Freedom*, by Raya Dunayevskaya, Columbia University Press (1988), for a discussion of "Voices of Revolt" within the Hundred Flowers campaign.

Organization of Thought

(continued from page 4)

and John L. Lewis' Labor Bureaucracy, marshal all their command in an attempt to destroy us.

That man Hegel never ceases to amaze me. He sat that ivory Prussian tower, thinking and rethinking the movement of thought—its history—and yet Practice him is of the essence, and that even when he reach the pinnacle of his system, the Absolute Idea, and when he says that recall, remembrance of things past, is the pathway to the Absolute Idea, he adds; "Recognition puts itself forward as simple knowledge of duty in contrast to the distinction and direction that lie in action. As opposed to the rigid reality confronting action, action itself overcomes the opposition between reality and thought—breaks down the division between the two and what results? "Truth... has also the shape, the character of certainty." That is to say, that is how you gain inner conviction.

It is thus not just a question that you learn by doing. You gain a new dimension in doing and a new adherence and that is what is important. You gain it, says Hegel, not so much from knowledge as such as from the activity. In exposing yourself to the outside world, you have thereby transformed innocence or inherent nature into "explicitness of Substance into Subject," and that when the cycle of philosophy returns to itself, you see that it has reached its beginning only at the end.

Translated into our terms, it is as a living human being ("Subject" to Hegel) that you supersede the distinction between thought and reality. It is as a living human being that you have shed the hostility to thought, your philosophic innocence and blind belief and thereby released the previous empty Absolute from the abyss and let it unfold its own existence anew—as a unity of the Theoretical and Practical Idea. "This process of releasing itself from the form of itself," says Hegel, "is the highest freedom and security of its knowledge of itself."

Now then, release is a most creative act of life itself and especially so, the lives of the working people, oppressed in the shop, depressed by the blaring of the labor bureaucrats and political leaders in and out of the shop, withdrawing into himself by the overwhelming pressures of a world he produced, but in which he is nothing but a cog in a machine, and he is told in a million subtle and not so subtle ways that thinking is not for him. Therefore, what is stirring in his mind not only you do not see—he himself isn't aware of it. There is no release and it is for this reason that we began, not with the book but with the paper. That must continue. But everyone in this room knows that it will continue and expand only as Marxism and Freedom has become second nature to us and therefore win for us a much wider base in members, in subs, and in money. That is how the whole organization will learn how to fly. It has just gained its philosophic wings, but it is not yet practiced.

The practice of the paper carried us to the book and the practice of the book will carry us to an expanded paper because by then we will have founded a new movement which will give the paper a wider, as well as a more solid, organization....

When these unofficial papers continued to challenge Deng as well as Mao, outstripping the limits Deng wanted to impose, the breathing space disappeared and dissidents were driven underground or arrested almost as quickly as the voices of the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

The debate on what Marxism in the post-Mao era would be was a vigorous one, as Bill Brugger and David Kelly explore in *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao*



Era published last year. Here we want to concentrate on the discussions on humanism, and the demand for "return to the original features of Marxism...to the true nature of practical, critical and humanistic Marxism."⁶ What became challenging in the debates was that taking man as measure, as Marx had worked it out, could expose the claim that China was a socialist society.

That this Marxian critique of China is revolutionary is clear from Wang Ruoshui's challenge: "A specter is haunting the Chinese intellectual world—the specter of humanism."

In "A Defense of Humanism," written in 1983, Wang carefully cited works of Marx throughout his life, not just the early humanist essays. Wang ends in *Capital*, with Marx's description of communist society as the "development of human power which is its own end, the true realm of freedom."

He had made clear that, "Marx from start to finish united the proletarian revolution and communism together with the question of man's value, dignity, liberation and freedom. There is no place for the difference between the so-called young, humanist Marx and the old 'anti-humanist Marx' spoken of by some Western scholars."

When Wang Ruoshui was ousted from his job in 1983 the CCP maintained a mass movement to criticize him. One Chinese student remembered having to read Marx to understand what the Party was criticizing in Wang's writings: "After I got some ideas from Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* and explained them to my colleagues, most of them said publicly or privately to me that alienation as described by Marx still existed in China...after the critique movement, the concept of alienation became popular and the discussion was broadened...We can easily see some of the ramifications of this 'negative' influence of the critique of alienation under socialism in the students' democracy movement, especially the 1989 movement."⁸

Brugger and Kelly call it noteworthy that Wang Ruoshui embraced even the Marx who hailed the Paris Commune. Mao had tried to identify himself with the Paris Commune in resolutions opening the Cultural Revolution. Other Chinese activists have defined what links them by basing themselves on a Paris Commune type of socialism. But Wang Xizhe, a member of the Red Guard generation that Mao tried to manipulate, who spent time in Mao's jail and has languished in Deng's jail since 1982, denied that Mao was a Communist. He pointed out that "all of a sudden the 'principle of the Paris Commune' was declared null and void" when Mao's control was threatened.⁹

By contrast Wang Xizhe assesses the main writer of the Sheng-Wu-Lien manifesto "Whither China," Yang Xiguang, who in 1968, in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, attacked the "red capitalist class" with Marx's vision of the Paris Commune type of socialism, as the "precursor of China's thinking generation."¹⁰

CHINA'S THINKING GENERATION

The student authors of the ten-page document distributed in Beijing in April call students from the movement of '89 now "more concerned with the situation of the workers, peasants and soldiers." They identify those who emphasize first perfecting themselves in theory before actively throwing themselves into any action for democracy.

All eyes will continue to be on the Chinese masses as they continue to work out a unity of theory and practice to overthrow state-capitalist tyranny. The Chinese who have confronted the retrogression begun by Mao have not permitted Deng to eradicate them. They represent not an end, but a beginning to revolution.

—June 3-4, 1991

6. Wang Shouchang, quoted in Bill Brugger and David Kelly, *Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era*, Stanford, 1990. The authors have an extensive discussion in the chapter titled "The Importance of Humanism." But they accept as "Marxist" the claim that the law of value operates in socialist society, rather than that being a Stalinist 1943 reversal of Marx's specific determination of capitalist production. That lies at the heart of measuring Chinese society against "practical, critical and humanistic Marxism." Similarly they misapply the title of the conclusion, "Marxism without Marx," to the direction of the humanists.
7. David A. Kelly (ed.) *Wang Ruoshui: Writings on Alienation and Philosophy*, Chinese Studies in Philosophy, Vol. XVI, No. 3, M.E. Sharpe, 1985.
8. See "An inside view of debates on alienation in China," *News & Letters*, November, 1990.
9. Wang Xizhe, *Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution*, Plough Publications, Hong Kong, 1981.
10. See "Sheng Wu-lien: The Challenge from the Left" in Ch. 5 "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung" of *Philosophy and Revolution*, by Raya Dunayevskaya, Columbia University Press, 1989. "Whither China" is reprinted in *China in Revolt and the Idea of Freedom*, News & Letters, 1989.

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Youth What kind of education agenda?

by Sheila Fuller

I don't feel that I have learned anything from my public high school education. In my school we had a home economics department but no classes in English literature, world history or philosophy, that challenge you to think critically. Now with the budget cuts in public schools, the classes that are being cut are art and music classes where you feel you have some ways to be creative. Now everything is being reduced to algebra.

—Young woman student from Chicago

In the past two months, George Bush, who claims to be the "education president," has revealed his agenda for education in a proposed bill and in commencement speeches. Many educators have praised his plans, and some have criticized him, but none of them ask what youth and students themselves think about the present system of education. What is missing from all the pundit debates on education is a vision of education as a human development which challenges the status quo.

BUSH'S EDUCATION AGENDA

Here is how Bush has spelled out his agenda for public elementary and high school education (in future issues of News & Letters we will take up other aspects of Bush's attacks on education):

On April 16, Bush's secretary of education, Lamar Alexander, proposed an education bill which claims to promote "choice" in the students' selection of schools. It drastically reduces the government's "Chapter 1 fund" (which pays for extra tutoring and special programs for at-risk children) and instead offers a limited amount of funding in the form of vouchers to public school students to attend private schools. Bush aims to help those students who already have partial financial aid to attend private schools. Other students are left in inner city public schools, which are sinking into deeper poverty. Bush's proposal also calls for national student testing.

Let's look at some of the results of this agenda for education in the inner city public schools:

In Milwaukee, Wis., where Bush's "choice plan" was instituted last August, only 600 out of 98,000 students applied for vouchers to attend private schools, and only a third of the city's private schools chose to accept them. The inner city public schools are now even poorer and more segregated. Over 50% of the students drop out because of financial necessity or boredom.

In Chicago, 30 out of 600 public schools are being closed to close because of lack of city and state funds. Schools are in dilapidated conditions. Several students have been killed by falling ceilings and exposed electrical wiring.

As one student from Whitney Young High School put it: "If I had a say, I would spend more money on language labs because they help us learn different ways to talk with other people in the world. I would change English and history books which have a white man's version of history and don't teach us about Black and white in American history. I would hire more teachers because we know our teachers have so many classes to teach that they can't concentrate on one class."

Many public schools are responding to the crisis in the quality of education by subjecting students to tests which determine their eligibility for passing. One student from Whitney Young High School had the following response to these tests: "The tests put so much pressure on us because most of the time you don't real-

ly think about the questions that are being asked but whether you have enough time to answer them. If you don't understand the passage in your first reading, you don't have enough time to re-read it, and you can't answer the question. Or sometimes the answer to a question is not just one answer. You have to interpret the question according to the examiner's opinion to give the 'right' answer. Otherwise you are wrong. I think these tests are not a measure of your intelligence."

A HIERARCHY OF KNOWLEDGE

His words reminded me of a statement which Karl Marx made over a hundred years ago on the question of examination in this capitalist society:

"The bureaucracy is a circle from which no one can escape. Its hierarchy is a hierarchy of knowledge. . . . The examination—this 'link' between the 'office of state' and the 'individual,' this objective bond between the knowledge of civil society and the knowledge of the state—is nothing but the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge, the official recognition of the transubstantiation of profane knowledge into sacred knowledge (in every examination, it goes without saying, the examiner knows all)."

This statement continues to be a powerful indictment of our alienating system of education and its exams in which the goal is not the free development of our minds and talents but the rationalization of the status quo.

Many youth want an entirely different type of education that has the free development of the human being as its center. What is needed to fight Bush's attacks on our education is a much deeper dialogue among us about the kind of life and education that we are for.

Youth in Revolt

by Tom Parsons

Students protested George Bush as he made commencement speeches at three universities. Anti-war students and others walked out of graduation ceremonies at U. of Michigan. Graduating Yale students booed as Bush announced most favored nation status for China. At traditionally Black Hampton University students met Bush with silence and raised fists.

Thirteen years after student activism was banned on campuses in Indonesia, students are joining farmers to protest their loss of land to development projects. Last October a student was imprisoned for expressing revolutionary ideas in a study group.

Protests by North African and Turkish youths shook Brussels for four straight nights. Immigrants in this home to NATO are greeted by few jobs and cramped housing.

Thailand is deporting thousands of Burmese immigrants including many students and others who fled Burma after the army crackdown on the Democracy Movement in 1988.

A slate of students fighting tuition increases and financial aid reductions has won student government elections at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). Many had participated in the occupation of the BMCC campus during the city-wide student protest in April and view the elections as a continuation of their protest.

Students fight racism

Editor's note: The following was excerpted from interviews with several Huntley Middle School students involved in a walkout in March.

De Kalb, Ill.—In March, 300 students walked out of classes to protest our school's handling of a student's science project poster that enforces racist stereotypes against Blacks and used the word n—. While the poster was on the wall in the media center of our school, racist graffiti were put on lockers and more racism came to the surface.

We didn't want to go to school and have to see this, so we told the principal he should take it down. He wouldn't at first. Finally he did, but he wouldn't do anything else about the problem. He thought the parents would handle it and we would simmer down. We had some meetings of our own and decided to walk out.

We made the following demands: a three-month Black and minority cultures studies program for district 428, the principal should resign, amnesty for all protesters, discipline and written apology from the students who made the poster, the school should hire a Black social worker for every white one, and the firing of a social worker who told us that when you think of the word "Black" you think "n—." None of these have been met except that the principal has been sent to another school.

Our demonstration wasn't just about the project. It was about the whole condition of the school. There are no positive images of Blacks and other cultures. All we learn about is white people except maybe a paragraph in social studies. There is only one Black teacher and no minority administrators or counselors in the whole district.

Racism isn't just in the school. It's in the whole country, but you have to start somewhere. Something has to be done.

Now the school board won't let the public see the poster. They're covering it up so no one will see how bad it really is.

A Chicago newspaper had an article accusing us of taking away free speech and being "politically correct." We're not taking away free speech. There is no free speech in school. I can't just get up in class and give a lecture on the history of the civil rights movement. When the principal and teachers let the poster stay on the wall they sent the message that they condone racist stereotypes.

The fact that the school wouldn't take it down when we went through the proper procedures shows that government only works when people force it. We should have common everyday people running society.

The problem is we didn't keep going. We had some organization problems and too many parents tried to take over. We brought it into the open. We should finish it.

—Huntley Middle School students

Memorial Day protest

Hartford, Conn.—Crowds of onlookers smiled, applauded and made peace signs as our contingent of anti-war protesters marched through the streets of Hartford as part of the traditional Memorial Day parade.

Frankly, we were pretty nervous when we showed up with our anti-war signs and giant puppets. "We" included two small groups: the Central Connecticut chapter of Veterans For Peace and "Paper Angels," our local Bread-and-Puppet-style anti-war street theater group.

So imagine our surprise when we became aware of the applause coming from the bystanders lining both sides of Capitol Avenue in the 89-degree heat. At first I thought they were applauding the group ahead of us. But since we had deliberately spread our small contingent out over about 50 yards so that people would have a chance to take in the impact of our signs and visual message, and the applause increased as we continued to march by, it soon became apparent that it was for us!

The American people are not as brainwashed by the jingoistic media blitz as we are led to believe. Although the anti-war movement was largely blanketed out by the major media during Desert Storm, people obviously missed us.

—Richard Greeman

Who We Are and What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that stands for the abolition of capitalism, whether in its private property form as in the U.S., or its state property form, as in Russia or 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. We have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead."

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-87), 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 philosophical 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. These works challenge post-Marx Marxists to return to Marx's Marxism.

The new visions of the future that Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are

rooted in her rediscovery 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." The development of the Marxist-Humanism of Dunayevskaya 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*, on deposit at the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in Detroit, Michigan.

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 have 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, exploitative society, 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.

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Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Student anti-government demonstrations have swept across South Korea in the most sustained wave of protests since 1987. The marches grew through early May, as students were joined by workers, and culminated in demonstrations to mark the May 18 anniversary of the 1980 Kwangju uprising massacred by the army.

The opposition was ignited by the death of Kang Kyong Dae, a student who was protesting school tuition fees. He was fatally beaten by police on April 26. The students demanded justice in the form of an apology by President Roh Tae Woo, sweeping resignations from his government and abolishing the hated plainclothes police.

Roh dismissed the Interior Minister and made some minor concessions including a meaningless revision of the 42-year-old National Security Law. This law has been used to silence government opponents and 1,200 political prisoners still remain in jail.

Some workers have joined the students' protests this year. Strikes, occupations and mass demonstrations by workers over the past three years had forced the large conglomerates to raise wages and reduce the workweek to about 48 hours.

They also caused the Roh government to pressure the large companies into setting up programs like day care for women workers and funding for workers' housing. However, the main tool used by the government to in-

From East Europe

Russian miners' strike

The strike by Soviet coal miners was initiated in the early days of March in the main government-owned coal basins of Donbas in the Ukraine and Kuzbas in western Siberia. Towards the end of March it was being claimed by the National Strike Coordinating Committee that 300,000 miners from 165 pits were involved.

In the initial days the miners' economic demands were confined to a 100% to 150% increase in wages and pensions after 25 years of work underground, while their main political demand was the resignation of Gorbachev. By the end of March the strike coordination committee had laid down four basic demands: resignation of Gorbachev; dissolution of the Congress of Peoples Deputies; resignation of the Soviet government and transfer of supreme power to a federation council of republican presidents; and conclusion of a new wage agreement for miners and all other industries, where workers so demanded.

While the economic ploy did meet with some success, with expressions of solidarity coming from steel, rail and aviation workers, the attempt to gain political support would appear to have failed. While Boris Yeltsin was prompt in responding to the situation and projected himself as the spearhead of democratic groups, republican nationalists and the striking miners, the government's initial indifference gave way to a shrill hard line.

However, as the effects of the strike began to tell, the government softened its stand. Three weeks into the strike, daily coal supply was down to 220,000 tons against the required 340,000, leading to fears of widespread industrial closures. Following talks between the government and miners' representatives, an agreement was reached.

Strike committees in Kuzbas, Donbas and Vorkuta, however, rejected the settlement and reiterated the political demands, and this is where they appear to have failed. The government, in response, spoke of a moratorium on strikes until the end of the year and of the need for a nationwide emergency to deal with the strike, since it would lead to the breakdown of the metallurgical industry.

Its adverse economic consequences notwithstanding, those contending for power seem to have put the strike to good political use. If ceaseless talk of crisis, particularly one initiated by the working class, was used by the Centre to get rivals for power to compromise, for Yeltsin championing the miners' cause was equally an attempt to get the Centre to negotiate with him. Gorbachev managed to beat back hard line opposition in the party and worked out an agreement with Yeltsin and eight other republics' leaders offering to review the steep hike in prices of food and consumer goods. They in turn appealed to the miners to resume production and make up losses.

At the beginning of May, the miners began to go back to work. Yeltsin visited the Kuzbas miners and promised vaguely that their pits would be under Russian, not Soviet (central), control. Radical representatives from the Movement for Democratic Russia who believe the strike should be the main method of struggle are speaking of Yeltsin's "treason."

They are concerned about two formulations of the declaration signed by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and others at Novo-Ogarev on April 23. The sentences mentioned read: "1) Initiating strikes is inadmissible. 2) The participants express their support of a special labor regime in the basic industries." Thus the declaration clipped the wings of the strike movement and put off the catastrophic fall of the economy. Observers believe the declaration did ward off—for sometime at least—a revolutionary scenario of Soviet development that could have led to a general strike and Gorbachev's fall.

—Correspondent, Czechoslovakia

South Korea rocked by national protests

sure labor "peace" has always been repression, whether in the form of anti-labor laws or outright police and military repression.

In February, 69 union activists were arrested in conjunction with a strike at the Daewoo shipyard. Most were released but seven remain in jail, including the president of the Daewoo Motors union. In April, a strike by workers at the Daewoo Motors auto plant outside Seoul was broken up by lockouts and arrests by the police. One report stated that a total of 247 unionists and supporters were in prison.

The government unilaterally changed a number of laws last year, so that it is now illegal for workers to make certain demands, such as the release of workers in prison, the granting of strike pay, or anything that is judged to impinge on management's "rights." All these harsh measures have not stopped the growth of unions, whose members have increased threefold since 1985 to over two million workers today.

Students joined workers in May to protest the death of Park Chang Soo, president of the Hanjin Heavy union. Park was arrested in February for call-



Students demonstrate at Myoungil University.

Whither Ethiopia?

It took only a matter of hours for rebel armies to capture Ethiopia's capital on May 28. The ease with which they overpowered the remnants of Col. Mengistu's military was not alone due to the drying up of Russia's support, military and otherwise. It was also one measure of the Ethiopian peoples' total disgust with his 17-year dictatorship, which was long ago shorn of any popular support.

The Bush administration jumped into this picture long before the capture of Addis Ababa. The U.S. is presiding over talks between rebel groups and what is left of the government. It has taken the role of broker not only because Russia, at this moment, is no longer contending for influence in this part of Africa. What the U.S. and Russia both agree to is the necessity for "stability," and after Bush's military victory in the Persian Gulf war, he is now in a position to orchestrate that "stability" in Ethiopia.

The three main rebel groups—the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)—had united in fighting against Mengistu. It now will become very clear what each group was fighting for. The EPRDF and the OLF called for a coalition "transitional government" leading ultimately to elections. The EPLF immediately put forth the demand for Eritrean independence.

The fullness of Eritrea's decades-long struggle for self-determination meant not only nationalism, but brought forth other movements including women's liberation. It remains to be seen how these revolutionary human forces and passions will express themselves.

Cyclone in Bangladesh

The deadly cyclone that struck Bangladesh on April 30 killed at least 140,000 people, by official estimates. Many thousands more have died from disease, exposure and other after-shocks of the storm.

A neo-Malthusian attitude among many western governments, who consider Bangladesh to be "overpopulated," was to blame the victims who lived along the unprotected coast for their fate. The fact is that most of the ten million people in the storm's path are among Bangladesh's huge landless rural population, forced to look for work along the coast or to live on the vulnerable offshore islands. This is the only land free of property rights that is left in Bangladesh.

None of these people has benefited from the "development" aid which world capitalism has supplied to Bangladesh, primarily for building up export industries. Bangladesh's rulers took some steps to protect the coast after the devastating 1970 cyclone which killed one-half million people. But in the 1980s they discontinued building cyclone shelters and dykes.

Bangladesh authorities and relief agencies were left with the immediate task of delivering food, water and medicine to the millions of survivors with a fleet of six inadequate helicopters. It took two weeks for the U.S. government to finally send helicopters, personnel and supplies. As one international relief official commented, "There's no geopolitical interest in Bangladesh."

ing for solidarity strikes. He had undertaken a hunger strike in prison to protest attacks on labor and the death of Kang. Police claim Park committed suicide while being treated at a hospital.

While the mass demonstrations have primarily engaged students and an increasing number of workers, the dissatisfaction with Roh is growing. The South Korean "economic miracle" is seriously tarnished, with inflation that runs from 9% to 20% eating up wages. Many fear the upcoming "democratic" elections will, in effect, institutionalize a one-party rule.

Mexico: 'free trade'

The capitalist debate in the U.S. over "free trade" with Mexico has fixed on whether a pact would create more U.S. jobs or drive jobs out of the U.S. to Mexico. The "free trade" agreement, however, isn't about barriers, or even jobs as such. It is about labor.

The workers' experience in the now-notorious maquiladores along the northern Mexican border offer the best prototype of a free trade arrangement. They earn an average of \$1 to \$1.40 an hour. The turnover among workers is very high because \$50 a week is not a livable wage.

Pay is maintained at sweatshop levels by agreement between the international manufacturers and local authorities. The only "free trade" is in workers themselves, who are mostly young, single women. Mexico brings \$3.5 billion from the maquilador second only to revenues from its oil industry.

The U.S. Congress is voting to give Bush carte blanche—"fast track" authority—to negotiate a trade agreement with Mexico, without any amendments. The kind of final pact will be easy to pass into law. Most the arguments against "free trade" have maintained the capitalist ground which pits U.S. workers against Mexican workers.

The U.S. labor bureaucracy has practiced this international double standard by arguing against "free trade" because it will accelerate the move of jobs to Mexico where wages are lower. But these same bureaucrats say very little about "free trade" across the northern U.S. border which has meant the loss of jobs for Canadian workers. In fact, a lot of the "lost" U.S. jobs can be found, not in Mexico but in sweatshops here in the U.S.

Kurdish activists speak

Editor's note: As we go to press, Bush continues his effort to cover over his complicity in Saddam Hussein's massacre of the Kurds. Neither Bush's use of U.S. troops to build refugee camps in northern Iraq, nor U.S. insistence that the Kurds return to their villages can erase his responsibility for the continuing genocide there. Rank-and-file Kurdish revolutionaries have condemned Bush's actions at the same time that they have sharply criticized a section of the Kurdish leadership that has betrayed them by negotiating with Hussein for their so-called "autonomy." Below we print excerpts from an interview with two Kurdish activists. For our analysis of these events, see the Lead article in the May issue of N&L, "Bush's complicity in Hussein's genocide."

Kurdu: Our leaders made a mistake when they went to U.S., Europe, Moscow, etc. and met behind the people, without a clear idea or support. When people rose up, there was no support. They led people to think America is supporting them. They should have said "don't have back-up. When you expand you have to be able to defend it. Otherwise you have another Halab [city destroyed by Hussein in 1988]. So people run away."

The least we must get from Kurdish Democratic Front's (KDF) negotiations with Saddam is a basic guarantee of security of our lives. At the same time people are very disturbed at the way these negotiations are being conducted. We can't even raise a simple slogan of "down with the enemy." One thing our movement has suffered a lot from is the factional struggle between various armed guerrilla forces and parties for leadership of the whole movement. We need to define for ourselves what do we mean by self-determination.

Adila: When the uprising got out of their control our leaders had no contingency plans. And as usual they ended up depending on one enemy against another enemy. Whenever you question this, they say we didn't have a choice. Instead of resolving these questions, they just go on to the next thing. With the same theories and the same lack of a serious analysis of those mistakes, we end up repeating the same thing over.

Many people feel threatened to raise questions and criticize. They want to keep their relations with the KDF. The Kurds in Turkey were definitely upset when Talabani [leader of KDF] met with Ozal's government without them. But for us, surrounded as we are by enemies, it is always a matter of survival.

How can we clear up our movement's goals, and raise such a banner, when we compromise our principles? We need a new way of thinking and doing in the Kurdish movement.

For a compilation of news and editorial articles from various journals on recent events in Kurdistan, send for *Kurdistan in the Media*. It is available for \$2 from Kurdish National Congress, North America, California Chapter, P.O. Box 26702, Santa Ana, CA 92799.