

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Editorial Article: American Civilization on Trial

What is the meaning of the Los Angeles rebellion?

by Lou Turner

Despite its every attempt to go on with "business as usual," America has changed. The rage, April 29 to May 1, brought on by the outrageous acquittal of four Los Angeles policemen for the videotaped beating of Rodney King the night of March 3, 1991, leaped like a California brush fire igniting the social tinder of other urban areas throughout the nation.

Within 24 hours of the verdict some 1,000 structural fires were reported in L.A. County. So widespread was the rebellion that by dusk of the first day Police Commission President Stanley Sheinbaum conceded that the National Guard wouldn't be enough to quell the unrest. "The problem is widening, intensifying. You have a whole social upheaval," anguished Sheinbaum.

Although the corner of Florence and Normandy was the South Central Los Angeles (SCLA) flashpoint, the rebellion spread like a brush fire throughout Los Angeles County. In fact, though the focus of the media was

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invariably Black people, the images flashing across the television screen were of a broad multicultural "social upheaval" involving Latinos as well as white youth, stretching from Long Beach in the south and Venice in the west, to Pomona in the east and right to the outskirts of Simi Valley in the north.

For George Bush, the national scope of the outrage and rebellion in response to the Rodney King verdict raised the spectre of spontaneous national insurrection. The deployment of 7,000 National Guard troops by California Governor Pete Wilson, and the dispatching of 1,000 federal marshals and Border Patrol Officers, along with 4,000 federal troops from Ft. Ord and Ft. Pendleton by Bush and Gen. Colin Powell, gave the green light to local governments across the nation to impose state of emergency measures and curfews.

Hardest hit were: Atlanta, where students from Atlanta University and inner city residents battled police for several days; San Francisco Bay Area, where a state of emergency was called by Mayor Frank Jordan in response to spontaneous revolts, marches and protests that tied up traffic on the Bay Bridge and led to the

Women fight capitalism's limitations



by B. Ann Lastelle

The lot of working women in this recessionary, racist and sexist economy continues to deteriorate: A fire at the Imperial Foods chicken processing plant in Hamlet, N.C., in September 1991 killed 25 workers, 18 of whom were women; 12 were Black. One hundred forty workers, 80% of whom are women, many Black or Latina, struck Rainfair, Inc., in Racine, Wisc., for over five months. The settlement has both strikers and strike replacements working in the plant, but after six months the company will decide, on the basis of productivity, not seniority, who works and who gets laid off.

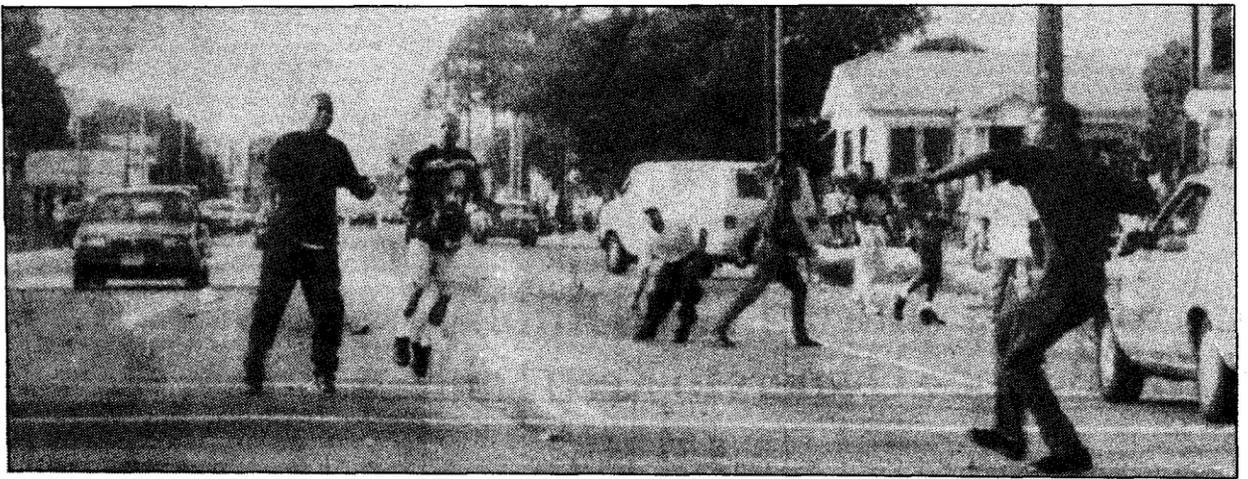
Women are almost twice as likely as men to work at minimum wage jobs. The median weekly earnings for Black women in 1991 were \$323, compared to \$374 for Black men and white women, and \$509 for white men. Twice as many women as men age 45 to 64 have no health insurance. Roughly 40% of working women complain of sexual harassment on the job.

Yet despite the deep recession, the sexism and the racism, working women are doing more than just struggling to survive. They are thinking, saying and acting on what a Black woman Delta Pride Catfish worker, who helped to organize a union in the largely unorganized South, said in a recent interview: "We're human beings and you can't treat us like this."

LIFE OUTSIDE WORK

That striving to become full human beings comes out in so many ways. While I was working in a meatpacking plant in Chicago, the company offered to open contract negotiations early in order to upgrade our medical and pension benefits. The only other point on which they were willing to negotiate was wages.

For the whole year before workers had been talking, not about wages and benefits, but about the conditions (continued on page 3)



Black youth take to the streets early in the rebellion.

multiracial "looting" of fashionable commercial sections of San Francisco; and Las Vegas, which continues to be in a state of sporadic revolt three weeks after the L.A. rebellion.

Before the smoke had cleared in L.A., it was estimated that the rebellion had been the largest U.S. urban upheaval of this century. The death toll stands at 60, the number injured 2,283, the total arrests as of May 19 are more than 10,000.

NEW STAGE OF U.S. AUTHORITARIANISM

Los Angeles' "recovery" from its second major rebellion in three decades is sure to leave the rest of SCLA as desolate as Watts is today, 27 years after its mass revolt signalled a new "Black Power" stage of Black social struggle. Now, the same criminal justice system that three days of mass revolt found guilty of flagrant social injustice in the Rodney King trial is once again the stage of a new round of high profile trials.

Laurence Powell—the officer accused of delivering the

greatest number of blows to a prostrate Rodney King, and the one heard on police transmissions laughing afterward and making racial slurs—is to be retried in Los Angeles County, according to the May 22 ruling of Judge Stanley Weisberg, the judge who originally shift-

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On the Inside

Deaths in Guadalajara: capitalism's true face

Mexico City, Mexico—Wednesday, April 22, death emerged from the depths of the earth in the second biggest city in Mexico, Guadalajara. A series of explosions carved an impressive trench eight kilometers (five miles) long; a total of ten explosions destroyed an entire neighborhood in the city's center. Officially, 200 deaths are spoken of, but everyone in Mexico knows that the official figures always hide the magnitude of the tragedies; the people speak of more than 500 dead and thousands wounded.

PEMEX RESPONSIBILITY

Worst of all is that this is not the first time and, unfortunately, everything seems to indicate that it will not be the last. This time the main culprit for the death and destruction is Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), the quasigovernmental enterprise that controls the various sectors of the oil industry. It was also responsible for 456 deaths—according to official data, or much more according to the people—Nov. 19, 1984, when its gas reservoir exploded in San Juanico, a poor neighborhood of Mexico City.

The most serious thing is that Pemex has installations, stores of combustibles, refineries, etc., the length and breadth of the country, and absolutely all these installations, pipelines, etc., are time bombs that could blow up at any moment. Mexico is a giant mine field in which there is no safety for human existence (not to speak of the systematic destruction of nature).

There are various reasons this situation persists; in the case of San Juanico and Guadalajara, where Pemex is the direct and principal culprit, the main cause is the lack of maintenance of installations and pipelines. For ten years they haven't invested a single peso in maintenance; accidents happen every day but don't affect public opinion since they are hidden by the government (and can be hidden because they don't cause hundreds of deaths but "only" one or two or several serious injuries).

Pemex's lack of investment in maintenance is mainly due to the government's adoption since 1982 of a political economy dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This political economy originally consisted of austerity plans to fight inflation—supposedly. Actually, the political economy hasn't changed, it is of a neoliberal style, much to the taste of the White House in Washington and the international

financial centers. Nevertheless, Pemex makes investments—not in maintenance but only for exploration and drilling of new oil wells, that is to say, investments in accord with U.S. interests.

ANTI-DEMOCRACY, AUTHORITARIANISM, PERVERSIVE CORRUPTION

The other reasons for the disasters and tragedies in Mexico are basically anti-democracy, authoritarianism and pervasive corruption. Anti-democracy because there is no citizen control over the politics and actions of the government—and Pemex is part of the state apparatus. Congress controls nothing but is completely dominated by deputies and senators of the official party (PRI), who rubber-stamp all the government's initiatives and politics. The presence of the opposition in the legislature is merely symbolic.

Authoritarianism is an essential element of political life in Mexico. All those who have power (from the president down to the lowest policeman) enjoy total impunity and the ordinary citizen is completely helpless against them. One can't count the judiciary because it is subordinate to the central power structure, which is vertical.

Corruption is another universal, everyday element in Mexico. Sheltered by power, the functionaries do all kinds of illicit business and profit permanently from their positions. They subordinate everything to their rapacious private interest because they know no one over- sees or controls them and they enjoy total impunity.

Such is Mexico at the end of the century. And all the reasons discussed here can be reduced to one: we live in a capitalist world where money—and more specifically profit, accumulation of surplus value—molds all social relations, the whole structure of society. And to speak of capitalism today is to speak of a capitalist world market, with centers and peripheries.

Mexico is part of the capitalist periphery, and in the periphery one often observes with greater clarity the barbarity implied by the dominion of capital and its development (the accumulation of capital) over human beings, and, in general, over life. That is to say, capital systematically destroys or pillages humanity as much as nature, and that is seen with total clarity in the capitalist periphery. Such is the case of Mexico. Here capital shows its true face: death and destruction.

—Student

Conference: 'Women Tell the Truth'

by Laurie Cashdan

So many women responded to the announcement of the April 25 daylong conference, "Women Tell the Truth: A Conference on Parity, Power and Sexual Harassment," with Anita Hill as the keynote speaker, that the organizing coalition turned down over 2,000 preregistrations. The 2,000 women who managed to register early enough for what many called "the Anita Hill conference" started pouring into Hunter College's auditorium at 7:30 a.m. By the time Professor Hill began to speak at 9:30, after an introduction by Gloria Steinem, an electrifying feeling of anticipation had filled the room and Hill was greeted with a long standing ovation.

This feeling of anticipation, the sense that a new stage of militancy is unfolding among women sick and tired of how we are degraded in this society, prevailed throughout the day. Over 150 women's organizations co-sponsored the event, and about 75 set up information tables. Hundreds of white, Black, Asian and Latina women new to feminist events signed up on every mailing list they saw. Everyone felt they were present at a historic event.

Anita Hill's speech contained a new aspect. Hill called her talk "Unfinished Works," and described it as her thoughts since the hearings and the calls, cards and letters she had received from across the U.S. She said that she had come to talk about society, not herself; the general, not the specific. Hill analyzed "sexual harassment

as a form of abuse of power," in relation to "economic coercion" and forms of oppression which play on feelings of vulnerability, like rape and incest.

I was excited when Hill said she finds inspiration in slave narratives, in the determination of women who "rose above pain to educate the world about atrocities of slavery." She insisted law itself should not be separated from women's experiences and narratives.

Unfortunately, the full significance of Hill invoking the spirit of slave narratives was submerged by the way the conference organizers defined their "parity, power and sexual harassment" theme. All day petitions circulated for the National Parity Campaign, demanding that major parties support women candidates, and the Freedom of Choice Act.

But we want more than that. That was clear at a coalition building session, where each woman said why she had come. A Black Medicaid manager was furious about Medicaid cuts and the problems of immigrant women who get no pre-natal or neo-natal care, whose babies die. Her daughter, a neo-natal care provider, was organizing nurses pushed out of full-time jobs into per diem work. A third woman had come "to support Anita Hill and because I want to make as many connections with other African American women as I can."

Their thoughts about economic and social crises in the U.S. went beyond sexual harassment. They saw women like ourselves, not politicians, as the source of transformation. But speakers from the National Organization for Women and the Commission on the Status of Women lectured for so long about building single-issue coalitions that they allowed no time for audience discussion.

The one session where coalitions were not taken for granted was called "Race, Sexual Orientation, Social Class and Sexual Harassment." Over 200 attended, including Black women who critiqued both virulent sexism among Black nationalists and racism among white feminists. This critique, raised repeatedly, was expressed by a woman who exclaimed, "This is supposed to be an action day. Why is this the only workshop on race?" Another woman insisted, "If white women keep dealing with sexism and abortion in a single issue kind of way, they won't get what they want."

This conference showed the passion and rage we have been hearing from women since the Thomas hearings. We are already shaking up politics. But slave narratives went beyond politics to test the concept of freedom, including the sham nature of American democracy. Similarly, anger heard at the conference could shake up not only politics but feminist organizations which try to channel our passion for a new society into the framework of the order we need to uproot.

Palestinian feminism

Chicago, Ill.—On May 22-25, the Union of Palestinian Women's Associations held its seventh annual convention here. A special feature of this conference was a keynote panel which included international speakers and was attended by over 200 women and men of different races and nationalities.

Robin Morgan, feminist writer, poet and editor of Ms. magazine spoke about her recent trip to Palestine/Israel and the "omnipresent open feminism" among women there who face the attacks of the Israeli government as well as the horrors of Islamic and Jewish fundamentalism. Morgan reported on the new organizing among Palestinian women against polygamy and "honor murders" which allow a man to kill any female member of his family if he suspects that she is involved with a man.

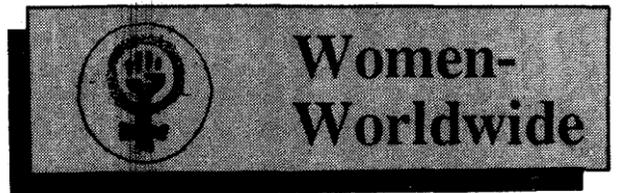
Cheryl Harris, an African American woman law professor and Chrystos, a Native American woman activist from the Menominee Nation, spoke about the genocide that has characterized the 500 years since Columbus "discovered" the New World, and the ongoing genocide that is killing Black and Native American people in the U.S. Harris reported the shocking fact that for every Black woman born in the U.S., one is dying. She concluded: "I heard in Los Angeles, the voice of rebellion, the voice of the voiceless. That is why the Palestinian women's struggle is not an abstraction to us."

The last two speakers, Simon Sharoni, an Israeli member of "Women's Organization for Political Prisoners," and Eileen Kuttab, a Palestinian sociology professor from Birzeit University, pointed to the deep contradictions within the Middle East and how they have affected women. Sharoni told a horrible story about an Israeli soldier who killed a Palestinian woman in the West Bank and later killed his Jewish girlfriend. This revealed to her how both Palestinian and Israeli women are treated as "occupied territories."

It was Eileen Kuttab's words which expressed the strongest challenge. She spoke of the "widening gap between leaders and masses" within the Palestinian movement and criticized the ways in which "the nationalist issue has been imposed over social liberation" within women's organizations. She spoke with great concern about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. She concluded: "The Intifada is a starting point. But the liberation of women in a liberation struggle is more complicated than it appears."

This panel raised many important questions about the depth of the contradictions that face women's liberation struggles worldwide. But it also showed women's resistance and hunger for dialogue about freedom.

—Participant



by Mary Jo Grey

In Pakistan, Women Against Rape is waging a war against the increase in the use of sexual violence against women as a tool of political repression, by police and the military. Veena Hayat, a friend of opposition leader and former President Benazir Bhutto, was savagely beaten and assaulted by five masked men who broke into her home. Kursheed Begum was grabbed by police, beaten and raped. Her 16-year-old son was arrested, shackled and tortured—yet never charged. The police are trying to force her to drop charges against them in exchange for her son. Both women refuse to compromise.

Information: Women Living Under Muslim Laws

A woman petty officer is fighting a written warning of "misconduct" from her boss, the U.S. Navy, issued after she was beaten by an ex-boyfriend who broke into her home. In a classic case of "blame the victim," the Navy warned her that "any further deficiencies" in her conduct could result in discharge. At the time of the beating she was refused counseling at the naval base's Family Advocacy Center because it was only for spouses of Navy personnel.

Warriors fight violence

Chicago, Ill.—College women are so fed up with violence against women that a group of women from seven colleges created Campuses Organized Against Rape (COAR). On May 16 COAR sponsored a Take Back The Night march and speakout that brought out about 200 angry women and many men—Black, Latino/a, and Asian, but mostly white, with a strong lesbian and gay presence.

At the rally a white woman declared, "Pro-choice means women deciding what to do with our bodies and lives, including who we will have sex with!" She asked us to imagine life if rape didn't exist—half of our lives would be different, the half that exists at night. She said women could take night classes, ride the subway, and do whatever we wanted without living in fear.

Women at the speakout echoed this desire for a different way of life. One woman said she is tired of clutching her mace and having her heart speed up every time she steps outside at night alone. Another woman asked why a woman's word isn't enough and talked about Anita Hill. Women spoke about how they have been threatened with having their scholarships taken away at De Paul University for organizing against rape—just as vocal feminists from Northwestern University have been investigated and intimidated by the FBI. They demand that this unfreedom we all live under stop.

One woman introduced herself as "a strong, proud Black lesbian warrior!" and said that we must all become warriors to fight against violence at its roots—oppression. She said as long as a Black man, like Rodney King, can be beaten and then find no justice; as long as lesbians and gays can be attacked; women, Jews, Latinos, Asians, all of us will burn by the fire of violence.

One Black man and one white spoke about how Chicago is the same as apartheid South Africa and said that COAR needs to break down the economic and social barriers that divide us by marching on the South Side of Chicago. Another white man designated the conditions women live under as "sexist martial law" and talked about how, under the guise of chivalry, men feel powerful when they walk a woman home at night. He said men should keep the kindness, but get rid of the power trip.

—Sonia

200th Anniversary of:

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman



Mary Wollstonecraft's portrait. Her hat is similar to those worn by French revolutionary women.

This year, 1992, is the 200th anniversary of the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's phenomenal book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In 1792 this partisan of the French Revolution wrote passionately of women's rights and so shook up England that she was denounced as a "philosophizing serpent" and "the hyena in petticoats." Her love of freedom is seen in how she did not separate her demand for liberty for the French masses from her insistence for what was totally unique with her—freedom for women.

In her writings on the French Revolution, she echoed what Marx was to say 52 years later. In 1790 Wollstonecraft challenged class-ridden society: "Though the enemies of the French Revolution despise the idea of the rights of men, yet they are very strenuous to support the rights of nobility; it is therefore evident that they suppose some men to have rights, though not all! The few are entitled to everything, the many, alas! to nothing!" In 1842 Marx expressed this as a generalization and extended "rights" to freedom: "Freedom is so much the essence of man that even its opponents realize it.... No man fights freedom; he fights at most the freedom of others. Every kind of freedom has therefore always existed, only at one time as a special privilege, at another time as a universal right."

When it came to women, Wollstonecraft was determined to make freedom a "universal right" and "to show the wrongs of different classes of women, equally oppressive, though, from the difference of education, necessarily various." She railed against "the peculiar Wrongs of Woman, because they degrade the mind" as well as the body. Her voice rings out as clear today as it did 200 years ago and we, like her, are determined to make freedom real and total.

—Terry Moon

The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya

"It is true that the beginning of the end of Trotskyism did not burst forth openly until the Hitler-Stalin Pact failed to deter Trotsky from continuing to consider Russia 'a workers' state though degenerate' and to call for its defense. Nevertheless, the tensions began in the mid-1930s before the actual split in 1940. Some of us dissented when we saw the Spanish Revolution crushed and asked, 'My heavens, if Stalin's murder of Trotskyists is not merely 'fractional,' doesn't it mean that Stalin is actually preparing to participate in a fully imperialist war in a global context?' That was really the beginning of the end of Trotskyism."

To order your copy of *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya*, send \$9.55 (\$8.50 + \$1.05 postage) per book to News & Letters, 59 E. Van Buren, Room 707, Chicago, IL 60605.

Economic fight or struggle for humanity?

Oakland, Cal.—“American Dream,” as Felix Martin pointed out (News & Letters, May 1992), sees workers more as force than reason. Oddly, intellectuals like the director, Barbara Kopple, gravitate to the economic fight without catching that a struggle for full humanity is on the line. The awakening of that corner of labor in Austin, Minn., gets reduced to losing a fair wage, losing the “American dream.” But every worker could understand what Local P-9 faced, and many threw their support behind P-9.

Curiously, Kopple left out the crippling injuries—severed human flesh and carpal tunnel syndrome—that plagued all of meatpacking as it speeded up production everywhere, nowhere more than at Hormel’s plants. Talk of horrid working conditions were on the lips of every worker in meatpacking. Played down by Kopple were the solidarity strikes, notably at Hormel’s Ottumwa plant where workers walked out, not because they saw P-9 picket lines one morning, but because their own conditions demanded it.

It’s hard to describe the enthusiasm at a rally at Ford Local 600 in Detroit when P-9 members visited during the strike. The many workers there understood this strike couldn’t succeed without rank-and-file to rank-and-file solidarity. And internationally, dockworkers in Spain printed Mike Connolly’s News & Letters article on the P-9 strike, struggles in meatpacking and histori-

cal labor battles against automation. (See “From IBP to Hormel: meatpackers fight companies, union bureaucrats,” N&L, April 10, 1987.)

To contrast, as Felix Martin does, Marx’s recording the Paris Commune to Kopple’s recording the Hormel strike becomes still sharper after we see the camera’s eye trained so long on the “consultant” Ray Rogers. Is the best contribution of the intellectual, allied with the rank and file and ready to charge into the teeth of Reaganism, merely one of tactical genius? Is that role, even in solidarity, merely to exercise a talent for the practical? True genius—by intellectuals and workers alike—can only emerge in this age of engaged in actual and philosophic uprooting of capitalism.

Kopple deserves credit for finding and filming this story (and “Harlan County USA” earlier). But there’s a lesson in the P-9 leadership discarding the industry pattern contract and trying to negotiate a meaningful one for the Austin Hormel local. Here Kopple managed to catch the UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) bureaucrat in charge of killing that strike, Lewie Anderson, uttering the truth: the workers don’t need the bureaucrats. A movie premised on workers not letting anyone do their thinking for them any longer could make history, not just record it.

—Jim Mills

Workshop Talks

(continued from page 1)

of labor that impinged on our daily lives: the attendance policy which began penalizing us after only three days absent and made no provisions for taking sick children to the doctor or for emergencies; the company’s ability to change our hours and shifts with no notice and no time to make child care arrangements; and no limitations on mandatory overtime, also imposed without notice.

Those were the things that were tearing people’s lives and relationships apart. Those were the questions the women spoke about at the union meeting and the reasons why we voted unanimously to turn down the company’s offer and wait to fight for a better contract. One young, Black woman put it succinctly: “We have a life outside this plant.”

Another young, Black woman who works on my line at Helene Curtis decided that she had been a high-speed packer long enough and wanted to be a stock worker, which involves some heavy lifting. When she announced her intentions, she faced the ridicule of our supervisor. Men and women co-workers started talking about how bad lifting is for a woman’s “internal organs.”

I won’t speculate on the men’s motivations, but I know what frightened the women: if one woman proves she can do it, maybe we’ll all have to do it, and we don’t want to. That concern is magnified by the company’s stated intention to impose the team concept on our line and have “everybody learn everything.” But do the other women’s fears mean that one woman shouldn’t try if she wants to?

CHOICE AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

It is on questions like these, questions of individual choice and self-development, that I feel most acutely the need for philosophy—not just any “philosophy,” but Marx’s Marxism. Karl Marx, in his 1844 Humanist Essays, singled out the Man/Woman relationship as integral to alienation and revolution. There he also wrote that: “We should especially avoid re-establishing society, as an abstraction, opposed to the individual. The individual is the social entity.”

Capitalism does exactly what Marx opposed. It establishes itself and its drive for ever more production in total opposition to the individual. Each person must be subordinated to that drive, whether that means abandoning your children or abandoning your ideas, aspirations and emotions. For Marx, on the other hand, the self-development of the individual is the measure of freedom in a new society which only the total uprooting of all of the old relationships can bring about. Working women are reaching for that future.



Members of United Steelworkers Local 5668 were locked out of Ravenswood Aluminum Corp. in W. Va. over 18 months ago after the company declared contract talks stalemated. Despite the hiring of scabs, only 17 of the original 1,700 workers crossed the picket line. The company has dismissed its chief executive and called for new negotiations.

What kinds of deals?

Chicago, Ill.—Labor was dealt another blow in April when the United Auto Workers (UAW) gave in to Caterpillar and directed its members back to work after a six-month-long strike in which the rank and file were again the big losers. What exactly went on between Caterpillar and the UAW “representatives”? What kinds of deals were made?

I was a “part of” negotiations in the meatpacking industry several years ago, and I still didn’t know exactly what kinds of deals were made between company reps and their union counterparts. Why? Even though we were in a room with a table, one side faced the other and the proposals were addressed, there were individual trips to the washroom or “I need some air”—not by the rank-and-file negotiating committee, but by the reps of both the company and the union.

As I sat and watched all our major proposals go out the window, I wondered if the negotiations had already been settled in the washroom. Perhaps this was the way Caterpillar and the UAW reps did it while the rank and file were out on the picket line or at home trying to figure out how to make ends meet on their strike benefits.

It just burns me up when I think about it. The bureaucrats don’t lose even if the rank and file does. Aren’t they drawing a salary no matter what happens during a strike? While they are negotiating away our health benefits, wages and lives, what are they risking?

What is the UAW anyway? A representative of the workers. What kind of representative sells its people short? What kind of union allows its workers to build up an inventory that will only hinder it if a strike is okayed? Only the kind of union that plays the capitalist game on the capitalists’ terms. The capitalists cannot be beaten at their own game.

We are working for our survival, but capital’s survival is dependent on us. Just imagine if all workers decided one day that we are not going to work anymore until we control our lives. Where would capital be then?

We the workers, the rank and file, must take control of our lives and our labor ourselves and not allow these union bureaucrats to burn us any longer. We must have fresh ideas and a new way of thought before we can take on capital—not on their terms, but on ours.

—Martin Almora

Baloney from Oscar Mayer

Editor’s note: The Oscar Mayer meatpacking plant in Chicago announced its permanent closure as of this coming December. Below we print the comments of one long-time Oscar Mayer worker.

Chicago, Ill.—We knew this could happen, but no one thought it would be this soon. We were scheduled to work over Memorial Day weekend, but they cancelled it, saying we needed a stress day off after receiving this news.

Over the last several years Oscar Mayer has been opening these focus plants, which are all non-union, paying workers only \$5-\$6 an hour. They took our jobs out of the plant—the hot dog line, the bacon line—and sent them to the focus plants: small plants where maybe 200 workers work on one product. Because of this process we have gone from 800 to 900 workers at the Chicago plant to now having just over 300. We told the UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers union) to organize the plants, and they didn’t do anything.

All we are left with is negotiating to make sure we have our pensions and whatever severance pay we can get. There are no transfer rights to other plants. The contract is not over until February. What are they going to do with those couple of months of our contract when there are to be no strikes on the part of the union, but no lockouts on the part of the company?

We are organizing ourselves, and not just for the negotiations over pension and severance pay. We say that if Oscar Mayer is taking 800-900 jobs out of Chicago, why should we buy their product? Let them take their meats to the cities where they make it. We are thinking of going to supermarkets and asking people not to buy Oscar Mayer products. If they don’t have any jobs for us in Chicago, we don’t need their products here.

—Long-time Oscar Mayer worker

‘Escaping’ to Mexico

New York, N.Y.—As the rebellion was taking place in Los Angeles, I came upon Business Week (March 16) with its article, “Detroit South.” It reports U.S. and European auto makers have been “escaping” (my word) to Mexico for five years now for the highly “qualified” work force that uses quality teams and produces “quality” made cars, and, since labor is so cheap, U.S. companies will “cut capital costs” by using fewer robots! It is called the “manufacturer’s revolution,” which they want to bring home to U.S. workers. I call it home grown retrogression.

They are investing in a Third World country in the name of competition with Japan, but in reality to bring down the wages and living standards of U.S. workers. According to the writers, the U.S. auto worker makes \$16 an hour; the Mexican, \$10 to \$20 a day. U.S. auto supply workers make \$6 to \$7 an hour compared to their Mexican counterparts, who make \$1 an hour.

The article describes one young Mexican auto worker who lives 40 miles from the plant, takes a one-hour bus ride to and from work, and lives in a hut with no running water or electricity. He is happy to be making a “living.” It made me think of the speed-up and working conditions in U.S. auto plants that did not allow the production of quality cars, safe working conditions and certainly not job security. The desire of a Mexican worker to make contact with U.S. workers becomes extremely important. (See “What is Mexico’s future in face of new world order?” News & Letters, April 1992.)

The attempt to push the U.S. workers back, to negate all their struggles, will not forever go unchallenged. All these fools talking as if they know what is going on in L.A. had better watch out when race and class, Black and white, North and South explode and (as James Baldwin so eloquently spoke) the fire next time.

—Angela Terrano

N.Y. union busting

New York, N.Y.—Members of the Newspaper and Mail Deliverers’ Union went on strike on May 7 against The New York Times and the new owner of two of the Times’ distribution companies. In spite of two court hearings and an injunction, the strike has disrupted the delivery of The New York Times to homes and newsstands in the metropolitan area and parts of the city. Trucks have been firebombed, hijacked or forced into accidents, while the union has faced very severe fines over the disruption of the Times’ delivery systems.

The strike started when the new owner, Arthur E. Imperatore, locked the drivers out following the rejection of his first and only contract offer. Mr. Imperatore, in close consort with the Times, is performing their union busting for them. Using a little known ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, Mr. Imperatore bought the two distribution companies from The New York Times, but not the contracts with the union.

Had the drivers accepted the offer, their salaries would have been slashed by 50% or more. It would have, as well, handed Mr. Imperatore total control of the workplace. Instead the drivers rejected the contract, and the owner hired scabs at one-third pay.

The whole scenario is seen as a smoke screen to keep the Times’ name out of the battle over workplace concessions and accusations of union busting, although everyone knows their goal is to lessen labor costs before opening a new \$450 million state-of-the-art printing plant in New Jersey. After 12 days of delivery disruption, the Times agreed to meet the union to work out a settlement.

—Observer

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From the writings of Raya Dunayevskaya Marxist-Humanist Archives

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Founder of Marxist-Humanism

Editor's note: The following document reflects Raya Dunayevskaya's response to a new stage in world politics brought on by Reagan's bombing of Libya in 1986, at the time News and Letters Committees were in the midst of a series of classes on "Current World Events and the Dialectic Method." Dunayevskaya gave the sixth and final lecture titled "The Trail to the 1980s from the 1880s: Marx's New Moments and Those in Our Age." Below we are publishing excerpts from part I and the concluding part III. The complete text is available in The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, microfilm #11522.

With this bombing of Libya, Reagan Retrogressionism has reached such an abyss that the whole of today's talk is entitled: **Which new beginnings will determine the end—the new developing revolutions or the Reagan counter-revolution and its putrefaction of thought?**

There are two opposing worlds in each country—the rulers and the masses. The Reagan degenerate chauvinistic super-patriotism pollutes our air. Long ago, Samuel Johnson had the right description of such patriotism when he said, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

Just look at the concrete disgusting rationale with which Reagan followed the attack in the Gulf of Sidra with an actual attack on Kadafi's living quarters, killing his 15-month-old infant and severely wounding two others of his children, three and four years old. Eighteen bombers flew from England to drop the bombs. If anyone can be lower as a terrorist than Kadafi, then Rambo-on-the-loose, Ronald Reagan, is the one.

It is this type of pull from the gutter imperialist politics of nuclearly-armed capitalism that makes it important to struggle against all rulers. And it is the enemy at home that Marxist-Humanism must struggle against, not only by being active in all mass movements and by solidarizing with international movements, but by the specificity of a totally opposite philosophy of revolution. The philosophy of classless new human relations is also a force to be projected in our daily lives journalistically as well as philosophically.

As a beginning toward that end, we projected the transformation of News & Letters into a bi-weekly. In order to become fully practiced in responding quickly to current events as they happen, we outlined a series of Workshop/Courses called "Current World Events and the Dialectic Method."

I.

LET'S DIG INTO the Dialectics of the three Marx principles in the context of the new global concrete of these past three months...

1.) Marx's concept of history in the making. That is to say, recording an event both as the masses in motion are shaping and reshaping history and as the Marxist philosophy of revolution practices the Idea as a force, even as action itself is force. First, then, is history in the making.

2.) Inseparable from it is Dialectics. It is not something restricted to any one historic period. The Dialectic Method examines every event in the context of both historic continuity and discontinuity, as well as the perspective for tomorrow.

To put it another way, while there is no substitute for action, action like theory is in itself one-sided. The unity of action and thought is what motivated Marx from the very start when Marx designated his philosophy "a new Humanism" and unfurled a banner not only for the overthrow of capitalism but for the creation of totally new human relations.

Whether an event happened in Marx's lifetime, specifically, his founding of a new continent of thought and revolution in 1844; or whether the event happened in Lenin's time, 1914, and he issued the call for the transformation of an imperialist war into a civil war—what all Marxists singled out from Hegel was the "materialistic" statement that wherever there is life, there is movement, there is the Dialectic.

Marx's transformation of the Hegelian Dialectic from a revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution led him, when the 1848 Revolutions were defeated, to call for "revolution in permanence." The second principle, then, is Dialectics.

3.) The third principle is the relationship of objective to subjective, neither as mere generalization nor something that stops at the first negation—that is, the overthrow of private capitalism-imperialism, the uprooting of capitalism, private or state. Rather, it analyzes the concrete events inseparable from a vision of the future. This isn't something Marx said only in 1844 or 1848. It is something Marx experienced; he lived it. The "new moments" in the very last decade of his life, with his dialectical attitude to the so-called new science of anthropology—i.e., his new appreciation of pre-capitalist society, what we now call the Third World—are proof of this.

We all know what the Communist Manifesto projected as the world outlook of the newly named Communist League: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!" Why, then, don't we remember as well that the Communist Manifesto was practicing Marx's 1844 proclamation of "revolutionary, critical-practical activity" not only against the ruling state-party, but by separating himself from

"the varying existing opposition parties"?

In a word, why don't we remember the battle of ideas in all periods?...

III.

IT IS HIGH TIME to detail Marxist-Humanism's development because what becomes imperative in this crisis-ridden capitalistic-imperialistic world—and that of course includes both nuclear Behemoths—is Marx's multilinear concept of human development, be it of the industrialized world or what he called the pre-capitalist world, and we know as the Third World, as well as the whole concept of organization for that final battle, that would be inseparable from Marx's philosophy of revolution. This of course is what we point to when we say that Marx's new moments make it clear that the 1880s are the trail to the 1980s. But this requires concretization by this new generation. First we broke with all post-Marx Marxists and worked this out explicitly in Chapter 12 of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. The turning point in the global struggle for freedom was the recognition that the Absolute Method is the philosophic ground for the present world struggle for freedom.

In a word, we must face what we consider the burning question of today—**ORGANIZATION AS INSEPARABLE FROM THE IDEA**, i.e., **MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION, vs. THE VISAGE OF HITLER AND THE ONGOING REALITY OF REAGANISM...**

The relationship between the battle of ideas and our actions against the reactionary age we are living in may not seem to be connected with what sounds like such a mystical abstraction as Absolute Method. The truth is that 1953, when the world witnessed the very first ever revolt against totalitarian Communism, was the very period when I broke through on the Absolute Idea. I said that signified that there was a movement from practice as well as from theory, and this involved the whole struggle for total freedom in the specific post-World War II period. That is exactly why, in a similar period of Prussian reaction more than a century ago, Marx called his ideas "a new Humanism." All this we spelled out in our first major theoretic work, *Marxism and Freedom*, which worked out the continuity with Marx's Marxism and the discontinuity which was an actual concretization for our age's battle for freedom. Indeed, the very first chapter ended with a section called "Hegel's Absolutes and Our Age of Absolutes." In a word, Absolute Method, far from being any metaphysical abstraction, is actually the process of concrete dialectical development in each age.

The ceaseless movement of human development, through ever reappearing contradictions, signifies that an end is really the ground for new beginnings. And new beginnings determine the end.

When the turbulent 1960s ended with an aborted revolution, it became clear that Youth activity alone, with its disregard for theory as if it could be "picked up en route," would only end in more and more aborted revolutions. We concretized this in *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*.

To this day, neither post-Marx Marxists nor activist pragmatists have wrestled with the **Dialectics of Organization: Philosophy, the "Party," and Opposite Forms of Organization Born Out of Spontaneity**. That is the topic of my next book. Unfortunately it will take another two years to complete. All I can do here is touch on where I begin—with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, written in that last decade of his life when he experienced all those "new moments."

No Marxists understood fully this critique as it relates to organization, not even Lenin, who achieved the greatest leap on concretizing Marx's analysis of the need to destroy the bourgeois state in his *State and Revolution*, which unfurled the banner for the actual November 1917 Russian Revolution. But insofar as the Party was concerned, he omitted entirely that question of Organization, leaving himself confined within his 1903 concept of the vanguard Party, notwithstanding the changes he introduced in 1905 and 1917, and hailing the spontaneous new forms of organization, like the soviets in 1917.

Rosa Luxemburg, who had made a category of spontaneity, likewise remained "orthodox" on the question of the Party and criticized Lenin only on the point of centralization and decentralization. Who, then, took organizational responsibility for Marx's philosophy, not just of revolution "in general," but specifically the question of what happens after the overthrow of capitalism? What Marx was pointing to concretely was that both those who called themselves Marxists (Eisenachists) and those who were Lassalleans considered that what was of the essence was unity, putting off or "taking for granted" the philosophic ground.

In actuality, what "taking for granted" achieved was to make a principle of the specifically German General Workers Association that was nationalistic, as against the First International Marx headed.

Facing a new stage in world events

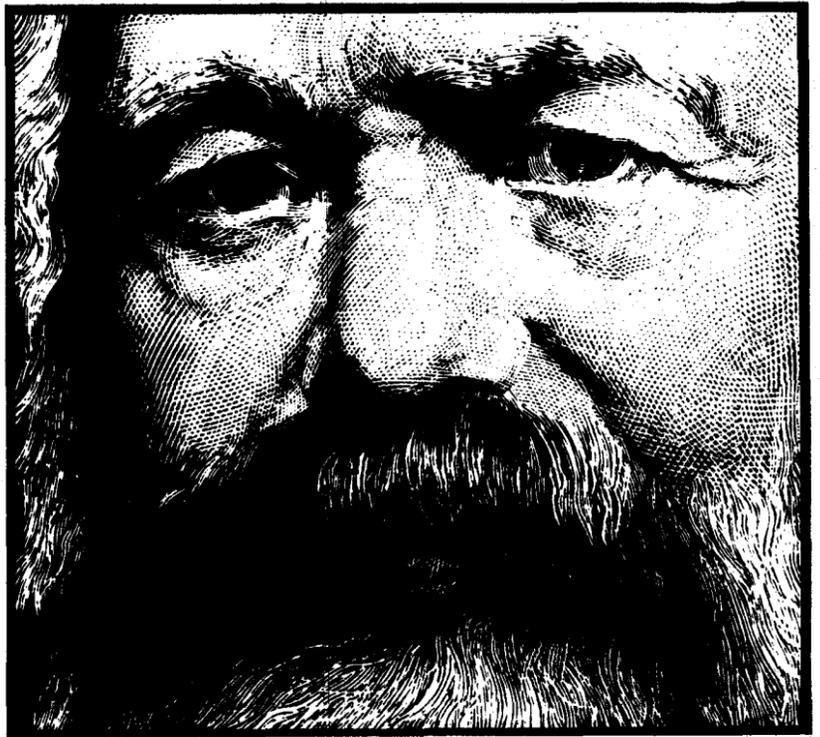
Spontaneity, organization, dialectics

Put differently, what Marx was aiming at in the *Critique* was to tell Marxists they must not forget the Universal of freedom as what happens after overthrow, in their preoccupation with immediate activity, activity, activity. It is true that those last three words were from the 1960s, not from 1875. But the essence of what Marx was aiming for was expressed in that simple word that everyone "took for granted" they understood—labor.

There Marx "repeated" at the very time he completed the French edition of *Capital* what he had been saying on labor since 1844: that labor must not remain alienated, that it must become a total human activity, never separating theory from practice.*

The world in which we live now confronts us with all its counter-revolutionary actions, with the Reagan Retrogressionism on all fronts, including the U.S. itself and its "ideology," which we must never forget that Marx designated as false consciousness. The putrefaction of thought that the Reagan administration is exuding is polluting the air for all.

That makes it all the more imperative to grasp what has happened in this post-World War II period since the movement from practice was so creative as to be a form of theory itself. Let us not forget that a form of theory is not yet philosophy. Rather, it is a challenge to the theoreticians to end the one-sidedness of theory, as practice is challenged to end its one-sidedness, so that theory and practice can create a new unity, the new re-



lationship of practice to theory in order finally to reach the realization of philosophy. This is what Marx was working out in his last decade, after the defeat of the revolutions in his period, and the fact that the 1875 attempts at organization put a priority on the unity rather than the principles which they supposedly "took for granted."

What is an imperative for our age is never to "take for granted" the Marx principles, Marx's Universals, the philosophy of revolution, as the age grapples with its immediates.

New forms of theory that have arisen from the spontaneous mass revolts, with their challenge to the theoreticians, are exactly where Marxist-Humanism started when working out a new newspaper where the production worker became the editor.

News and Letters Committees at the same time assigned the completion of the first major theoretical work, *Marxism and Freedom*, and that it be done by submitting the draft for discussion with workers and Youth. (See especially Chapter 16, "Automation and the New Humanism," as well as the Introduction.) In a word, the combination of worker and intellectual was not limited to the journalistic form, but was for all our major theoretical works in process.

The point is that objectively the new passions and new forces of revolution—whether they be rank-and-file labor, Black, Youth, women's liberation, peasant—are present both as force and as Reason, all aiming to see that the new revolutions are not aborted but create the ground for new human relations.

This is exactly what we are aiming at with what we call organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism. The doors are open, wide open.

April 22, 1986 (Lenin's birthday)

* A conversation with Herbert Marcuse in the late 1970s in a way revealed the whole relevance of that for our age, when he asked me what did I think of that specific paragraph in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

Coming next issue

Report of a Marxist-Humanist tour
of Britain and East Europe

What is the meaning of the Los Angeles rebellion?

(continued from page 1)

ed the venue in the first trial to largely white Simi Valley. Four Black men alleged to have participated in the videotaped beating of a white truck driver, Reginald Denny, on April 29, were arraigned the day before.

With the cynical sense of history and social justice with which Reagan and Bush sought for 12 years to equate affirmative action with "reverse discrimination" against white males, the media replayed the beating of Denny ad nauseum until they believed they had created the perfect counterpoint to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) beating of Rodney King. The beating of Denny became the media-driven symbol of Black "savagery" and urban violence in the American white mind.

It was not until you came down from the police helicopter vantage point of the "big eye in the sky," down to the grassroots level of the Black and Latino communities, that you heard the rush of indictments of "American civilization" which cancel out the brutal symmetry of media "justice" the repeated replaying of the Denny beating was supposed to embed in our minds. You heard of 15-year-old Latasha Harlins, shot in the back of the head last year by a Korean store owner who was given five years probation for involuntary manslaughter. You heard personal accounts of police abuse and harassment of Blacks and Latinos that were universal in scope. You heard historical recollections of state sanctioned violence against African Americans, names like Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Fred Hampton, Michael Stewart, Eleanor Bumpurs, Arthur McDuffie, Latasha Harlins.

And while Black historical recollection stretched even further back to the infamous moment when Chief Justice Taney, ruling in the Dred Scott Decision, articulated the unabashed principle of "American civilization's" attitude towards Black rights—"A black man has no rights that a white man is bound to respect"—the fatal immediacy of 1992 carried its own confirmation of history, recollected or in the making: 60 people lay dead, most of them Black, most killed by the LAPD or National Guard. In the Black mind there is no such contrived media symmetry for 400 years of social injustice.

As the defining moment in the life of American race-class relations in the post-Civil Rights era, the L.A. rebellion, like every popular protest and rebellion marking a new phase of social struggle in this country, also discloses the authoritarian nature of "American democracy." The protest and rebellion of April 29-May 1, in compelling local authorities to transfer their powers to the Federal government, exposed the true instrument of authoritarian rule that the U.S. military is. Indeed, if Bush and Colin Powell demonstrated anything it is that the military occupation of American cities is more or less the same as that of a foreign country.

Which is why the Third World conditions from which the L.A. rebellion arose mark both a discontinuity with the exclusively Black Watts rebellion of 1965 and a parallelism with the phenomenon of recent Third World urban revolts that have erupted in Venezuela, Trinidad, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Brazil and throughout Africa. Such a Third World context suggests that the L.A. rebellion may be as much an extension into the technologically developed West of a Third World phenomenon as the beginning of a new phase of social struggle in the U.S.

LATINO DIMENSION OF THE REVOLT

La migra patrols the streets of Latino neighborhoods rounding up thousands of "illegals" in curfew sweeps and raids. LAPD-INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) collaboration, once banned, is in full force. As of May 19, 829 undocumented people have been deported to Mexico and Central America.

To date, more than 2,000 felony cases have been brought against people arrested during the rebellion. Stories of police brutality during the search of homes and arrests of people have been rampant. One tells of a Black Compton family subjected to the full brunt of LAPD, SWAT and National Guard armed force when more than 225 rounds were fired into their home. Meanwhile, teachers extract information from students and report them to the authorities.

Just as the aerial videotaping of demonstrators made them into telescopic objects of police and media commentators bent on conveying the impersonal image of a "marauding horde," so the press has made the thousands of detainees into a faceless mass and essentially tried their cases in the newspapers. The words "alleged" and "suspected" have virtually disappeared from L.A. Times coverage of judicial proceedings.

Such media accounts are part of the relentless reduction of Blacks and Latinos to the administrative objects of a capitalist system that already marginalizes them in such enclaves as SCLA, an increasingly Latino urban foco in L.A. County that subsists on shortages of everything—grocery stores, banks, health facilities, public transportation, affordable housing, jobs.

Ethnic and class lines often overlap the violent frontline of the police occupation of SCLA. They intertwine those of the criminal justice system to form one big knot of injustice in the mind of the Black community. It was that knot which welled-up from the chest into the throat of Black America and released into a national cry of outrage at the Rodney King verdict.

However, essayist Richard Rodriguez is surely right when he points to the fact that "In the aftermath of the

Rodney King riots, African American newspaper columnists and activists speak of 'black rage.' But in the Los Angeles of 1992 it is crucial to remember that the majority of looters who were arrested have turned out to be Hispanic. The Rodney King riots were appropriately multiracial in this multicultural capital of America." Nevertheless, he adds that "My fear is that multiculturalism is going to trivialize further the distinct predicament of black Americans—most especially the plight of the young black male. It is my belief that there are two stories in American history that are singular and of such extraordinary magnitude that they should never be casually compared to the experiences of other Americans. One is the story of the American Indian; the other is the story of the black slave" (Chicago Tribune, 5-20-92).



1st Marine Battalion part of L.A. occupying force.

BLACK MASSES—TOUCHSTONE OF 'AMERICAN CIVILIZATION'

It was in slave revolts, however, that the African American "was decisive in the course American development followed" (American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard p. 8). For the African American could always expose the fact that it is in the very artifice of American society, its "civilization," that its racist character lay. Which is why that supreme artificer Ronald Reagan took as his "civilizing mission" the rolling back of two decades of civil rights gains, a half century of rights won by labor and the launching of a "legal" assault on women's reproductive rights, seeking thereby to redefine the course of American development in which Black freedom struggles had been the decisive vanguard.

That was symbolized by the display he made of opposing the decision to make Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday. Nor was it lost on the anti-imperialist sentiment of the Black community that Bush chose the Jan. 15 date of the King holiday to launch his imperialist war in the Persian Gulf. In the mind of Black America, the "civilizing mission" of American imperialism in the Third World has always come home to roost on its native racist ground.

In response to the widespread condemnation of the social policies of the Reagan-Bush years, which have been the ideological incubator of urban dislocations and Black frustration of the last decade, the Bush Administration has desperately counter-attacked that the "cause" of the L.A. rebellion lies in the politics and social policies of the 1960s.

Clearly, the events of April 29-May 1 have challenged the very social categories of "American civilization" as being any kind of "democracy" the rest of the world would follow in Bush's "new world order."

Which is why to keep up the hypocrisy that the L.A. rebellion was not political but criminal, while pointing to the political malfeasance of the last 12 years of Reagan-Bush retrogression that helped create the social conditions of the inner cities, is itself a political attack on the Black community. This is the position of Black and liberal leaders who assume the utopian attitude that the crisis of the inner cities can be resolved within the capitalist system.

The obsequious comments of John Mack, president of the L.A. Urban League, and a frequent commentator on television coverage of the rebellion and its aftermath, expresses how out of touch Black leadership is with Black reality. Mack's fear of losing "everything we've worked toward...if people let their basest instincts take over" reveals both the illusory world of "American civilization" the Black bourgeoisie covets and the class chauvinism underlying its rainbow illusions. Indeed, their class instincts are the measure of the ideological distance between them and the masses of Black people. Whether it is the Black observer of the rebellion along

Martin Luther King Blvd. who said that the Rodney King verdict is "a message that will go all around world: if you're a Black man or Black woman in L.A. don't expect justice," or the anonymous Black man in a South Pasadena cafe who upon hearing the verdict threw a table through the window and shouted "The party's over!" the response of the Black masses is in altogether different world than the Black leadership.

The divergent however is not an anomaly, it is an inevitable consequence of nearly three decades of sharp disparity between leaders and masses. In fact, it was the 1965 Watts rebellion that first signalled the gulf that had opened between Black masses and all Black leadership including militants like Stokely Carmichael who called for "Black Power" in the wake of Watts.

The wish to "humanize" the economic underdevelopment of the Black community with so-called "free enterprise zones" or self-managing housing projects, both schemes of HUD secretary Jack Kemp, is the limit beyond which the Black bourgeoisie cannot afford to step. Traditional civil rights leaders and nationalists, whether the Urban League or Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, and their conservative counterparts, faithfully believe that capitalist development of the Black community can be shorn of its exploitative nature. It is a "faith" which threatens to translate Black self-determination into the "fatal vicissitudes" of capitalism.

SPONTANEITY & THE THEORETICAL LIMITS OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

However, along with the "established" Black leadership's "incapacity...to rationalize popular action, that to say their incapacity to see into the reasons for that action," as Frantz Fanon observed, the Left too has been unable to comprehend the revolutionary meaning of mass spontaneity. "The truth is," wrote Rosa Luxemburg in *American Civilization on Trial*, "that radicals are forever blind to the positive, the subjective new dimensions of any spontaneous struggle" (31). This is because "they too are products of the bourgeois society in which they live and thus do not see full the contradictory foundation of American Civilization; its Achilles heel is enclosed not in the general class struggle, but in the specifics of the 'additive' color in these class struggles. Precisely because of that the theory of liberation must be as comprehensive as when Marx first unfurled the banner of Marxism" (26).

Because of the integrality of race and class oppression, the African American, at each turning point in American history, anticipates the next stage of development in capital-labor relations. Thus, far from capitalist economic development having brought the Black masses alongside white America in areas of income and education, or dissolved Black struggles for elementary democratic rights into the general class struggle, the L.A. rebellion illuminates how deep, permanent and insoluble America's social crises. It also illuminates how pyrrhic George Bush's Desert Storm finale to the Cold War actually is.

However, Left theoretical and programmatic responses to the question raised by the L.A. rebellion, "which way out?", remain as constrained within the current ideological confines of bourgeois democracy and the framework of "free market" capitalism as Reaganian conservatives. Harvard Left sociologist Theda Skocpol believes that "What's missing is the coalition to put these ideas together" for an urban agenda (NYT, 5-17-92). University of Chicago sociologist and "democratic socialist" William Julius Wilson seems all too willing, with his policy recommendations, to rationalize the racism of American society: "It is critical that any economic empowerment program for black youth be embedded in broader 'race neutral' policies that draw the support of all segments of the population, not just minorities" (L.A. Times, 5-6-92).

And even when the analysis of such intellectual comes close to the mark, they shy away from drawing the revolutionary conclusions that flow from it. Thus Jacqueline Jones, history professor at Brandeis and author of the recently published *The Dispossessed: America's Underclass From the Civil War to the Present*, writes that "In the last decade, Indiana's steel industry has used technology to upgrade quality and efficiency, in the process cutting its workforce by 50 percent. North Carolina's textile industry, under siege from foreign competitors, has also consolidated and mechanized. Between 1980 and 1988 1,250 textile and apparel plants closed... For displaced workers and their families in Indiana's steel belt and the North Carolina Piedmont region, our economic system produces poverty as naturally as prosperity" (NYT, 5-5-92 my emphasis).

Stopping short at this paraphrase of what Marx called the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation," Prof. Jones' denigration of the L.A. rebellion as the work of "a lawless inner-city minority (sic)" reveals just how sharply she wants to diverge from the inescapable conclusion Marx drew from his analysis of the inexorable law of motion of "our economic system (which) produces poverty as naturally as prosperity." Following Hegel's dialectical principle, Marx articulated the conclusion flowing from the absolute general law, its "historical tendency," as the negation of the negation, i.e., the expropriators are expropriated by the "gravediggers" of "our economic system," the army of the surplus population of the unemployed.

(continued from page 6)

Voices from the L.A. rebellion....

Clearing our heads to determine what to build

by Gene Ford

"To serve, protect, and break a n---'s neck," is the motto of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in 1992. This was seen worldwide in the videotape of the Rodney King beating. This beating has been confirmed "law" by the "Not Guilty" verdict given by the all white Simi Valley jury to the four white police officers, as if they were just doing their job. The reality is as the Black film director Spike Lee stated: "The day after the Rodney King verdict, a white policeman in South Africa was sentenced to hang for killing blacks.... I never thought I'd see the day when South Africa was ahead of the United States as far as human rights was concerned."

The Rodney King trial, which sparked the revolt in L.A., cannot be separated from the Latasha Harlins case where Korean merchant Soon Ja Du was given probation for the murder of 15-year-old Harlins by Judge Warren in Compton. We saw Korean merchants singled out for attack in the revolt because of the type of insensitivity they showed in their stores towards Blacks, under this alienated capitalist system. This system induces these two violent acts of murder and attempted murder against the Black community.

Now four Black youth have been arrested for the beating of a white truck driver, Reginald Denny, and these youth have been charged with attempted murder, robbery, kidnapping, torture, and a federal charge of interfering with interstate commerce. They face life imprisonment.

TWO SEPARATE REALITIES

White America, with lily-white law-and-order communities such as Simi Valley, lives in a separate reality from Black America's South Central L.A., where the revolt began. Two separate realities, worlds apart. How else could this jury in the King trial, or this judge in the Harlins case, come back with verdicts that shocked the world, that sparked such outrage?

These verdicts reflect a segregationist white mentality of the 1990s that is entrenched in the system. That is what is under attack in these many revolts and fires that have taken place, and which have brought Blacks, Latinos, whites, and some Asians into the streets in protest against this mentality of injustice.

"It is as if time slowed down," stated a Black worker about the revolt, "as if the day would never end. It's what they say about time changes during revolution. I am glad a lot of these businesses were burned out. It was like a noose around our necks, the way some of these merchants treated us in the Black community. And I ain't about to help them clean up their mess. They should pay us to clean it up."

Another Black man shouted at the National Guard to get out of our community; you and the police have destroyed the Black community, you created this looting and burning, not the gangs." There was outrage in the

Black community over the curfew being put in place from dusk to dawn and the fact that the National Guard and Marines were brought in to help the LAPD thugs to restore "order": 13,000 law enforcers in all.

JUSTICE FROM GRASSROOTS

For many during this revolt there was a sense of true justice from the grassroots. One brother said: "Today people are friendly and open, people I have never seen before talk to you like they have known you all their lives. A cloud has been lifted from our heads, a weight of burden off our shoulders. Now we feel respect and a sense of power/freedom."

These old buck-shaking politicians and preachers, they don't speak for the youth that sparked this revolt. The youth aren't apologizing. They call it a war on the police, "187," the number in the state penal code for homicide. "Why should we apologize for this looting and burning? We have been robbed, this is our 40 acres and a mule; it's mine."

One Black youth, a member of the Crips gang, stated on ABC-TV's "Nightline" show that "Rodney King was the spark that lit the fire but this ain't about Rodney King. The gangs are not the main ones looting. It's families, women and children. We have been taken advantage of by the police, beaten and slapped around for years. Now it's our time to get even with the pigs, that's who we want. That's what this is about."

While the established Black leadership is afraid of this type of talk, the main reason is because these elected politicians are not going to break from this system. They will never condemn the police system that is being imposed by the state which they really represent, or

break from the state's mentality of white racist law and order. There is a big gap between the Black youth, the "baby locs" on the streets, and this system of "law and order."

(continued on page 7)

Meaning of L.A. rebellion

(continued from page 5)

The L.A. rebellion broke onto an ideological landscape of rank retrogressionism this U.S. election year, evoking its own symbolism, speaking its own language in the vocabulary of what Marx called "new passions and new forces for the reconstruction of society." The revolutionary reason it has elicited from the masses haunts the powers that be as much as the spectre of new rebellions. Yet, as Johnnie Tillman-Blackston, a Black laundry worker in Watts, said, "They (politicians) come to the wartorn area, they claim to see what can be done and nothin's changed since 1965. It's all based on a lot of lies and what looks good on TV and what looks good when you read it in the newspaper. Nobody really takes a good look at what happened and why it happened.... I think the riots sent out the right message, but I don't think the folks are comprehending the message.... Those are the people who are in power. I don't think they're quite ready yet" (L.A. Times, 5-13-92).

WHICH WAY OUT? IN PHILOSOPHY AND IN PRACTICE

Black political leaders, traditional and Left, lack political understanding of the rebellion and its causes because they lack philosophic understanding of its inherent dialectic of liberation. The problem of political direction will only be overcome if the L.A. rebellion has also liberated the theoretical perspectives and categories of revolutionaries genuinely seeking to comprehend the nature of the social crisis and the praxis necessary to transform it. Otherwise, today's Black politics threaten to deceive the social consciousness and insights of the Black masses, exhausting them in a state of permanent rebellion, rather than providing the philosophic ground to become a state of revolution in permanence.

As Black socialist feminist Barbara Smith contends, "Above all, the events in Los Angeles have made it perfectly obvious why we need a revolution in this country. Nothing short of a revolution will work" (The Guardian, 5-13-92). She also underscores the "responsibility of Black activists, radicals and socialists to create vibrant new leadership that offers a real alternative to the tired civil rights establishment."

The forms of organization which emerge from spontaneity and suited to our times may not yet have appeared. However, there is no doubt that the organization of thought, of a new social consciousness, is in the process of formation. The L.A. rebellion is a manifestation of that, and proof that the consciousness of the Black and Latino masses is no longer to be found where the Black and Latino leadership thought it was. Their consciousness has led them, if not yet to the creation of a new social existence for themselves, then surely to begin the uprooting of the old one which oppresses them.

The problem is that the new social consciousness reflected in the historic mass activity of the L.A. rebellion and its national ramifications risks expending itself at the stage of first negation, i.e., striking out at the oppression of existing society, without a vision of the new social reality with which to replace it, i.e., the positive motion of the second negation. This leads to the diversion of social movements into the self-limiting channels of old political parties, personalities and programs that have assumed new forms of existence under the incubus of Reaganism.

The inherent humanism of social rebellion makes it imperative that there "be an idea of man and the future of humanity," as Fanon wrote, otherwise rebellion leads up a blind alley. Which is why the crucial question before the Left is how does the dialectic of Marx's philosophy of revolution, at the present historic moment, determine a very different theoretical and organizational life for itself than the one that has collapsed or otherwise been discredited in our epoch. Indeed, can the working out of the absolute opposite of this exploitative society, which Marxist-Humanism contends is revolutionary, Black and ongoing, succeed without there being an "idea of the future of humanity" which only a philosophy of human liberation can articulate and make practicable?

Today, the crisis and breakdown of American capitalism has again brought the Black masses to the point of social rebellion, outside the confines of any political parties or personalities. Lest the Left once again shift the theoretical burden of working out a philosophy of revolution onto the backs of the masses, confronting the question, which way out from under American authoritarian capitalism, remains the urgent philosophic task history has assigned us.

That presently there has been but the barest opposition to the authoritarian rule of George Bush in the aftermath of the L.A. rebellion must set the first and immediate task before the movement. Which is why the present moment calls on us to defend in the press, at public meetings and in all political forums the ground that can, for now, no longer be held in the streets.

May 25, 1992



Seventeen-year-old Manual Arts H.S. student Octavio Sandoval: "I got bunk beds for my little brother and sister, and a bed for myself because I sleep on the floor. I felt I was doing something good for my family."

The Black dimension as revolutionary and ongoing

American Civilization On Trial Black Masses as Vanguard

Published first in May, 1963, and in new editions with new introductions in August, 1963, 1970 and 1983, this pamphlet is essential for understanding past history and history-in-the-making.

● The two-way road between the U.S. and Africa

"...what was won through the last two decades was inseparable from the intense new forms of revolt. The turbulent 1960s witnessed the birth of a whole Third World, central to which was the Black Revolution both in the U.S. and Africa. Secondly, inseparable from and simultaneous with that, was the Marxist-Humanist banner that American Civilization on Trial raised in the context of the whole 200-year history of the U.S., whose civilization had been put on trial and found guilty. In a word, to separate a philosophy of liberation from the struggle for freedom is to doom us to yet one more unfinished revolution such as has characterized the U.S. from its birth...."

● Abolitionism: a new dimension of American character

"The vanguard role of the Negro in the struggle for freedom helped bring onto the historic stage the most extraordinary of all phenomena of American Civilization: New England Abolitionism.... These New England Abolitionists added a new dimension to the word, intellectual, for these were intellectuals, whose intellectual, social and political creativity was the expression of precise social forces. They gloried in being 'the means' by which a direct social movement expressed itself, the movement of slaves and free Negroes for total freedom."

● 'The Negro as touchstone of history'

"Rip Van Winkle awoke after twenty years; the old radicals sleep on 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, as they did at the outbreak of the Civil War when Marx considered their high-sounding 'Marxist' opposition to wage slavery 'as well as' chattel slavery as no more than escapism from reality.... In a word, they too are products of the bourgeois society in which they live and thus do not see in full the contradictory foundation of American Civilization; its Achilles heel is enclosed not in the 'general' class struggle, but in the specifics of the 'additive' of color in these class struggles. Precisely because of this the theory of liberation must be as comprehensive as when Marx first unfurled the banner of Humanism."

● The Reason of the Freedom Now movement

"...the Freedom NOW movement compelled the Kennedy Administration to admit a 'rising tide of discontent' and execute an about-face with the introduction of a civil rights bill.... This has brought the movement to the crossroads. Though it is impossible to stop the momentum of the Negro struggle, its forward development can be impeded if the underlying philosophy for total freedom is in any way compromised."

To order American Civilization on Trial

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Black/Red View

What's next in thought?

Los Angeles Voices...

(continued from page 6)

by John Alan

The spontaneous rebellion in South Central Los Angeles a month ago, caused by the infamous, racist Rodney King verdict, has now been shifted to a political battle as conservatives and liberals maneuver to influence the national consciousness. The Republicans blame the revolt on lack of "law and order" "family values." The Democrats are less abstract and would ward off revolts by the African-American and World immigrants by reviving President Johnson's "great society" social programs.

UNITING THE ABSOLUTE CHALLENGE

Neither of these political "solutions" contain the best movement toward the elimination of racism and sexism in any fundamental way, which is the real foundation of American civilization. Instead, they defend that foundation in their own way.

The revolt in South Central Los Angeles has issued an absolute challenge to the foundation of American civilization.

It is imperative, at this moment, that this absolute challenge by the people of South Central Los Angeles be muted in the darkness of conservative abstractions about "law and order" or by the false hope of social programs.

The South Central revolt is not an isolated incident; it has historical roots and is integral to an ongoing movement to finish the unfinished American revolution.

In 1963, when hundreds of thousands of people were demonstrating for Black civil rights, the editorial board of *Jews & Letters* published *American Civilization Trial* (ACOT), a history of the Black struggle in America from before the Civil War to the early 1960s. The principal author was Raya Dunayevskaya, Chairman of the National Editorial Board, who wrote a preface to ACOT, for *N&L* (May, 1963).

Her analysis there illuminates the dialectic of liberation inherent in today's South Central uprisings. What she emphasized was the fact that ACOT was a "radical departure" from all other studies—bourgeois or radical—because it revealed that Black Americans were subjects, not objects, in the mainstream of American history. The "touchstone of American civilization," exposing the "class-ridden, color conscious, defaced civilization which has an ever expanding frontier but no unifying philosophy."

Her analysis of America's Black dimension goes beyond exposing the lie of American democracy. The Black dimension is shown as the creative force with a dialectical relationship to struggles of Third World people and U.S. and world labor. Every "new period of their history is a period of great clarification in thought."

Dunayevskaya concluded by stating that ACOT was a "finished work," but a contribution to a dialogue with other freedom fighters—a dialogue which refuses to separate theory from practice and practice from theory.

ry for only in their unity "can all man's innate talents first develop and gain a new dimension that puts an end once and for all to his pre-history in class societies."

UNITING THEORY AND PRACTICE

The challenge coming out of South Central Los Angeles is to forge a new unity of theory and practice, a unity which can only happen when the movement from theory to practice joins the movement from practice to theory. Dunayevskaya saw this as a process in which the theorist was directly involved. She often called this the "organization of thought."

The crucialness of the organization of thought was what Dunayevskaya was emphasizing in her *N&L* column in the wake of the 1965 Watts revolt. There she wrote: "The point at issue now is not so much: what is next in activity, but what is next in thought. Without being able to make what philosophers call a category out of their experience, that is to say, to be able to conclude that it is not just an experience, but a stage in cognition, in ideas, the experience itself will not become part of the emerging revolution either in fact or thought."

Of course the South Central ghetto/barrio revolt is not 1965 Watts replayed. But making a category of this experience is just as crucial today. American Civilization has been newly placed on trial.



Berkeley High School students walked out in aftermath of Rodney King verdict.

A Black worker stated that, "We must continue this discussion on what happened, to make sure that whatever comes out of this revolt not be lost, and that this movement continues in some kind of organizational form."

Something was in the air, even before the revolt. A day before the King verdict, peace was declared among the gangs in Watts. The Crips and Bloods, who had been at war for 20 years, were now hugging each other and crying because of the years that had passed and for the dead homies lost. Brothers that knew each other from school growing up, but were unable to visit each other as friends because of the division of a street or railroad track that divides these "hoods," now were at peace so the youth, the "baby locs," can live, or their children can live past the age of 15.

The police are attempting to destroy this peace because they see it as a threat to their power. To destroy the division among Black youth, you can call it peace, but power is what it adds up to and that is the only way to have peace: through power. And there are many who will attempt to control and manipulate this power or unity as Black people.

What we have to recognize is that we "destroyed" in some form what we were against, incompletely of course, but our voice was heard, although not understood. Now we must clear our heads to determine what to build to replace what we are against.

This is not so clear, and is yet to be worked out. In other words, the time is now to confront these questions, before the revolution. Revolution cannot be planned from above or built on conspiracy from below, but is integral to the movement of the Idea of Freedom to reach Freedom in life.

They still don't get it

The building that houses my mother's real estate business was burnt on Thursday. But it seems to me that certain businesses were singled out for the burning, mainly those that are part of the corporate structure. In the Crenshaw/Leimert area, businesses marked "Black owned" were mostly untouched. People knew what they were doing. I never thought I'd hear on TV all the loaded racial language they were using; they used every word but "n-----." My dad asked me if I was going to go help in the cleanup. I said I wanted to try and find a demonstration.

I went out after the curfew. It was my way of saying, "You're not going to make me change my lifestyle." There were tanks on the Harbor Freeway. I've tried to discuss this with my children; ever since they were in kindergarten I've told them that the policeman was not their friend. In four years my oldest son will be driving a car and could become a Rodney King. This is not the kind of world I want to bring my kids up in. It was not just Blacks or gangs looting, but people out of desperation. But the upper classes still don't get it. —Angela

Protests from across the continent...

Toronto

A reporter, who happened to be with 25 police officers when the news came of the acquittal of the four cops who beat Rodney King, writes that there were spontaneous cheers and applause. The scene was not Los Angeles, however, it was Toronto, Ontario in Canada.

Toronto Blacks have every reason to understand the meaning of the Ventura County verdict. Police harassment here is an everyday reality. Both the Mayor of the City of Toronto and the Chairman of Metropolitan Toronto have expressed their racist belief that Black youth are dangerous and need to be handled differently. Metropolitan police have shot nine unarmed Blacks in the last four years resulting in serious injury and three deaths. All cases have resulted in dropped charges or acquittals of the police.

It was therefore logical for the Black Action Defense Committee to plan a protest of the L.A. acquittals in front of the U.S. Consulate for May 4. In the early morning hours of Saturday, May 2, a Toronto undercover officer shot and killed 22-year-old Raymond Lawrence, a recent immigrant from Jamaica. Police claimed Lawrence was dealing drugs and armed with a gun, but few are left in the Black community who give credence to police excuses for shooting and killing their children.

Against this background, the rally in front of the consulate on May 4 drew more than a thousand anti-police but peaceful demonstrators, where speakers denounced the racist state violence against Blacks in L.A. to Toronto. At the close of the rally the crowd spontaneously marched to the city's major intersection where it "sat in" for another round of anti-police speeches. They then marched to Toronto City Hall where the City Council was supposed to be in session. The march arrived there to find the Council in session at its dinner break and the building completely sealed off and defended by mounted police officers. Some of the demonstrators then began to throw objects at the police and City Hall windows at which time the mounted police forced the rally to disband. However, instead of disbanding, the march proceeded toward Yonge Street where anger erupted into a wholesale destruction of store windows along Toronto's main commercial drag.

What media and politicians have come to call a "riot

caused by hooligans" was in reality an expression of the slogan: "No justice, no peace!" Participants in the rally and march and rebellion on Yonge Street were of all ages and races, and were united by a common passion to end the racism that is endemic in the criminal justice system and to oppose governments' self-defeating economic policies that are pauperizing Blacks, youth and other entire segments of the population. Even when its anger boiled over into the smashing of store windows, the demonstration maintained a discipline and political purpose.

In the wake of May 4 all levels of government have reacted with studies, investigations and promises of new programs to address "the underlying causes" (the same governments that refuse to characterize the rebellion as anything more than a criminal riot). Such efforts, because they do not recognize the need to humanize the entire racist/sexist/capitalist structure of Canadian society, are doomed from the start. —Participant

Minneapolis

Some 6,000 people rallied at the Government Center in downtown Minneapolis, Minn. following a march from Urban League headquarters. The crowd was extremely diverse with a significant presence of Southeast Asians, Indians, gays and lesbians and disabled people. The Southeast Asian community here has experienced numerous instances of police brutality. Speakers at the rally were very clear in pointing out how abuse of power by the police doesn't only happen in L.A. It's a part of life for people of color in this community as well.

People were vocal on the march, expressing their outrage and demands for peace and justice. Signs read, "No justice, just us," and "The rich have been looting America for years." March organizers refused police "protection" and instead called on gang members to do security.

Though this march was a tremendous expression of solidarity with others around the country calling for an end to racism, some local media chose to focus on the few instances of looting that occurred as the march entered downtown and passed stores like Saks Fifth Avenue. This is just another example of how the media perpetuates racism. My response was, why not loot Saks? Looting is a natural response of people who could never afford to shop there, but have been taught to want all

those things that a store like Saks represents.

There is a depth in discussions about searching for solutions to the situation we are in that I did not feel was present during the war in the Persian Gulf. I have heard callers on our public and community radio stations talking about the racist system we live in and the responsibility of the government, and yes, even capitalism, for bringing about the current crisis.

Rallies have also taken place in St. Cloud and Duluth. I only hope that the power in so many people coming together who hunger for change, that was represented by this march, can be turned into something more than a trip to the voting booth. We need to seize this opportunity to figure out our real solutions to racism and poverty. —Marge

San Francisco

On May 1, I was arrested and detained for 38 hours along with over 650 others under San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan's suspension of the right to assemble. A rally had been called for 7:00 p.m. at 24th and Mission Streets. At 6:45, the police announced that the demonstration (which was just a bunch of people standing around) had been declared an unlawful assembly. They told people to cross the street to the other corner. A few minutes later they announced that the corner was an unlawful assembly and the police sealed both ends of the block and arrested everyone on the block. They repeated this action block by block for the rest of the night.

Many of the people arrested were Mexicans and Central Americans who live in the neighborhood who had just stepped out of a restaurant to see what was happening, and some who were just waiting for a bus. Some were shipped off to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, perhaps to be deported or harassed.

These martial law police sweeps continued. The next week a rally was held to protest the mayor's and police actions. Over 150 protesters were rounded up there. There's a lot of talk about this suspension of the Constitution. The outrage has become so great that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors fired the Chief of Police with hardly a whimper from the mayor when the two were like Batman and Robin the week before.

—Tom Parsons

SPONTANEITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND ORGANIZATION; ON THE LOS ANGELES REBELLION

A friend said that the riots renewed his faith that people wouldn't just be pushed around, and that's what the experts aren't saying about the contagious spread of this across the country. It wasn't a breakdown of order that people took advantage of; people got tired of being pushed around in every respect. When Los Angeles declared that the limit had been reached, people elsewhere enthusiastically discovered that people don't just stand aside and let things happen, and that necessarily meant not standing aside. The experts are right: much of this was not about racist police brutality in the strictest sense; it was about that and much more.

The government isn't going to forget this quickly, and popular consciousness hasn't definitively resolved from what I've seen. This "cleanup" cannot hope to restore a previously beautiful surface now that the organization of appearance has been blown, and if that means the "cleanup" will have to go further, it's more likely to mean a not-very-pretty Federal Emergency Management of Aesthetics than actual change.

Subscriber
Illinois

The Los Angeles uprising brought home for me the importance of a philosophy of revolution such as *News & Letters* always stresses. I'd never seen such a spontaneous upsurge before—it made me understand the concept of spontaneity for the first time, but also made me understand how spontaneity alone isn't enough. The rebellion reflected capitalist society at an extreme, with people risking their lives for a TV set or a pair of shoes. It showed me that if people really worked out what they wanted (i.e., freedom), they could get it.

Gwynne
Los Angeles

The spark for the Los Angeles riot was the Rodney King verdict. But there was more to it. What kind of answer can capitalism give to the youth in Los Angeles and everywhere else when there's no need for their labor? What solution does the system have to the crises they live? Marx said no prophet can see the future totally, but he did see the nonviability of capitalism, now played out in Los Angeles. I wonder if those youth can see as well that production and the population are exploiting nature to the point where the ecology is being damaged beyond repair?

Retired Black worker
Oakland

Many German people under Hitler had to be willfully blind to ignore the horrible reality of what was happening to the Jews in Germany. For those who may have found that hard to believe, take a look at the Rodney King verdict. The horror of racism is its power to dehumanize other human beings—and in the U.S. we have reached a horrible new depth of dehumanization that is not at all limited to jurors in Simi Valley.

World War II veteran
Detroit

When I first heard the verdict, I was at work, cleaning someone's house. When I got home, I wanted to do something, so I called up a few friends and said, "Let's make some signs and go demonstrate at the corner of Indian Hill and Arrow," which is where we held our protests during the Gulf War. I showed up there first, and then a few friends, and then a few college students came when they saw us, and then some more—and by that evening there was a crowd of 500 protesters on all four corners of the intersection, who then marched to the front of the Police Department nearby.

I was so angry at the verdict; it felt to me like another lynching. There's no justice for people of color and the poor. The police treat us Mexicans like we're just scum. And then Patrick Buchanan spewed more of his venom, blaming immigrants from Mexico for causing all the problems in L.A. On Spanish-language TV here, someone called him what he is: "an enemy of the people."

Chicana working-class mother
Pomona, Calif.

My heart throbs for the people in L.A. The U.S. is so separate and divided. When I see that racism is still happening today, I think, did we make a difference back in the 1960's? I think we have lost touch with what we were supposed to do. The 1980's were the "me" era. But now we're picking up where we left off in the 1960's.

Black woman office worker
Chicago

Middle-class and bourgeois America needed to view the L.A. rebellion as fragmented: the good citizens venting rage at the verdict in the trial of four cops on police brutality charges, the "thugs and hoodlums" who did the things they fear most. It was an expression used by L.A. Mayor Bradley and President Bush. With it they brought the full force of the state onto the scene. With apology to Fanon, revolution is not the untidy affirmation of middle-class values.

It is impossible to return to the '60's as some '60's movement participants, now mayors and state officials, would like. Those who invoke the civil rights movement's non-violence should know that it is one thing when used by a movement facing the state and quite another when representatives of the state call for, in the same breath, non-violence and "law and order at all costs."

Angela Terrano
New York

I am white, 38 years old, and agree with the Blacks about the Rodney King verdict. How could a jury acquit those policemen? Why are these men above the law? We need to come together as human beings, not by our races, but by the oppression we all suffer from. All people must come together to stand against what is happening to all of us. But we little people aren't each others' enemies! We're all the same and it is a shame the fat cats can keep us apart, because together we could make them fall. We all need to stand together because we all are oppressed. And there are definitely more of us than those damn politicians. I hope its not going to cause another civil war, because I'm on the oppressed side and I know many or all of the readers feel the same. I want every person to have a chance.

Lynn
Oklahoma

I support the L.A. rebellion because it shows that the spirit of rebellion is alive in people. If the Supreme Court overturns women's right to a legal abortion, I would be out in the streets smashing windows, too.

Feminist
Chicago

Two well-known gangs in L.A.—the "Bloods" and the "Crips"—came out with a statement after the rebellion saying that they were going to end the warfare between themselves and call for a new war, not across racial lines but across other lines—against the police. That's a very important distinction. It says something about the idea of "Other," how they used to find their identity and identify themselves against gang rivalries. Now they seem to be expressing

THE TEST OF OBJECTIVE EVENTS

The events in Los Angeles that erupted on April 29, in my view, caught the stride of N&L—not the other way around. What erupted was anticipated in the issues that preceded, especially Raya Dunayevskaya's through the decades insisting that the Black revolt was revolutionary and ongoing, even when the rest of the world didn't see it. The selection of her writing on "racism" for that issue proves my point.

Construction worker
Los Angeles

I just received this month's issue of *News and Letters*. This has to be the only organization that can be caught in the middle of a press run by a new development and offer relevance by printing the articles that were intended before it happened.

T.C.
Downstate Illinois

Readers' Views

a new definition of Self and Other. A lot of gang members were born in the generation after the Watts Rebellion, growing up and experiencing entirely the ghetto. But after the Rodney King verdict, a lot are not thinking about the issues the way they did before.

Asian-American
Oakland

One positive element that has arisen out of the rebellion in L.A. is the level of discussion among Blacks. Illusions of an outside savior are being replaced with the reach for a true alternative to today's retrogressive way of life.

Maurice
Los Angeles

The money Bush has promised South Central L.A. will not rebuild our city. We need ideas, to speak philosophically and creatively about Black's role in this society. The work starts with us.

Black worker,
witness to 1965 Watts revolt
Los Angeles



SUPPORT
HAITIAN
REFUGEES

On April 14 a federal appeals court in New York refused to stay a lower court order allowing 3,300 Haitian refugees, incarcerated at Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba, to speak with lawyers before being forcibly returned home. The full appeal will be heard in May. In granting the order, Eastern District Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. said the refugees "are isolated from the world and treated in a manner worse...than a criminal defendant. They are defenseless against any abuse, exploitation or neglect to which the officials at Guantanamo may subject them."

In a quintessential case of blaming the victim, the government lawyers argued for a stay on the grounds that granting the refugees even the most meager rights is dangerous because it encourages more Haitians to flee "in unseaworthy boats." The government admitted that if the stay were granted, the Haitians would be returned immediately, before the appeal could be heard, and asked the court to "send a message."

The government has already returned some 9,500 of about 16,464 refugees picked up by the Coast Guard since the Sept. 30 coup against President Aristide. The courts are unlikely to force the government to grant them asylum because the Supreme Court has already approved their general procedures.

Anne Jaclard
New York

POLL TAX REVOLT

It is the effects of the retrograde tax that I wish to draw the attention of your readers. Masses of ordinary working-class people just refused to pay an organization was formed, the Ant Tax Union. The man who became chairman, Tommy Sheridan, is at this serving six months in Saughton Jail inburgh for defending the poor.

A barbarous law—The Debtors Land Act—is used to seize the house furnishings of the debtor. It is also to arrest workers' wages and any accounts. Most people were unaware that such draconian law existed, now being rigorously applied. A number of people in their absence had a summary warrant granted against them in the courts which means the sheriff officers can legally seize belongings. The word goes out this is about to take place. By numbers the people prevent the sheriff officers from carrying out this deplorable action.

We carry on the struggle. We beat the poll tax. It is to be repeated next year. From what we have read the new proposals, as Robert Burns it, "An 'forward tho' I canna see guess an' fear!"

Bill John
Scot

JAPAN BASHING

A friend of mine in California was worried and upset about the negative attitude towards the Japanese people these days that she phoned me to about it and then sent two articles. One was about a man in Camarillo, California, stabbed to death after threatening his life. The other was about the Asian Americans suffer discrimination in employment. She said that on I Harbor Day she was afraid to go out her house and that it had not been this ten years ago when she came to U.S. I told her the Japanese are blamed for the U.S. economic problem and that ten years ago there were "scapegoats"—like the "Communists" I'm sending her some copies of *N&L* she can see the real reasons for "Japan bashing."

SI
New



ELECTION
IN THE
PHILIPPINES

The Philippine election campaign taken place in the shadow of the going near civil war in the rural areas—17 police officers died in a battle with the New Peoples' Army in Cagayan, the birthplace of the 23-year-old insurgency, the day before the 11 vote. Miriam Defensor Santiago—only one to dare to talk about issues of direct concern to women and youth such as support for reproductive rights—shocked many by running victoriously even with Corazon Aquino's hand-picked successor, Fidel Ramos, who led the counter-insurgency effort until Ferdinand Marcos until his overthrow by the People Power rebellion in 1986.

Santiago had led the opinion poll at least a year leading up to the elections, but none of the experts believe she had a real chance to win because she lacked the political machine to deliver the votes, often openly bought, especially in the rural areas. But millions of Filipinos, including masses in the urban independent "cause-oriented" groups which were instrumental in overthrowing the Marcos regime, are still looking to realize the revolution's promise, have apparently thought otherwise.

Victor
New

Worker
California

THE MARXIST-HUMANIST THEORY OF STATE-CAPITALISM

In this period of senile, degenerate capitalist decline when revolts abound, when the only business that seems to be thriving are pawn shops, and even the "Soviet" rulers had to jettison their "Communist" ideology in order to restructure that state-capitalist reality under the guise of "free market" capitalism, the importance of the News & Letters publication, **The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism** cannot be overly stressed. It reveals that the reality of life and labor in Russia is state-capitalist and is not just a Russian, but a world phenomenon, the study of which is crucial to the philosophic comprehension of today's global reality. The philosophic comprehension would be incomplete without seeing the relationship of Raya Dunayevskaya's theory of state-capitalism to her epochal philosophic breakthrough in 1953 and her development of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, which this book traces.

Dale
Los Angeles

When you read about the starvation wages Russian workers are getting, and see on TV orphanages where children are left because their mothers can no longer afford to feed them, you wonder about this "transition" to private capitalism and how many lives it will cost. Then I started reading Dunaayevskaya's description of the famine in Russia in the early 1930s as Stalin forced state-capitalism upon the Russian peasantry. Capitalism, whether in its private or state form, seems to find so many ways of oppressing and even killing us.

Internationalist
Chicago

The new book on state-capitalist theory is very timely. In the past few years I think there has been a certain tendency to take that theory too much for granted, as if it were fixed and settled. On the contrary, it needs continuous development, both because it remains very much a minority viewpoint, even in the anti-Stalinist Left, and because of the changing nature of state-capitalism itself—especially with the changes sweeping what is now the "Commonwealth of

Independent States," which, tremendous as they are, leave the basic class relations intact.

Richard Bunting
England

The new book on state-capitalism gives me a different view of Marxist-Humanism. Marxist-Humanists place so much emphasis on philosophy and dialectics that I often asked myself, what about the analysis of the concrete facts of reality? I was amazed to discover how detailed and clear are Dunayevskaya's economic analyses of capitalist production.

T.B.C.
Chicago

WHERE IS RUSSIA GOING?

I enjoyed reading the January-February issue that contained the article, "Does the Collapse of the U.S.S.R. Reveal to the U.S. Its Own Future?" While many Americans have been gloating over the fact that the Communist regime in the former U.S.S.R. has collapsed, what they fail to realize is that the U.S. is heading for major economic depression which could easily threaten the stability, if not the inherent viability, of our present form of government and the so-called "democratic" process. Simply put, the U.S.'s current political-economic system is not satisfying the basic needs of the people, largely because of the vast waste and corruption which our present form of "largely accountable to no one" government has inflicted upon us.

P.S.
Atlanta, Georgia

It is difficult at present to publish any serious literature here since the market is filled with waves of erotica, mystery and detective stories. I suspect it is some sort of escape for ordinary people. They do not want to return to neo-Stalinism and are angry at the same time with Yeltsin capitalism. The only channel for most of them is religion and this sort of literature. The real situation is that the old neo-Stalinist nomenclatura

and their supporters did not go away. They occupy many decision-making positions backstage and often manipulate political figures. They plunder and try to use the present complicated atmosphere to construct some sort of comprador "third world" society.

Subscriber
Russia

On February 10, 1992, two Moscow anarchists were sentenced to three years of imprisonment for resisting a brutal attack from two KGB agents in civilian clothes. The same day, a spontaneous demonstration of anarchists took place in the centre of the city—protesters blocked the traffic on Gorky Street. Soon after that the special troops attacked the demonstration using batons and heavy boots and arrested 19 people including two 13-year-old girls. Because of the support from the radical socialist deputies of the Moscow Soviet, they were released five hours later. But two of our comrades, Alexei Rodionov and Alexander Kuznetsov, are still imprisoned and we appeal for your help.

You can request more information from: Russia 109462, Moscow, Volzhsky Blvd., d.21, kv.62, Mikhail Tsovma.

M. Tsovma
Russia

THE DIVISION OF MENTAL AND MANUAL LABOR



I currently work part-time in a secretarial position in which I feel completely separated from the labor I perform. How meaningful can it be to send mass mailings to people I will never meet, concerning a subject of which I am ignorant or to xerox a textbook which I have little interest in reading? Yet, it is precisely during these mind-numbing hours in front of the xerox machine or attached to the phone that I feel the rage rising within me at the unbelievable demand that we isolate ourselves from any form of self-development through our

labor. This fury makes me appreciate Marx's concretization of each human relationship as a "to be" instead of a "to have." "To have" suggests limited and static interaction based upon possession. "To be" evokes the continual creative process, the demand for self-development and the full, ripe possibilities for the future.

Black women's liberationist
New York

I'm interested in Marx's idea of ending the division between mental and manual labor because I suffer from that division in my own life. How can we end this division of labor? Who are some other philosophers who have written about ending the division between mental and manual labor?

Greek-American woman
Illinois

THE DANGER OF PEROT

The phenomenon of Ross Perot this election year raises some very disturbing questions about where this country is going. So near solid is the ideological hegemony of the Reagan-Bush retrogression that the wish to see an "independent alternative" in a Texas billionaire is the most dangerous kind of self-delusion at this moment. The billionaire arch-capitalist Ross Perot represents the very foundation upon which American political institutions rest. The current fascination with electing a capitalist "strongman" to resolve America's capitalist crisis reminds me of the Third World phenomenon which Peru's president Fujimora expresses at the moment. One wonders if Perot wouldn't declare martial law or some other forms of austerity the day after taking office.

Concerned
Chicago

Correction

Due to a typographical error, in Neda Azad's article on "Marx's Concept of Praxis" (March 1992 N&L) a reference was made to "Epicurus quoting Seneca." It should have read "Marx quoting Seneca."

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Essay

From alienation to freedom in Marx's 1844 Manuscripts

by Maya Morrison

So widespread is the ideological pollution imbuing the air today that while the media rings the death-knell of Marxism, the intellectuals are busy committing Marx's philosophy of freedom to the dusty vaults of academia. In both cases, Marx's philosophy is seen as being dead to the real world. Marx has become a reified cultural icon—a genius of his time to be admired and respected, but not to be taken too seriously. What is missing in this picture? Precisely that which the rulers are trying to get rid of—Marx's radical vision of freedom and thus his philosophy of revolution.

When we ask, in these retrogressive times, whether we can be free at all, we are searching for a total answer. It is this search for an absolute way out that compels us to turn to Marx, not as an economic critic of capitalism (important as that is), not as a philosopher of alienation as many view him—but as the philosophy that spells out the possibility of the total liberation of humanity. To grasp the todayness of Marx's concept of freedom, we need to explore the dimension of his thought that is all too often ignored—his concept of the transcendence of alienation.

Let's here re-examine Marx's momentous 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, where he not only broke with classical political economy but with Hegel as well as Feuerbach, and in the process, set the groundwork for the development of his philosophy as a "New Humanism." The three main essays of the Manuscripts, "Alienated Labor," "Private Property and Communism" and "The Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," bring to light the alienation inherent in the capitalist mode of production, and also deal explicitly with the transcendence of this alienation. As Raya Dunayevskaya put it, "Marx never talked about alienation without also talking about transcendence." A close study of "The Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in conjunction with the other two manuscripts is crucial to understanding these concepts of alienation and transcendence—not as philosophic abstraction but as philosophy of revolution.

MARX'S CONCEPT OF ALIENATED LABOR

To Marx, alienated labor is not something that arises from within the human being:

"What constitutes the alienation of labor? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that, consequently, he... does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased... Finally the external character of work for the worker is shown by the fact that it is not his own work, but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person." (pp. 98-99)¹

It is important to note that Marx talks about alienated labor as something external. To me this shows that alienation does not pervert the essential nature of humanity, but rather prevents human beings from realizing their essential mental and manual potentials. That is why in "Alienated Labor" Marx talks about Nature as humanity's "inorganic body." Nature is not something external to humanity because nature is human nature, and the "universality" of the human being is contrasted with the limitations of animals precisely on the point of production. Humans produce beyond need and only truly produce in freedom thereof; animals produce only to fulfill a need. The human being does not only live in the world, she/he appropriates and transforms it. Thus, the objectivity of human labor is something that can confront the worker because he/she is a conscious being, and under class society, this objectivity becomes alienation. This does not mean, however, that objectivity equals alienation, only that objectification of labor under class society is alienated.² After all, Marx did see sensuous, human activity as objective, and it is not the objectivity of labor that needs to be transcended but only the determinate character of this objectivity in class society that must be abolished. Thus, at the end of "Alienated Labor" Marx writes:

"It should be noted that everything which appears to the worker as an activity of alienation, appears to the non-worker as a condition of alienation. Secondly the real, practical attitude of the worker in production to the product (as a state of mind) appears to the non-worker who confronts him as a theoretical attitude." (p. 100)

Seeing labor as Subject prevents Marx from studying the workers as objects of inquiry as do those who question the possibility of class consciousness.

In "Private Property and Communism," Marx battles the vulgar communists in much the same manner that

he battles the classical political economists. He shows the alienation and reification inherent in their proposed methods of transcendence, namely nationalization of private property. These vulgar communists remain on the level of private property, and though some (Proudhon) may see labor as essence, they do not see labor as Subject:

*"According to this theory, the community is only a community of labor and the equality of wages which the communal capital, or the community as the universal capitalist, pays out. Both sides of the relationship between capital and labor are elevated into a sham universality."*³ (p.292)

This approach to transcendence is simply a reaffirmation of alienation. It is the focus on the objects of labor instead of the objectivity of the activity of labor, and on private property instead of the alienated labor that created it that reveals the reification against which Marx fought. Thus, Marx points out how capitalism has perverted human existence from a "to be" to a "to have." Human relationships become commodity relationships, especially in the most fundamental human relationship between men and women. And, in critiquing vulgar communists, out of which is borne Marx's concept of the Man/Woman relationship, Marx reveals that they have not transcended the logic of private property.

In opposition to "vulgar and unthinking communism," Marx proposes the following:

"Communism, as the positive abolition of private property, which is human self-alienation, and therefore, as the actual appropriation of human essence by man and for man, is the return of man to himself as a social, i.e., human man, complete, conscious and matured within by the entire wealth of developments to date. Just as completed humanism is naturalism, so this communism, as completed naturalism, is humanism." (M&F p. 307)

When Marx equates communism with humanism and naturalism, we can see that Marx's concept of labor as Subject inheres in his concept of transcendence. Marx subverts a confirmation of alienation by holding real, live human beings as subjects: "Both the material of labor and man as subject are equally the result and the starting point of the movement." (M&F p. 295) There is a debate, however, about what Marx meant by the "positive abolition of private property and the 'positive transcendence of private property.'" In order to understand this, it is crucial to dig into the "The Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic."

MARX'S CONCEPT OF TRANSCENDENCE

Raya Dunayevskaya has pointed out in *Philosophy and Revolution* that it is here, in "The Critique" that Marx gave birth to historical materialism by transforming the Hegelian dialectic into the dialectic of revolution. Marx's relationship to Hegel is not characterized by a rejection of Hegel's idealism, but a rejection of the dehumanization of the dialectic. Thus Marx puts the dialectic "through a profound change" by taking Hegel's categories and putting in the human Subject.

Marx begins the main part of his critique with an evaluation of Feuerbach. He praises Feuerbach on several counts, and even credits him with transcending "old philosophy." Feuerbach, Marx writes, proves that philosophy is nothing but religion, and through the negation of the negation, simply affirms Theology after it had denied it. Thus Feuerbach thinks that the positive that inheres in the double negation is "not yet certain of itself," to which he counterposes sense-certainty and arrives at, "positive affirmation which is based on itself." Though it seems that Marx is still praising Feuerbach, there is in fact a qualification on Marx's part when he says:

"But inasmuch as Hegel comprehends the negation of the negation in accordance with the positive relation, which is imminent in it, as the only truly positive, and in accordance with the negative relation which is imminent in it, as the only true act of self-manifestation of all being, to that extent he has discovered only the abstract, logical and speculative expression for the movement of history." (M&F p. 305)

Though Marx agrees with Feuerbach to a certain extent, there is a fundamental break between the two on the question of the negation of the negation. To Marx, the negation of the negation characterizes the movement of history though still in an abstract form. He sees the worker as subject immanent in Alienation as the positive immanent in the process of history. Marx gave birth to historical materialism by putting the human subject back into the Hegelian dialectic. Thus, Dunayevskaya writes, it is not the concepts of alienation and reification that prove the philosophic continuity of Marxism, it is precisely the birth of historical-materialism in the 1844 Manuscripts and its development throughout Marx's lifetime that proves that Marx did not metamorphose from an "idealist" to a "scientific economist."

3. I am using Raya Dunayevskaya's translation of "Private Property and Communism" and "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," as found in the appendix to the 1958 edition of her *Marxism and Freedom*.

This is a point that can be interpreted in many ways. For example, though Georg Lukacs held that 1844 was the birth of historical materialism, to him, Marx's dialectic distinguished itself from Hegel only in opposition to Hegel's idealism. Lukacs writes in *The Young Hegel* that Marx agreed with Feuerbach on the question of the negation of the negation: "[Marx] admired Feuerbach's advance to true materialism...and thought Feuerbach was right, 'opposing to the negation of the negation...the self-supportive positive...'" Though he does acknowledge Marx's qualification of Feuerbach's argument, it is only to concede that Marx thought the negation of the negation was the movement of pre-history.

The difference between Dunayevskaya and Lukacs lies in the fact that Lukacs holds Marx's critique of Feuerbach and Hegel to be a simple counterposition of idealism and materialism. To say simply, as Lukacs



does, that Marx was anti-idealist is a vulgarization in the worst sense especially in light of the fact that it is right in these manuscripts that Marx writes of his philosophy as a "thorough-going Naturalism or Humanism, [which] distinguishes itself both from Idealism and Materialism, and is, at the same time, the truth uniting both." Marx's relationship to Hegel is more complicated than Lukacs' view.

Marx's critique of Hegel's *Phenomenology* reveals a two-fold error in Hegel. He develops this in the critique when he moves to the last chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Absolute Knowledge. First, because Hegel abstracts consciousness from the human subject, actual alienation, alienation in real life, is only the appearance of the alienation of consciousness. For Hegel, alienation is not "human essence materializing itself in an inhuman manner, in opposition to itself," but rather "materializing itself from, and in opposition to abstract thinking." Objectivity in Hegel is simply externalized human essence, i.e., self-consciousness. Thus, objectivity equals externalization equals alienation. As Marx put it:

"Since it is not actual man, and likewise not Nature as such—man is human nature—which is made the subject, but only the abstraction of man, namely, self-consciousness, thingness can only be externalized self-consciousness." (p. 312)

Consequently, the reappropriation of this objective essence is not transcendence of alienation but a transcendence of objectivity. Marx shows that the negation of the negation, for Hegel, is not the confirmation of "true essence...but confirmation of apparent essence." Actual essence is hidden. It appears only in thought. Transcendence, to Hegel happens only in thought and as such Hegelian transcendence is simply a confirmation of alienation.

Thus, when Marx turns to the positive in Hegel's philosophy, he does so with the recognition that it is within the limits of the category of alienation. Nonetheless, he says that the greatness of Hegel's dialectic of negativity, which Marx called the "moving and creating principle of history" lies "in the circumstances that Hegel...grasps the essence of labor...the true active relating of man to himself...as human essence is only possible...through the collective action of man, only as a result of history." (p. 309) Notice that here Marx's use of the word essence is different from the typical use—as something fixed and overdetermining. Essence is historically defined by human beings. In fact, in *The German Ideology*, Marx actually critiques the Left Hegelians for their talk about the essence or the man.

Thus, by putting the human subject back into the Hegelian dialectic, Marx praises Hegel's concept of transcendence as "objective movement." He says that this insight contains, though in an alienated form, an expression of the appropriation of objective essence through the transcendence of alienation. It is the "alienated insight into the actual objectification of man,

(continued on page 11)

1. I am using Eric Fromm's translation of "Alienated Labor" from his book *Marx's Concept of Man*, (Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, New York), 1961.

2. In his 1932 essay "The Foundations of Historical-Materialism," Herbert Marcuse ties the concepts of objectivity in with Marx's concept of Nature as well as human nature: "It is only now, after the totality of the human essence as the unity of man and nature has been made concrete by the practical-social-historical process of objectification, that we can understand the definition of man as a 'universal' and 'free' species being." See also Peter Wermuth's essay, "Towards Philosophic New Beginnings in Marxist-Humanism," *News and Letters*, June, 1988. In this essay Wermuth explicates the importance of Marx's concept of nature as not only human nature, but as History as well, to Marxist-Humanism. Dunayevskaya, traces the movement of transcendence from Logic to Nature to Mind—which she translates as the new society. As she points out in a manuscript called "Why Phenomenology? Why Now?" (April 3, 1987): "Nature...is true essence because you can't separate Nature from Human Nature. And that is why he [Marx] uses, not as a naturalist, 'thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism' which would first alone grasp the act of world history."

Capitalizing on biotechnology

by Franklin Dmitryev

In May, the Food and Drug Administration gave its blessing to genetically engineered foods—artificial organisms whose effects on human health are totally unknown. Most such foods will not have to be tested for safety or even labeled. This is just one part of Bush's policy of ensuring that there is virtually no special regulation of biotechnology products.

Hosannas immediately rang forth from industry for the unchaining of this new scientific "magic." The bourgeois press, too, got caught up in the excitement, forgetting a cardinal rule of the nuclear age: when industry and government trot out experts to testify to the complete safety and wondrous benefits of some new technology—run for the hills.

Even if we leave aside the question of unforeseen disasters that may result from the engineered organisms directly, we must ask what social effects the projected reshaping of agriculture could have.

TURNING GENES INTO CAPITAL

One of the major areas of current genetic engineering efforts is herbicide-tolerant plants. What chemical companies are doing, instead of trying to grow crops without adding chemicals that poison the environment, workers and consumers, is developing soybeans and canola able to withstand massive doses of herbicides.

This is a way to make agriculture more capital-intensive, more chemical-intensive, more dependent on the multinational corporations that provide the chemicals and seeds. It is a continuation and intensification of modern trends of capitalist agriculture, following what Marx spelled out as the concentration and centralization of capital.

It is not only that the ever higher amounts of capital needed to compete keep driving small farmers out of business. It is the continual transformation of the conditions of production into capital: fertilizer and pesticides substitute for the natural fertility of the soil and the regulating power of ecological diversity; seeds are purchased from multinationals because the crop strains used cannot reproduce; now the genes themselves are to be turned into a form of capital, and monopolized by a handful of corporations.

Far from ending hunger or enriching humanity, high-tech agriculture has impoverished the gene pool. Native crops around the world are replaced by the few favored species, such as soybeans, wheat and corn. The vast majority of natural strains of even those plants are crowd-

ed out by the few owned by seed-producing multinationals. And now with genetic engineering, a single genetic scheme may replace even the diversity within a strain.

The result is an exacerbation of monoculture, which makes the food supply more precarious than ever: the same crop grown in the same huge field year after year exhausts the soil and becomes extremely vulnerable to diseases, pest infestations and climatic variations. While needing less labor, the farmer becomes even more dependent on chemicals and energy. In the Third World, local food producers are drawn into dependence on the world market.

SUSTAINABILITY VS. CAPITALISM

To fight their image as shameless polluters, the chemical companies have appropriated from environmentalists the term "sustainable agriculture"—but to them it means sustaining the existing exploitative production relations. What else could it mean in a system where people exist to fulfill the needs of production, rather than the other way around?

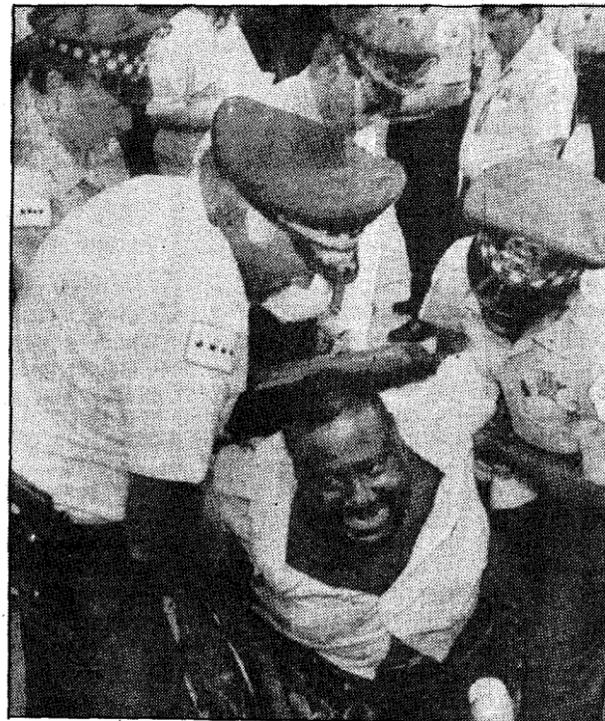
The opposite is the poet and environmentalist Wendell Berry's definition: "Sustainable agriculture is agriculture that does not deplete soils or people."

Long before there was such a thing as an environmental movement, Marx discussed the non-sustainability of capitalist production, and he concluded:

"Moreover, all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility.... Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the laborer."

What the ceaseless destructiveness of capitalist agriculture points to is the need to uproot capitalism, which is not only an "economic" demand, but, as Marx wrote, calls for the "restoration" of the "circulation of matter" between humanity and soil "as a system, as a regulating law of social production, and under a form appropriate to the full development of the human race...."

ADAPT demonstrations stop Chicago!



Sit-in at AMA

Editor's note: From May 10-14, 100 or more people with disabilities who are members of ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Attendant Programs Today) came from all over the U.S. to Chicago, Ill. to participate in militant demonstrations where many people threw themselves out of wheel chairs in order to block doors. They are demanding that 25% of Medicaid funds that now go to warehouse people in nursing homes be reallocated to in-home health care that would help people live independently. ADAPT estimates this is \$900 a month savings per person. Below we print reports from two participants made during the time the protests were taking place.

Sunday, May 10—Soon to speak at the commencement of the University of Illinois at Chicago is Dr. Louis Sullivan, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. ADAPT protesters are stationed inside and outside the Pavilion and are passing out leaflets. At 10:13 a.m. ADAPT protesters inside the Pavilion are being arrested. Bob Kafka had unfurled the ADAPT banner, hanging it from a balcony. ADAPT has been trying to meet with Dr. Sullivan and persuade him to concede ADAPT's position.

At 10:49 a.m. there are 50 protesters chanting at the main entrance of the Pavilion. A few of the protesters were banging on a trash can. At 10:54 police brought in more barricades. The ADAPT banner was confiscated and will likely never be seen by ADAPT again.

It's 2:46 p.m. At the main entrance people are hanging out and protesting. At one point a young man with a megaphone yelled: "Louis Sullivan, your car is parked in a handicapped parking zone! Your lights are on!" While we were able to match the police barricades with our protesters, we under-protested at the main en-

Sit-in at U. of Illinois

Chicago, Ill.—On May 6, over 150 Latino, Black, Asian American, Native American and white students occupied the administration building of the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Their sit-in followed two weeks of protests inspired by the Latino students' struggle for greater autonomy and financial support for their cultural center, La Casa Cultural Latina. Their list of demands ranged from the creation of a Latino Studies program to the elimination of the racist stereotype of Native Americans embodied in the school's mascot, Chief Illiniwek.

This action stopped university business for the rest of the afternoon. The students refused to leave until they were forcefully evicted by riot cops called in by the Administration from four separate police departments. Three Latinos who were roughed up by the cops were arrested for "resisting arrest."

A local activist described the events as especially important because there hadn't been such strong multi-racial solidarity on the campus in recent memory, and the movement was "much broader than the immediate grievances."

The movement kicked into high gear when, coincidentally, 15 Latinos sat in at La Casa Cultural Latina to protest its poor funding on the same day as the Rodney King verdict was announced in L.A. The police evicted these students, sparking two mass protests, the second of which resulted in the mass occupation of the administration building.

Lisa Saunders, an African-American economics professor, joined the protest "because I was thinking about Rodney King. I was thinking about a class on race and gender discrimination that I teach. This week I felt I had to do something about it, not just talk about it."

Despite the administration's promise to increase funding for La Casa Cultural Latina, students were not satisfied. One student said, "Most of the students felt the administration wasn't even listening." Protesters were angry that U of I Chancellor Morton Weir was only following the advice of a special advisory committee he himself appointed without a single student member and that he ignored their demand that he drop the charges against the arrested students. —Jim Guthrie

Essay Article

(continued from page 10)

into the actual appropriation of his objective essence through the destruction of the alienated determination of the objective world." Thus Marx immediately adds that "Communism is humanism mediated by the transcendence of private property. Only by the transcendence of this mediation, which is nevertheless a necessary presupposition, does there arise positive humanism beginning from itself." (pgs 319-320)

Marx here clarifies the meaning of the "positive abolition of private property." The term positive does not mean that we must bring the positive aspects of private property with us into the new society. Rather, because private property is only the "form of appearance" of alienated labor, one cannot equate the abolition of private property with the transcendence of alienation, or freedom, which Marx calls "positive humanism beginning from itself."

Why does Marx spend so much time critiquing the concepts of transcendence held by the "vulgar communists" and Hegel as well? Precisely because Marx's "new continent of thought" (so-called by Dunayevskaya) is also the birth of a philosophy of revolution. Marx is forging new pathways out of alienation. In the process of singling out alienated labor as something external that confronts the worker, as well as singling out laborers as subjects, Marx has not only described alienation in society, but has elucidated the very concept of transcendence—that is the very idea of freedom.

Marx's vision of freedom is a radical assertion of the self-development of human beings in a new society. Many people dismiss Marx's vision of a new society as utopian, and indeed when abstracted from Marx's dialectical methodology, it is just that. However, because he always began with human beings who create themselves and the world around them, and recognized the relationship of human nature to Nature and to history, which is human natural determination, Marx's vision of a new society is not ahistorical and abstract. Accordingly, Marx emphasized that:

"It is very difficult to dislodge from the consciousness of the people the concept of creation. Because it contradicts all the obvious facts of life, it is inconceivable to them that nature and man exist through themselves."

(p.302)

Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning

An essay by Raya Dunayevskaya

\$1 (includes postage) from News & Letters

trance. So Sullivan made it out the front entrance.

Of course he did not take a nice little stroll—he ran! A car arrived at 45 mph and came to a screeching halt. Sullivan and 50 or so secret service agents made a mad dash for the limousine. Then the limousine peeled out, knocking over a police barricade, and charged off into the distance. So we do know we had his attention.

May 11—Dr. Louis Sullivan delivered a resounding "No" to the protesters of ADAPT. Our request is to meet with him to discuss diverting 25% of the money now dedicated to nursing homes to attendant services in the community.

Today ADAPT protesters marched on the regional Health and Human Services building in downtown Chicago. Protesters blocked all exits and 40 protesters took up stations inside the building. **During the afternoon not only was the building shut down, but traffic was backed up in the heart of downtown Chicago for ten blocks.**

We did meet with the regional director of Health and Human Services and the regional director of the Health Care Finance Administration. It was done in front of much news media. One ADAPT member commented that the idea of ADAPT is not to meet with a bureaucrat—it is to bring our petitions before the people of America and the world.

May 12—Today ADAPT closed down the American Medical Association (AMA) building for the afternoon. All exits and entrances of the AMA were blocked. When people came out of the building, they had to pass by protesters chanting "AMA Kills!"

We began our march at about 10:43 a.m. and arrived at the AMA building about 11:10. Traffic has been stopped for several miles. At one point all four intersections surrounding the AMA building were blocked.

—Bill Scarborough and Bob Gustwick

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CHICAGO: 59 E. Van Buren, Rm. 707
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Call for meeting information
DETROIT: P.O. Box 27205
Detroit, MI 48227
Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.—Central Methodist Church,
Woodward and Adams

OAKLAND: P.O. Box 3345
Oakland, CA 94609 (415-658-1448)
Sundays, 6:00 p.m.
390 27th St., Oakland
(between Telegraph & Broadway)

LOS ANGELES: P.O. Box 29194
Los Angeles, CA 90029
Sundays, 3:00 p.m.
Echo Park United Methodist Church
1226 N. Alvarado (north of Sunset)

NEW YORK: P.O. Box 196
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163 (212-663-3631)
Sundays, 6:30 p.m.
Washington Square Church
135 W. 4th St. (East door), Manhattan

FLINT: P.O. Box 3384
Flint, MI 48502

Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The mass protests in Thailand against military dictatorship which began in April have succeeded in forcing General Suchinda Kraprayoon to flee the country. As we go to press, the protests are continuing as tens of thousands of Thais are demanding that Suchinda and his cohorts be punished for their bloody attacks on demonstrators.

Suchinda, a central engineer of the 1991 coup which overturned 14 years of electoral government, had himself "appointed" Prime Minister in March, 1992 by pro-military parties in the parliament. The press had called this "Suchinda's second coup."

Student youth, both women and men, were in the forefront of the protests which drew in many dimensions of society, from workers to the middle classes. It is the greatest mass uprising since 1973, when a student revolt led to the overturn of an earlier military dictatorship. Rallies and marches were not limited to Bangkok but erupted in 13 provinces.

The central demand of the mass demonstrations was

Serbian massacres in Bosnia-Herzegovina

As we go to press, at least 16 civilians were massacred and more than 100 injured by mortar shells in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as people stood in line to buy food during a so-called cease-fire.

In the past several months, over 1,300 people have died in the conflict in and around Sarajevo. Most have been civilians killed by Serbian irregulars or military forces. Since March, when the former Yugoslav province voted overwhelmingly for independence, fanatical Serbian nationalists have created a murderous ethnic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Its population is composed of Croats and Muslim Slavs as well as Serbs, who form a minority. As in the conflict in Croatia in 1991, the Serbian irregulars are armed and abetted by the Serbian government and the old Yugoslav military, now completely Serbian-controlled.

In April, Serbian police fired upon thousands of peace demonstrators from various ethnic groups as they marched in Sarajevo. The gunmen were assisted by low flying planes from the Yugoslav military. Today massive fighting is taking place on the streets of Sarajevo. Their apparent goal is to split off a huge section of the country, including Sarajevo itself, by forcing non-Serbs out of their homes and land. They intend to link this territory with Serbia.

This is what the Serbian nationalists did in 1991 in a large part of Croatia. Once they had gained enough territory, they grudgingly accepted a truce on their own terms. But even under the truce in Croatia, Serbian commandos are engaged in yet another human rights violation: expelling Croatian civilians from their villages and settling Serbs in their homes. On a smaller scale, Croatian commandos are doing the same thing.

Yugoslavia's unraveling holds the danger of creating another Lebanon in the heart of Europe. The leaders of the Croats are almost as narrowly nationalist as are the Serbs, and there is likely to be retaliation for the outrages of 1991-92.

that Thailand's leader be an elected official and that Suchinda leave office. The Thai people were fed up not only with the anti-democratic seizure of power, but were out to finally end over six decades of military interference and rule. The military had effectively controlled the state ever since it overthrew the monarchy as an absolutist power in the 1930s.

The turning point came on Sunday night, May 17, when soldiers attacked a demonstration by tens of thousands who listened to Chamlong Srimuang, a largely



Students rally in Bangkok.

Protests in China

As China's rulers take the national economy deeper into the world state-capitalist market, workers have intensified their resistance. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* recently reported that 200 workers held a spontaneous walkout from a Sino-Japanese joint venture enterprise in Dalian.

Elsewhere, troops were sent in to put down a workers' revolt at a watch factory in Tianjin. The state has responded with a new trade union law aimed at curtailing any workers' activity that could lead to formation of independent unions.

Also, in the past few months, peasants have begun to protest mass evictions from their land being carried out under China's "free market" economic policies. Peasants are being driven off their land by capitalist entrepreneurs in order to set up factories, stores and other large commercial enterprises.

Peasants are not going along with this, especially since they are usually paid only a pittance for their confiscated land. In a village in southwestern Yunnan province, a land war broke out after 1,000 evicted peasants fought people brought in to dig up their fields. The peasants sent a delegation to Beijing. The delegation was ordered to return home empty handed, where they were arrested. This led to more pitched battles, 47 arrests, and another delegation to Beijing. A similar conflict broke out in Ninghe County near Tianjin. These revolts show that it is a myth that the deep discontent with the system is confined to urban areas.

popular former general who held a hunger strike against Suchinda in the early stages of the protests. When the march turned towards Suchinda's office, police and soldiers attacked.

The following day, the army fired point blank at demonstrators and began to arrest thousands during a bloody crackdown, which had echoes of Tiananmen Square in 1989. A schoolteacher said of the military brutality, "The people want democracy. They want to be able to control their lives. But the soldiers, they just want power."

When military repression did not end the mass demonstrations, the King of Thailand intervened, getting both Suchinda and Chamlong to agree that the constitution would be amended as soon as possible, requiring the Prime Minister to be elected. He also issued an amnesty by royal decree which enraged those who wanted Suchinda and all the military put on trial for murder. There still is no accurate count of the number killed; at least 400 people are missing and thought to be dead.

Neither Suchinda's flight nor the King's intervention have stopped the protests, although the rulers in and out of power are scrambling to bring it under their control. While the Western media described the events in Thailand as largely influenced by an emerging middle class, there is no doubt that the demonstrations involve the deepest layers of Thai society. For the moment, all are united against the military.

Mass strikes in Germany

In the biggest labor conflict in Western Europe in many years, western Germany's 2.3 million-member Union for Public Service (OTV) staged a ten-day series of strikes. Railroads, airports, garbage collection and postal and telephone service were disrupted at various points during the strike. Then on May 14, after the labor bureaucracy and the government had finally agreed to a compromise contract, rank-and-file workers voted it down. It is unknown whether the labor bureaucracy will now impose the contract anyway, something it has a right to do under German law.

Throughout the strike, the OTV leadership tried to keep the strikes localized and scattered, never calling out a large number of workers at once. They justified this tactic by arguing that this would put less of an economic hardship on union members, especially lower paid ones, but in reality they did not want to challenge the government directly.

The strike began after rightist Chancellor Helmut Kohl refused to accept an arbitrator's ruling that workers be given a 5.4% raise. OTV had been demanding 9.5%, and Kohl had offered only an insulting 4.8%, even below what the arbitrator had recommended. Kohl's intransigence and attempt to change in his favor the rules of union-employer conflict established since the 1950s led large sectors of the middle class as well as the bourgeois press to blame Kohl rather than the OTV for the strike.

From the beginning of the strike, rank-and-file workers took the initiative. Postal workers in Hamburg walked out on the first day, leaving 20,000 tons of mail untouched, despite the fact that the OTV had not called them out on strike. In fact, during the entire ten days of the strike, most postal facilities remained closed.

On May 5, OTV workers shut down Frankfurt airport, the largest in Western Europe. One day later, the government was suddenly back at the negotiating table. They and OTV leaders soon agreed to the original 5.4% plus up to \$650 per worker, especially low income workers such as women who work in the food services at universities. This paltry increase was apparently responsible for the workers voting down the contract.

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 philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa. 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 recreation 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*.

Forum on East Timor

New York, N.Y.—About 50 people gathered May 12 to hear eyewitness accounts of the massacre by the Indonesian army of more than 150 demonstrators in Dili, East Timor, last November. Several speakers, both from the panel and from the floor, emphasized that though massacres have not been unusual since the 1975 invasion of the island by Indonesian troops in the wake of its abandonment by the Portuguese, which was at the time itself in revolutionary upheaval, a new element was that it occurred before television cameras which broadcast the carnage around the world.

In fact, Jose Ramos Otra, representing the East Timorese coalition of liberation groups, recalled that the current Suharto regime of Indonesia had come into power through the murders of perhaps a million peasants, workers and ethnic Chinese ten years before its invasion of East Timor.

Alan Nairn, from *New Yorker* magazine, and Amy Goodman, from radio station WBAI, gave horrifying accounts of East Timorese being shot all around them as a group of demonstrators marched to Santa Cruz cemetery to commemorate the second week since the army had shot into a church, killing the youth activist, Sebastiao Gomes.

Lorne Rider, a student activist from Brown University, described a confrontation with the Indonesian navy when an international group of solidarity activists tried to sail to East Timor this spring. He also told of recent rallies and conferences at several colleges, where a growing movement is demanding that the U.S. cease its military support of the Suharto regime. —Victor Hart