

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

Vol. 38 — No. 3

APRIL, 1993

25¢

Team concept or worker vigilantism?



by B. Ann Lastelle

My first experience with "team concept" came at an M&M/Mars orientation meeting for temporary "associates." We were informed that after we had worked 500 hours we could apply for permanent, full-time status. Approval would require a favorable vote by members of the crew with whom we worked, which meant, the speaker said, that, if we wanted a job, we had better make sure that we returned from our breaks on time.

I now work at Helene Curtis, which is mired in its own form of team concept, "job redesign." Our supervisor spoke about what a burden absenteeism puts on other team members and told two members of one team to discuss with another why she was absent so much. All three shifts in my department met in February, discussed what they expected from one another and wrote "agreements" about how the lines would be left at the end of the shift. Each shift polices the previous one.

'CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT'

My shift watched a video during a "Team Development" training session about how teams function at other companies. There are no regular raises at one company, Johnsonville Sausage in Wisconsin; workers receive increases only for learning new skills such as budgeting or serving as team leader. Teams hire and fire without interference from management. One worker stated: "If you are not growing, you're out of here. We have no room for people who are not continuously improving."

The forms of worker discipline have changed during capitalism's rule. First there was the capitalist himself; then, the "army of superintendents" who relieved him of a direct role in supervision. Where machinery was introduced, the machine itself became a form of control by setting the pace of the work. The union bureaucracy in the post-World War II U.S. contributed by guaranteeing labor peace between contracts.

A HORRIFYING DEVELOPMENT

To all of these forms we now must add team concept, where the role of disciplinarian is thrust upon the workers themselves. It makes all the sense in the world from a capitalist point of view. You may be able to fool bosses who don't know much and can't be everywhere at once, but your co-workers know what you are supposed to be doing and whether or not you are doing it. It is a horrifying development.

Why are there so many different attitudes to job redesign among my co-workers? Why do they sometimes resist (The two women told our foreman that it wasn't their business why the third woman was absent.) and at other times give in? Isn't it, at least in part, because some of what management says contains an element of truth?

(continued on page 3)

A special supplement coming in the May N&L In celebration of the 40th anniversary of Raya Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes

- "New Thoughts on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy" Two 1986 texts central to Dunayevskaya's last writings on the integrality of philosophy and organization.
- Essay Article by Peter Wermuth, national co-organizer of News and Letters Committees, on the relation of these two texts to the Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism, born in the 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes.

Lou Turner's Black World column will resume next issue.

Behind Yeltsin's threatened coup: economic crisis and ethnic unrest



A homeless woman in Moscow

by Kevin A. Barry

On March 20, Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced that he would ignore parliament and the courts and rule by decree until April 25, when he would hold, as he put it, "a vote of confidence to the President" as well as a "vote on the draft constitution." Despite its patently authoritarian nature—such plebiscites have always been the tool of kings and military dictators to legitimate their rule, since the ruler always makes up the actual question to be voted up or down—Yeltsin's announcement of the April 25 referendum to legitimate what was in fact the threat of a coup, was enough for the U.S. and its allies to side vociferously with Yeltsin, hailing his move as a step toward real democracy. At the same time, however, Clinton and the others hedged their bets a bit, saying that they supported his "reform" policies, not Yeltsin as an individual.

Yeltsin's rivals, particularly Russian Parliament Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, moved to oppose him for violation of the existing Russian constitution. Also lining up against Yeltsin were Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi and Supreme Court Head Valery Zorkin.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, forced upon Yeltsin last year by those in parliament who wanted a slowing down of his "free market" shock therapy to the economy, surprised them by rallying to Yeltsin's side. Two key bureaucrats, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and Viktor Barannikov, head of the Security Ministry

(the former KGB), were more circumspect. They said they supported Yeltsin but also the constitution, also promising "neutrality" in the conflict between Yeltsin and the parliament.

WHAT IS AT STAKE POLITICALLY

The crisis posed the danger of civil war or even the eventual disintegration of the Russia Federation as a unified state. While Russian military power is far weaker today than a decade ago, there are still 25,000 nuclear warheads in Russia itself and another 1,200 in Ukraine. Were rival factions in a civil war or Russian-Ukrainian conflict to get hold of some of these weapons, the effects could be incalculable, and not only inside the borders of the former Soviet Union. Recall the damage caused by the explosion of a single nuclear reactor in Chernobyl in 1986.

Yeltsin and his chief rivals such as Rutskoi and Khasbulatov are not as far apart as most media accounts suggest. All serious contenders for power today claim to support converting Russia to a multi-party bourgeois democracy and a "free market" economy as well as maintaining a partnership with the U.S. Both Yeltsin's group and his opponents are composed almost entirely of former apparatchiks who held high positions in the Communist Party, the military, or academia. In contrast to the situation in several of the East European countries, there are no former dissidents vying for power here. These are not former political prisoners, but bureaucrats who either participated actively in or kept quiet during the repression of all dissent during the Brezhnev years.

Neither Gorbachevism nor even the popular ferment which derailed the 1991 coup and brought Yeltsin to power represented a real uprooting of the old totalitarian state-capitalist system. This helps explain why so few have rallied on the streets on Yeltsin's side, or on the side of his opponents. The old state-capitalist system remains largely in place, although in great disarray. This is because its linchpin, the Communist Party, has been shattered, but not replaced with a new mechanism of centralized rule—the kind of centralization, that is, which state-capitalism, including in its so-called "free market" form, demands.

However, there are also some key differences at stake (continued on page 10)

Dr. Gunn's murder and women's freedom

by Terry Moon

The murder of Dr. David Gunn by anti-abortion fanatic Michael Griffin, who pumped three bullets into Gunn's back as he was walking into the Pensacola Women's Medical Services clinic, was a horrible shock. It was a shock even though we knew something like it was coming—a shock, not a surprise.

No one could be surprised by this brutal murder because it is the conclusion that flows from the twisted logic of the anti-abortion zealots. What women have been confronting for the last two decades is not a movement for "life"; rather it is a group of neo-fascist religious fundamentalists profoundly dedicated to a philosophy antithetical to freedom.

When Reagan and Bush greeted it with open, welcoming arms, it left the battle up to women and the clinics. In the last several years, it is women's organized clinic defense—with all its inherent contradictions (See August-September, 1992 N&L)—that has defeated the fanatical hordes and been able to proudly declare, time and again, "This clinic is open!"

MISOGYNIST MOBS

This reactionary movement has dared to compare itself to the Black Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Gunn's murder reveals its true ideology—murder, prejudice, misogyny, reaction. Look at what we have been fighting for fully 20 years:

* Vicious gatherings by woman-hating fanatics at clinics around the country—some invited by the local police—who scream at women using the clinics, follow them, publicize their addresses, spit in faces, use their own children as blockades, yell "murder" at women struggling to control our own lives, call women "walking wombs."

* Their signs and slogans reveal the direction leading to Dr. Gunn's murder: "Abortion: America's holocaust," "Dr. Death works here," "Abortion kills children," "David Gunn murders babies," and wanted post-

ers with doctor's pictures, names and addresses on them.

* Unrestrained violence has been escalating for years: 1992 saw 186 acts of violence against clinics, women and abortion providers—double that of 1991; over the last 15 years over 100 clinics have been bombed or burned; in the second week of March eight clinics in California were sprayed with chemicals so deadly that the clinics were unus-



Dr. David Gunn

(continued on page 2)

- From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya—Practicing Dialecticsp.4
- Editorial—Clinton's Economic policies and worker's sacrificep. 5
- Essay Article—Nationalism, the Artificer and Afrocentricityp. 9

On the Inside

Woman as Reason

by Diane Lee

Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality, edited and with an Introduction by Toni Morrison (Pantheon Books, New York, 1992), 175 pp.

This work furthers the needed discussion of the Clarence Thomas Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, where Professor Anita Hill testified that Thomas sexually harassed her. This anthology reveals the all-sidedness of what happened at the hearings—how the Black community and Black intellectuals were split apart along lines of class and sex revealing the divisions between men and women and among Black women. The hearings sharpened the already massive divisions of race, class and sex existing in this degenerate capitalist society.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Here I can only mention a few of the 18 essays and Toni Morrison's fine Introduction. Kendall Thomas, in his essay, "Strange Fruit," addresses Clarence Thomas' opportunism, calling the hearings a "high tech lynching." He speaks plainly about the history of lynching as systematic terror used against Black men and women and says bluntly: "[N]o African-American man was ever lynched on the word of an aggrieved black woman. This was because black women had no honor that a white lynch mob felt bound to respect."

Another essay that needs to be singled out is "Whose Story Is It Anyway? Feminist and Antiracist Appropriations of Anita Hill" by Kimberle Crenshaw which shows how anti-racism and feminism come together in relation to Black women. She writes from the standpoint of Black feminism.

Michael Thelwell's essay, "False, Fleeting, Perjured Clarence: Yale's Brightest and Blackest Go to Washington," quotes everyone from Shakespeare to Bob Marley. With a poignant sense of irony, he shows that Thomas is merely part of a long list of "house negroes" who have presented the same policies—even using the same language as Thomas—to U.S. administrations in past years. Thelwell says, "The point is that the Sowell, Thomases, Crouches, and Steeles of the world do indeed have progenitors."

Claudia Brodsky Lacour's essay, "Doing Things with Words: 'Racism' as Speech Act and the Undoing of Justice," is a keen insight into the misogyny and sexism of the hearings—something that most of the male contributors to this book failed to confront, and even trivialized.

HISTORY IN THE EYE OF POLITICAL STORM

What sets the tone for this work though is Toni Morrison's Introduction, "Friday on the Potomac." Her metaphorical analysis of Thomas' motivations has a Fanonian ring to it as she captures the dementia of self-hate and sexism that pervades his policies and general outlook. At the same time, Morrison unyieldingly holds onto the integrality of race and sex in her writing.

Morrison accurately depicts every aspect of the Senate hearings "amid a controversy that raised and buried issues of profound social significance." She tears away the obfuscation and the complexity of the events and arrives at the core of what went on: the fact that a multitude of political perspectives were torn apart as if a political hurricane had taken place. Morrison states, "for what was at stake during these hearings was history."

Indeed, when Morrison, and any author in this anthology, focuses on that eye of the political storm—that is, history—the events become clear, fascinatingly so. Morrison sees history, not as an analytical tool, but as a measure of what is occur-

Pro-choice block anti's

Fremont, Cal.—Angry and vocal protesters showed up at the Bethel Baptist Church where Operation Rescue was to hold a planning meeting, three days after Dr. David Gunn was murdered in Pensacola, Florida. He had been singled out publicly for intimidation by anti-abortion organizations for providing family planning services to women, including abortion, when his killer, an anti-choice zealot and wife-abuser shot him dead in a clinic parking lot.

The 200 pro-choice militants managed to shut down the meeting. While sensational press reports called the action a "melee," it was the riot-outfitted Fremont Police and California Highway Patrol who showed up in a massive show of force, shoving demonstrators aside and with no provocation arrested one woman. One cop was heard to say, "She wants to be dragged."

"We shut them down today," declared Kass McMahon of Bay Area Coalition for Our Reproductive Rights, echoing the feelings at the concluding victory-memorial rally. "We are the only thing that's going to answer the shooting of Dr. Gunn and the terrorism on women's clinics. With this terrible shooting, a curtain has been lifted for a few moments on what happens to women's lives."

"We're not the ones with the guns, and we're not the ones with armed police. As a matter of fact, the police interfere with our struggles to keep clinics open. They can stay away. All we got is the people to stop the murder of women. We need to work in groups, but individually, too. Don't just rely on what the organizations tell you to do. Do whatever your conscience allows."

—Outraged pro-choicer

Sexism, racism and the Thomas hearings

ring to Black people in the U.S.

The depth of her outlook is evident when she discusses the character Friday in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and compares his mentality to that of Clarence Thomas'. Just think of Thomas and Bush in relation to the following: "The problem of internalizing the master's tongue is the problem of the rescued...[I]n Friday's case, if the rescuer saves your life by taking you away from the dangers...he may very well expect the debt to be paid in full...full payment forever. Because the rescuer wants to hear his name, not mimicked but adored."

While it is clear that if anyone wants to continue the dialogue on the hearings, this book is the place to start, I do not agree with the anthology's format which gives the first 126 pages of analysis to men. Some writings show Thomas' horrid legalistic positions on race, while revealing their own lack of understanding of what sexual harassment is and how it works within the minds of the women who are abused. Thelwell was right, that very few Black people did not believe Anita Hill. But there is a problem, as Lacour points out, when the very word "racism" can be used to cover up sexist acts.

Finally, why did this work begin with Leon Higginbotham's letter to Thomas? The letter is a plea to Thomas when it is clear that there is no room for "reasoning." This falls outside the book's purpose and is out of touch with reality because Thomas considers himself to be one of Reagan and Bush's Black footsoldiers. What is needed to replace that letter is an open letter to women, an open dialogue, and a demand for Women's Liberation.

International Women's Day protest



News & Letters photo

International Women's Day this year saw an outpouring of women at protests and parades as well as political and cultural meetings all over the U.S. and the world dealing with all issues women are struggling against. There was particular emphasis on stopping the mass rapes in the former Yugoslavia, which no doubt had a lot to do with the mass participation. Above is a picture of women in Chicago confronting an advertising agency for its sexist, degrading depiction of women.



Women-Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

More than 100 mainly-women workers are seeking international solidarity after being arbitrarily fired from the laboratories of Avon Cosmetics in Mexico City with the collusion of their corrupt union leadership. The fired workers are mainly single mothers taking care of not only their children but other family members. They have no benefits and have not been paid for the two weeks prior to their firing. Said one worker, "We want it made known on a world level that this is not an isolated case. There are a number of companies...that operate in the same way, fire unjustly; because we are poor...our voices are never heard." Letters demanding their reinstatement can be sent to: Avon Cosmetics, S.A. de C.V., Apartado 591, Mexico 1, D.F., Mexico.

—Information from *Women's News*

A new law in Hungary supposedly providing "easier" access to abortions—for those with money—doubled their cost to one-third of the average monthly salary. Abortions are available on the grounds of "crisis or a socially hopeless situation."

The practice of female genital mutilation is spreading beyond Africa and the Middle East to Europe and North America, with an estimated 10,000 young girls at risk in both Britain and Canada and 20,000 in France. At least 80 million women have already been victims of this painful and dangerous practice. Afua Dorkensoo, a woman originally from Ghana, has spent the last ten years fighting to stop genital mutilation, as founding director of the Foundation for Women's Health and Development in London. She disputes the myth that this is part of her culture, "Genital mutilation is not an issue of race, nor is it an issue of culture. It is an issue of gender and of human rights abuse." She sees young people recognizing this violation of their human rights as the key to ending it.

—Information from *Toward Freedom*

Stop the raping!

Los Angeles, Cal.—On International Women's Day, some 100 women marched through the streets of West Los Angeles, in mourning and rage at the mass rapes and deaths of Bosnian women. The demonstration was co-sponsored by the Women's Action Coalition and the Women's Coalition Against Ethnic Cleansing—members of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women's organizations, as well as independent feminists and peace activists.

The previous evening a candlelight vigil had been held, at which solidarity with the Bosnian women was linked by an Armenian woman to the necessity to learn lessons from the Jewish and Armenian holocausts, and a Korean woman spoke passionately about the Korean women who had been used as "comfort women," i.e. sex slaves, by the Japanese military during World War II.

—Feminist in solidarity

New York N.Y.—Women's groups have formed the Ad Hoc Women's Coalition Against War Crimes to provide aid to women in the former Yugoslavia and to demand that rape be prosecuted as a war crime. Thousands of women and girls have been systematically raped and tortured, and many killed, in part, as a method of "ethnic cleansing." Most of the victims have been Muslim, but non-Muslim Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian women have also been victims. Many women have also been cast out of their homes and communities and are living in refugee camps. Muslim women have even been murdered by Muslim men because they were raped!

WAC (Women's Action Coalition) is holding weekly vigils at 5:00 p.m. Wednesdays through June outside the United Nations. The vigils are in solidarity with a Belgrade group called Women in Black Against the War, which meets every Wednesday in Belgrade to protest the hostilities on all sides of the conflict.

Citing the historic use of rape as a military strategy and the non-recognition of its victims, WAC is demanding the world community end violence against women and enforce women's rights everywhere. The Coalition's demands include a strengthened UN peacekeeping force to include protection of women and to close the detention camps, a UN War Crimes Tribunal to give central attention to crimes against all women, and UN humanitarian aid for victims of sexual violence and forced pregnancy. Within N.Y. WAC, however, a proposal to call for military intervention was defeated following a debate about passivism, and debate continues about WAC's position and priorities.

—Women's Liberationist

For more information or to make a donation for aid to women in the former Yugoslavia, call WAC at 212-967-7711, ext. 9226.

Dr. Gunn's murder

(continued from page 1)

able, and the same thing happened to seven clinics in Chicago in one week in June of 1992; a nurse at the clinic where Dr. Gunn worked was slammed into a wall by Griffin's "Rescue America" buddies in 1986 as they busted up the Pensacola clinic; in 1992 a hand grenade was found outside a clinic in Wichita, Kan.; doctors are now reporting that they have received death threats for decades, been followed, had their cars and homes vandalized and their children harassed; and so it goes—on and on and on.

The official response to this cowardly orgy of woman-hating violence and destruction—this ideology of un freedom—has been yearly greetings and good wishes from Ronald Reagan, from George Bush, from Dan Quayle; it has been the Reaganite/Bush construction of a vicious right-wing Supreme Court that in January of this year gave the green light to the kind of frenzied violence that murdered David Gunn when it ruled that the anti-Ku Klux Klan act of 1871 could not be used to keep anti-abortion fanatics from blockading clinics and harassing women trying to have an abortion. It was Reagan and Bush who helped Griffin pull that trigger three times; they are the ones who set the climate, they are the ones who turned loose these woman-hating terrorists and gave them their blessing, over and over again.

OUR FIGHT IS ABOUT FREEDOM

Many now are looking to a Clinton presidency and the proposed Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act to try and curb the destruction raging at clinic doors. Janet Reno, the first woman attorney general, said, "I think in this instance somehow or another there has got to be a federal response to interference through physical conduct...which restrains access to a woman's right to choose." It's about time. But this administration's legalisms will not guarantee women's freedom any more than *Roe vs. Wade* did in 1973.

The fight for abortion rights has never been limited to "a woman's right to choose"—it has always been about freedom. Just as surely as the right to abortion alone will not mean our freedom, without that right and the means to control our bodies, women cannot be free. Our fight to control our own bodies has always been part of our fight for total freedom—and control of our bodies means our minds as well. That is what these fanatics sense, that is why their attacks are so vicious, and that is why we will never let them win.

Check your library for the first ever encyclopedia on

Black Women in America
edited by Darlene Clark Hine

Worker's Bookshelf

Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town, by William Serrin (Random House, 1992), 451 pp.

Terror, fear, intimidation, racial and ethnic segregation, economic discrimination and political corruption marked the methods used by Andrew Carnegie and his second in command, the ruthless H.C. Frick, to establish and maintain control over the community of Homestead and the workers employed at the Homestead Works—a huge complex of mills and furnaces located on the Monongahela River south of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Homestead and class warfare have been synonymous since June, 1892, when Carnegie and Frick broke a historic strike and destroyed the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers—at the time the most powerful union in the nation with 24,000 members. That defeat marked the end of any unionization of steel for almost half a century and dealt the union movement nationally a devastating blow that lasted until the creation of the CIO in the late 1930s.

PEOPLE, RESOURCES DISCARDED

This book, however, while dealing with the strike and its significance, has the much broader perspective of the origins, development and recent demise of the community and its people (the mill closed in 1986). The author's primary thesis, that America uses people and resources—here an entire community—and discards them callously when no longer needed, is served well with his selection of Homestead.

Author Serrin, the son of working-class parents in Michigan, who served recently as labor correspondent for *The New York Times*, remembers his roots well. He spent much of the five years it took him to write the book in Homestead itself, researching primary sources and interviewing workers and their families.

The book, though well written and easy to read, has several serious errors. Serrin's unqualified characterization of John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers union which spearheaded the organization of

Boycott Jacobson's!

Detroit, Mich.—A delegation of women warehouse workers forced off their jobs asked the nearly 2,000 women and men at Detroit's annual International Women's Day celebration March 6 to "Boycott Jacobson's." Nearly 200 members of Teamsters' Union Local 164 in Jackson, Mich. were fired on June 5, 1992 when they struck the profitable nationwide chain of upscale department stores.

The workers refused a contract which called for a three-year wage freeze and an end to company-paid health insurance which would have added a burden of \$850 per year to pay for their coverage. Jacobson's immediately fired the strikers—and permanently replaced them with scabs who accepted the concessions.

Most of the fired workers are women, some with as much as 32 years' seniority. "Warehouse workers are the only unionized employees at Jacobson's," one of the women told *News & Letters*, "and the company was waiting for a chance to break the union." The union demands reinstatement of all fired workers with back pay.

Even if you can't boycott Jacobson's because you can't afford to shop there in the first place, you are needed to leaflet the stores. If there is a store near you, contact Teamsters' Local 164, 3700 Ann Arbor Rd., Jackson, MI 49209, 517/764-1102. They also want to hear from other workers and unions fighting union-busting.

—Susan Van Gelder

Workshop Talks

(continued from page 1)

The president of General Motors, John Smith, says that "We went too long without...recognizing that the people doing the job certainly knew best how that job should be done." Isn't that what we workers have been saying all along? Moreover, management equates its control with the general functions of coordination, communication, direction and planning necessary in any cooperative effort. Supervisors are not bosses, but "facilitators."

However, production at M&M/Mars, Helene Curtis, Johnsonville Sausage or General Motors is not just any cooperative effort; it is capitalist. "The directing motive, the end and aim of capitalist production, is to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus-value, and consequently to exploit labor-power to the greatest possible extent," Karl Marx wrote in *Capital*.

UNAVOIDABLE ANTAGONISM

Therefore, the functions of management are not due simply to the needs of the cooperative labor process, as they would have us believe, but have special characteristics "rooted in the unavoidable antagonism between the exploiter and the living and laboring raw material he exploits." Those "special characteristics" may be obscured by the rhetoric of employee involvement, but they do not disappear.

The capitalists have put a lot of effort into trying to convince us, with all of their talk about productivity and competitiveness, that we have no future apart from theirs, that we cannot exist without them. They're right, in a way. We can't exist as wage slaves without them. But we have a very different future to win.

Steel town tragedy

the CIO, as an arrogant, authoritarian, and bureaucratic union leader cut from the same cloth as his contemporary union leaders is far off the mark.

Lewis, for all of his failings, which were many and serious, not only articulated the aspirations of the American working class as no other had before, he was also the architect and builder of the CIO, which Serrin acknowledges was a major social as well as union movement. Indeed, Serrin emphasizes that it was only with the advent of the CIO that the Homestead workers were able to break the social, economic and political fetters that had shackled them for half a century.

SYSTEM SPAWNS TRAGEDY

Serrin does not make the connection between the inventions which propelled the Homestead Works to the top of the world steelmaking industry and Marx's declaration that every industrial invention discloses manage-



The longest work stoppage in U.S. steelmaking history ended in 1987 with a concessionary contract with USX Corporation. Most USX workers had at least 20 years' seniority due to the loss of steel jobs, and USX had just announced three more plant closings.

ment's unceasing efforts to control the "intractable hand of labor." That assertion, however, is precisely confirmed in the strategy of both Carnegie and Frick leading to the 1892 strike and reinforced thereafter (Homestead Works was the fountainhead of what evolved into the most powerful and exploitative corporation in the world—the U.S. Steel Corporation).

For all of Serrin's passion and insights, all ends in despair and outrage, deploring such merciless wastefulness of people, places and things. Far from being the result of a terrible turn of events, these conditions must be related to an economic system which spawns such dehumanization and which must be totally uprooted in order to offer any hope of solving the dilemma so forcefully described.

—Andy Phillips

'Unorganized' resistance

Chicago, Ill.—The maintenance company that I work for has several different sites at airports in several cities in the eastern U.S. Each site has a site manager, and each shift has a lead mechanic who must follow the directions of the site manager. Since we are under contract to an airfreight carrier, the lead must answer to the airfreight managers also. Their word is final.

Last year the airfreight managers ordered our lead to have someone drill holes into an electrical cabinet while equipment was running and there was live voltage in the cabinet of over 400 volts. The lead suggested the job could wait. After this incident they began to continually harass him, and two days before Christmas he was demoted and placed on the weekend graveyard shift.

When our site manager asked people if they wanted the position, they refused. Others made it clear that if they were asked, they too would refuse. Only one worker wanted the job, because he needed the extra money and wanted to return to our shift, but he was not asked.

One evening the captain of security called for the lead mechanic over the two-way radio. I answered him saying that there was no lead mechanic on duty. He then began asking for the acting lead mechanic. Another worker answered by saying there was no acting lead mechanic. Frustration could be heard in the captain's voice as he pleaded for anybody to call him on the telephone.

We knew this would get back to airfreight management. The next day the site manager again began asking for someone to take the position, and again everyone refused. After seven weeks, the managers gave in and asked the worker who wanted the lead position. Our former lead was allowed to transfer to Indianapolis.

Soon after he was given the OK to go, the former lead came into the shop with a huge smile on his face and said, "We won!" He pointed out that we had forced management to give in to what we wanted and who we wanted and allowing him to leave without being fired.

Yes, it appears we did win, if only for this moment. But how? I always think of resisting by workers putting their heads together and organizing. We did not put our heads together; we didn't organize anything. Each one of us unconsciously resisted at the same time. Was this a fluke? Or is this another way for human beings to rebel against inhuman conditions?

—Martin Almora

Company wants flexibility

New York, N.Y.—There's been another change of operations at work. Seems every time you're just getting used to a bid (shift) or a route, they kick you in the ass. It makes me think what Marx wrote: the capitalist is constantly revolutionizing the means of production. You think, why can't we do it the way we did? But no, they've got to keep coming up with something new. And the worker always gets the short end of the stick.

The (trucking) terminal manager has told the dockmen they are "dinosaurs"—the last of their breed. The company wants flexibility. They want trailer men on the dock bids. They want you to be a switcher (move trailers in the yard) in the afternoon, a dockman in the evening, and run linehaul (take a load to another terminal) at night. I don't think this is what Marx had in mind when he said that once we abolished capitalist wage slavery, we could be a poet in the morning, a farmer in the evening, we would be self-developing all our human capacities.

Dockmen with seniority are not working and casuals are working every day. Even though the company's brilliant plan has put plenty of manpower on the dock, they can't seem to get the trucks out on time. The linehaul drivers are forced to work the dock, and they don't want to. The dockmen feel like any day they might be out. Everyone feels bad, and the work doesn't get done. All their planning and rearranging at headquarters just messes things up for everybody and gets less work out.

Every job is like that. The bigger the company gets, the bigger the gap between those who think up plans and those who have to carry them out. When you reach the extreme of this, you get what Russia or Poland had—all central planning, everyone unhappy, the jobs run all stupid and wasteful. That's the logic of capitalism, which is the separation between mental and manual work.

The only way out of this is to bring the mental and the manual back together, to take our minds back and unite that with our hands and run things ourselves. We certainly know that we know our jobs if they would just leave us alone. But then all those management types would have to do some real work instead of thinking up ways to screw us, all in the name of competition. Hell, if all those parasites, and those who protect them—the politicians, judges, police, military, all producing nothing—if they all had to work, we could be done in a couple of hours and have the rest of the day off to develop ourselves, enjoy our children—and feed the world.

—John Marcotte

Asian immigrant women denied money earned

San Francisco, Cal.—A dozen students, most Asian American women, picketed the Jessica McClintock Inc. outlet here. They pressed shoppers to boycott McClintock's "romantic" dresses. According to a flyer by Asian Immigrant Women's Advocates:

"The dress you buy off the rack for \$175 costs the store half that from Jessica McClintock... Of the wholesale price, half goes to the romantic Ms. McClintock. The other \$42 goes to a cut-throat contractor who made the dress in a blacked-out storefront somewhere in the Bay Area. His cost? Maybe \$15 for the material. And all of \$5 for the woman who sewed it. If she gets paid anything at all... [T]hese are 12 women, Asian immigrants struggling to support their families on far less than minimum wage, who are still waiting for the money they earned."

"The contractors themselves are Chinese," explained one young woman from the Berkeley Asian Student Union. "The reason they hire Chinese contractors is to have direct access to the Chinese labor market, to exploit it. One person of color is put on top to exploit everyone else. It appears not to be a race-based system."

"Initially we were going after the contractor. But he didn't have many assets, and those he did have, he put into his daughter's name. How do you go after the system? This is the problem with labor organizing. But if you take on just one company, it's a start for changing them all."

One young man, explaining his reason for picketing and leafleting, said, "Because we're immigrants, we have a way of not speaking up. These aren't necessarily illegal aliens. It's just that this is the only way these women know how to find work. You don't see the big companies doing this to people not of color. Companies give off an image of being progressive, but the people who do the work get kicked around. Once we do the work, they do the marketing, with Caucasian girls looking romantic in *Vogue* and *Seventeen*. Jessica McClintock has an obligation to these women."

—Jim Mills

Subscribe to News & Letters

Read—and write for—a unique newspaper in which workers speak for themselves in the context of a developing philosophy of revolution.

only \$2.50 per year

News & Letters

59 East Van Buren, Room 702
Chicago, IL 60605

From the writings of Raya Dunayevskaya Marxist-Humanist Archives

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Founder of Marxist-Humanism

Editor's note: On May 24, 1968, in the midst of the near-revolution in France, Raya Dunayevskaya wrote a "Dear Colleagues" letter she titled "On Working Out Our Perspectives: Practicing Dialectics" to members of the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees. We are publishing this letter on "how to practice method" on the eve of the 25th anniversary of France, Spring '68 and as we prepare to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes, letters which disclosed a new dialectic for our age. The complete text of the May, 1968 letter can be found in The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, microfilm #4092. The footnotes are by the editors.

These are times of great stress and it is as well, for the time being, that they remain only in the background. I note, for example, that "Resurrection City"¹ has been rained out today... But, of course, all eyes are on France. With the mass media trying to convey the impression that the Communists are behind the upheaval there, their counter-revolutionary role is well hidden. Yet it is the Communists who made it their business to see that the workers did not accept the student offer to act jointly. It is the Communists who saw to it that the workers accepted a "dialogue" (De Gaulle is really someone to have a dialogue with!) about their grievances. And, no doubt, they will bring in sufficient divisions so that the anti-De Gaulle unity will now be broken up between those who want to "Vote No" rather than act No.

Nothing scares the Communists more than spontaneous revolutionary actions and power in the streets. And nothing pleases De Gaulle more than the role of "saviour." (What, pray, was he saving France from "30 years ago" unless it was that he was trying to overthrow the Popular Front Government and the workers' occupations of the factories then by the abortive fascist coup to which he was very close indeed? Or had he, by fiat, moved up by a year the outbreak of World War II?) And now he will have every one wait for June when he will offer such illusory gains as "profit sharing" and "common interests" in university administration to "protect France from the adventures and usurpations of the most hateful nature and most ruinous."

The situation is fluid enough still and what will happen there next month will change not only France but the world, including the three critical events in this country: the Black revolt, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and the student rebellion. In order to better understand this and work out all the ramifications, I propose to get away from them all, and talk, instead, of seemingly abstract questions.

In our philosophy classes this year² we did try practicing dialectics, but, unfortunately, it was only "theoretically" whereas what is crucial is to practice dialectics politically and organizationally. Thus, some have talked too much from the top of their heads when it came to activities, and others haven't talked at all. Since actions always set off reactions and further ramifications, no doubt talking off the top of your head is a great deal more harmful than keeping silent; nevertheless, silence can't help the organization grow. Of the essence, therefore, for our pre-convention period is reasoned discussion rooted in objectivity.

EGO-CENTRISM, it needs to be understood, is not, philosophically speaking, a question of conceit of an individual. As an individual, Kant was not an egotist. Writing on the eve of the French Revolution, he fought the good fight against the British empiricists; he was the first to bring back to modern life the ancient dialectic; in many ways he anticipated the French Revolution and hailed it when it came. Nevertheless, because philo-

1. The encampment in Washington, D.C. organized by the Poor Peoples Campaign, originally planned by Martin Luther King Jr. before his assassination.

2. Classes, entitled "Practicing dialectics" were held in News and Letters Committees in the Spring of 1968.

'Practicing dialectics'—May, 1968

sophically the Ego was the judge, it was impossible to make any further forward steps. Hegel was not the liberal Kant was, nor the moralist who relied on men of good will ("the general will") to resolve contradictions. Hegel instead, judged by objective, historic developments and self-movement of ideas as well as of history, and therefore released the dialectic from external restrictions. [He] followed its movement through to its logical conclusion [and] elicited such new facets of the dialectic in labor as well, that his dialectic became in fact the "algebra of revolution" because it incorporated in it, or expressed, as you wish, the Enrages³ of the French Revolution in place of the Enlightenment, which is what Kant had transformed into method.

I should also add that ego-centrism wasn't only a bourgeois trait. Marx's main opponent when he first be-



gan working out historical materialism was the philosopher [of] anarchism (Stirner). Throughout the life of the First International this strain, whether in Proudhon, Bakunin, etc., was the biggest obstacle to the building of a revolutionary proletarian movement.

If there is anything we learned from the crimes of Stalinism it is that the counter-revolution within the revolution is by far the most dangerous since it remains after you have already finished with the class enemy. Petty-bourgeois egoism is the bane of existence of the movement when it is young, small in number, isolated from the mass movement which is the only thing that can discipline petty-bourgeois revolutionaries. If there is anything harder for such a revolutionary than the proverbial camel through a needle's eye, it is self-discipline.

"Every beginning must be made from the Absolute," wrote Hegel. And if ever anything sounded fantastic, abstract, nonsensical, incorrect and most certainly inapplicable to Marxist analysis, this surely sounded like the sentence that would win the prize, until—World War I broke out and almost all the Marxist leaders lined up behind the Kaiser. It wasn't only self-movement that Lenin discovered in Hegel's philosophy, it was also the plunge into freedom that a generalization gives you. Keeping in mind the example I gave the class of a generalization that achieves just that—that is to say, the realization by a worker that it isn't just his foreman or his buddy's supervisor or the boss named Joe but that it was a capitalist class characteristic—reread the quotation from Lenin that appears on p. 15 of the Lecture Notes of my philosophy outline about the formation of abstract notions.⁴

Now it isn't only for the study of Hegel or even Marx and Lenin that "beginning from the Absolute" instead of the immediate situation before you is a necessity. It is for our everyday activities. Somewhere Jean-Paul Sartre has a quite brilliant and correct expression about revolution being "a daily practice illuminated by theory." Practice that a while. Think of Marx reading galley proofs of Capital and suddenly deciding (sparked by a question by Dr. Kugelman, no doubt a stupid petty-bourgeois question at that) there is no point to letting that chapter on Commodities stand so concretely as it stands; better make a "little addition," like a whole big fat absolute, a notion, THE FETISHISM OF COM-

3. The spokesmen of the mass revolutionary movement in the French Revolution. See Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 31.

MODITIES, right there, in the very first chapter, on that simple most everyday thing, a commodity. And what happens from 1867 when it was written, to 1915 when Lenin reads the Science of Logic? Why, every Marxist brings it down to size—his narrow, simple "class struggle" size—rather than the FREELY ASSOCIATED LABOR as the only ones capable of ripping the fetish away from that little product of labor. Lordy, how many times must we retrace our steps, and make generalizations about that which is already past and therefore everyone agrees with it, only in order, at the very first crisis the individual experiences, to have the whole dialectic, not to mention simple human relations between comrades, go by the board and the egotist is off, rambling like an idiot!

O.K. LET'S TRY AGAIN. Let's try it closer to home; though it may not be within your individual experience, it is near enough to test yourself. The year is 1953, which, as against the formally correct date of 1955, is the real (in the Hegelian-Marxian sense of rational and quintessential) breaking point of the state-capitalist tendency. I don't know how many have reread those May 12 and May 20, 1953 letters on the Absolute Idea that I asked you all to read for the philosophy lectures.⁵ But in any case some of you experienced that break we made from Johnson.⁶ Heretofore we have stressed that the great philosophic breakthrough was my "translating" Hegel's analysis of Absolute Mind as containing a movement from practice. This, of course, remains historically true, and it remains true in practice since both *News & Letters* and *Marxism and Freedom* were founded on that principle.

Now, however, I wish to show how those letters on that abstract, abstruse Absolute anticipated the future of both big events and the establishment of Correspondence.⁷ Or, more precisely put, didn't influence the establishment of an attempted workers' paper and thus led to breakup. As you know, 1953 was a very eventful year which became historic, first, on March 5th, when Stalin died. Between that day and the next historic turning point, June 17, the East German revolt, I wrote two letters, on May 12 and May 20, 1953. I was quite unconscious of separating myself theoretically from Johnson, and when I pointed to a difference between one interpretation of Hegel and another, attributed it to a difference in dates. Johnson had written his notes on Dialectics in 1948, I mine in 1953.

Mind you, 1953 was then a very silent year; the death of Stalin had not produced a new situation at once and therefore the bourgeois press kept up its prattle about the impossibility of any actions within a totalitarian land; on the other hand, in 1948 we were still expecting revolution at least in Western Europe. Yet in May 1953 I wrote that Johnson's 1948 Dialectics manuscript "meant only the general development of socialism through overcoming Stalinism, whereas now we can be more concrete."⁸ And I proceeded to concretize by saying there will be totally new types of revolts because "our age proves it has abolished the distinction between theory and practice and that which is the pre-occupation of the theorists, freedom out of one-party totalitarianism, is the preoccupation of the great masses."⁹ A month later the East German Revolt broke out.

When it came to further concretize this two weeks later (the convention for voting to begin Correspondence was July 4th) I thought it meant that theory would no longer be restricted to "theoretical organs" but be written directly in the paper, the workers-paper-to-be. As you all know, it didn't work out that way; a new paper, *News & Letters*, was needed before we could practice both theory and self-activity of workers. One final word on the question of theory and those 1953 letters and that is the fact that, just as the movement from practice was said to be not only to theory but to a new society, so the movement from theory was not only to practice but as "the mediating agent" of a new society.

(continued on page 10)

4. "The formation of (abstract) notions and operations with them already includes idea, conviction, consciousness of the law-governed character of the objective connection of the world. To distinguish causality from this connection is stupid. To deny the objectivity of notions, the objectivity of the universal in the individual and in the particular, is impossible. Consequently, Hegel is much more profound than Kant, and others, in tracing the reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions. Just as the simple form of value, the individual act of exchange of one given commodity for another already includes in an underdeveloped form all the main contradictions of capitalism, so the simplest generalization, the first and simplest formation of notions (judgments, syllogisms, etc.) already denotes man's ever deeper cognition of the objective connection of the world. Here is where one should look for the true meaning, significance, and role of Hegel's Logic. This NB." This quotation from Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* is found in Dunayevskaya's "Notes on a series of lectures: Lenin on Hegel's Science of Logic," *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, microfilm #3885.

5. For the text of the May 12 and May 20, 1953 Letters see *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism*, News & Letters, 1989.

6. Johnson was the organizational name used by C.L.R. James, a co-leader, with Raya Dunayevskaya, of the state-capitalist tendency.

7. Correspondence was the name of the paper published by Correspondence Committees from 1953 to 1955, the organization founded by the state-capitalist tendency.

8. *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism*, p. 32.

9. *Ibid*, p. 33

News & Letters

Vol. 38 No. 3

APRIL, 1993

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published 10 times a year, monthly, except bi-monthly January-February and August-September for \$2.50 a year (bulk order of five or more — 15¢) by *News & Letters*, 59 East Van Buren, Rm. 707, Chicago, IL 60605. Telephone (312) 663-0839. Second Class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *News & Letters*, 59 East Van Buren, Rm. 707, Chicago, IL 60605.

Raya Dunayevskaya, Chairwoman,
National Editorial Board (1955-1987)

Charles Denby, Editor (1955-1983)

Olga Domanski, Peter Wermuth, Co-National
Organizers, News and Letters Committees

Eugene Walker, Managing Editor

Mike Connolly, Marxist-Humanist Archivist

Felix Martin, Labor Editor



News & Letters
is printed in
a union shop.

Editorial

Clinton's economic policy and workers' sacrifice

The President's favorite word for his economic package is "sacrifice," the need of the American people to sacrifice in order to repair the sick U.S. economy. A young worker gave his reaction: "Sacrifice!? What does he mean? We don't have anything left to sacrifice. Our lives already feel as if we have been living on top of a volcano."

The young worker had been a meatpacker in a unionized Chicago plant through much of the '80s. But the wages stagnated over the decade, then the jobs began to disappear. By the end of the decade he and the 200 other workers in the plant were being pushed onto the street. He found another job just before the plant closed, in a nonunion shop at a lower wage. Many others from the plant—women and men, Black, Latino and white—are still on the street.

In truth it has been the U.S. working class (two forgotten words) that has already sacrificed deeply throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. It is only now that the press and the television news, caught for so long in Reagan's ideological pull, are discovering what American working people have been experiencing for more than a decade—that Reaganomics was carried out on the backs of working people, that the "job growth" of the Reagan/Bush era was for the most part in low-wage, no-benefits employment. In addition, the enormous increase in military spending combined with tax breaks for the corporations and rich has meant a huge increase in the Federal debt and yearly deficit which working people now and in the future are chained to.

NEW AMERICAN SWEATSHOP

Under Reagan and Bush much of the economic restructuring took the form of the outright lowering of wages through concession contracts, breaking union contracts. Much of the "growth" took place in nonunion, often part-time service jobs for "disposable," that is, temporary workers. Temporary-help agencies have displaced permanent-placement agencies. One owner of such an agency noted that some companies are providing their entire work force via temporary help: "I call it the new American sweatshop. It's four people who are owners or managers in a shop that has 200 people. They might have 12 permanent employees who are making \$6.50 an hour. All the others are paid \$4.75. And they're all temporaries."

Today the working class is being asked by a new president to sacrifice for a questionable future. Clinton in his campaign recognized the great dissatisfaction of the American people with the direction of the 1980s. But his call for "sacrifice" and "change" is not a fundamental break from the Reagan/Bush era.

Ever since the 1974-75 world-wide recession there has been a shortage of capital for investment, nationally and internationally. Each administration, from Ford to Carter, Reagan, Bush and now Clinton, has recognized this problem, and each has sought in different ways to obtain that capital from the working class.

Clinton recognizes that you cannot continue to run the U.S. economy based on an increase in \$5 and \$6 an hour temporary service jobs. Nor can you run up debt of \$300 billion and more each year into the future. His long-term proposal for restructuring the American economy relies on technology: funding hi-tech research by transferring funds from military to civilian hands, investment credit for the introduction of more machinery in the workplace. But far from solving the problem, its implementation would produce more unemployment. In the last decade heavy industries have so computerized and automated that mass production no longer means mass employment. Job losses have become permanent. Is this the vision of our future that Clinton is offering? Is this where the sacrifice will lead?

Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich has recognized that "the entire system (of work) has fragmented." But neither he nor Clinton wants to acknowledge that not only are we in a "recovery" without jobs, but there is an illusion that we can have an "economy" without workers.

THE TODAYNESS OF MARX

More than one hundred years ago Marx wrote that

even if the capitalists could appropriate the entire 24-hour workday, and the workers lived only on air, it would not solve the crisis of capitalism. Despite all of the rhetoric about Marxism being dead, Marx's description of the general law of motion of capitalist society, the relative use of more and more dead labor (machinery) and less living labor (human beings), is forever being demonstrated anew. Today's economy is one where more and more workers face low-wage, part-time work when they don't face the unemployment line. We have both an army of unemployed and an increasingly pauperized working class.

Capitalism is continually compelled to restructure itself and knows only two ways to do so: 1) to squeeze its working class directly by speed-up, cutting wages and benefits, including through taxes; 2) to throw its working class on the street through the introduction of ever more machinery to replace the living worker.

Clinton speaks about pursuing a policy of greater capital investment into hi-tech production, but so far lacks the capital to do so. He hopes much of that capital will come through worker "contributions." The capitalists will certainly welcome this, but they as well intend to pursue their search for decreasing the cost of production through lower wages and benefits.

We need look no further than the latest would-be strike in the coal industry to see this. The major issue in dispute is the fact that Peabody and other coal companies wish to operate nonunion mines with lower wages and benefits (and perhaps safety standards?) simultaneously with their mines under union contract, gradually shifting more mining to nonunion operations. In February, less than a month after the United Mine Workers Union began a strike against the largest coal operator, Peabody Holding Co., the union leaders told the workers to return to work under the old contract and negotiations would continue. Instead of expanding the strike, the union bureaucracy chose to call it off.

An ever increasing percentage of coal is being mined in nonunion mines. An effective strike cannot be waged without expanding the strike to all mines, union and nonunion. Mine workers are having to sacrifice a living wage in this most dangerous of industries where they already often sacrifice their health and very lives.

Philosophic Dialogue

To show Hegel's Science of Logic as stages of revolution as Raya Dunayevskaya does in the Archives column, "Logic as Stages of Freedom, Stages of Freedom as Logic" (N&L, December, 1992), is provocative. Take her discussion of the category Particular from Hegel's categories of Universal, Particular and Individual in the Science of Logic. She writes of it as representing an historic period, "which contains self-movement if it is to move to the 'individual,' and not retrogress into a fixed particular like nationalized property."

Even the particular historic moment of the Russian Revolution, which aimed to manifest Lenin's Universal of "To a man" organizing and running production, could become "fixed" into only nationalized property, and not be concretized as the freedom of the Individual, in the form of Soviets, Workers' Councils. There wasn't that self-movement to the Individual, what Raya called "nodal points where 'Individual' overcomes 'Particular.'"

If even as great a Particular as a social revolution doesn't "make it," and in fact becomes transformed into its opposite, as Russia became a state-capitalist society under Stalin, then there must be something damn difficult both philosophically and in life about the Particular that revolutionaries haven't yet grasped.

The Particular in Hegel's Logic is the middle term, between Universal, the idea of a new society, and Individual, the human beings creating/concretizing that universal. But that Particular is not simply a way station between Universal and Individual. Rather, it is the place/space/historic moment (form of organization?), where the Universal and the Individual are jammed to-

gether, the crucible where the actualization of the Idea of freedom either becomes worked out or the revolution is aborted.

Raya writes of our heritage being dual because revolutions, even as great as the Russian, failed to fully give birth to a new society. She adds, "We must make it (our heritage) single, concrete, totally philosophic and totally revolutionary." I want to ask, is the Particular the realm for working this out?

I have in mind here specifically the Particular of Organization that Raya was working on in the last years of her life—Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy. Not just any organization, but what Raya was speaking of in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism*, "a small group like us," that she links to "looking for the objectivity of subjectivity." How does a small group work out its revolutionary meaning, not within any mechanical "vanguard party to lead," nor alone in recording what the masses are saying and doing, but within the philosophic realm of "the objectivity of subjectivity"?

Can we think of it philosophically in the following manner: If the Particular is a "small group like us," then as Mediation between the Universal and the Individual it is challenged to jam together the Organization of Thought with the organizations born of Spontaneity. Here the Organization of Thought is Philosophy as the Idea of Freedom for your age—the Universal, while these organizations created spontaneously by masses in motion in struggle are the Individual. Thus you are speaking of the totality of Universal, Particular, Individual.

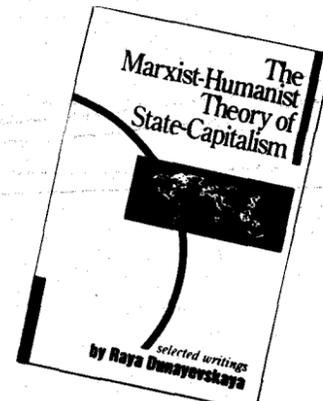
Or perhaps you can think instead of Organization in its various forms as all within the Particular, "moments" of the Particular. Here the Organization of Thought as the concretization of philosophy becomes one moment, while Organization born of spontaneity by masses in motion, be it soviets or mass strikes or committees, is another moment. Revolutionary groups of Marxist thinkers/activists become a third moment.

Whichever way one wants to think about it, what becomes key is that organization of thought and organizations born of spontaneity cannot simply co-exist side by side without interpenetration. That would only be a halfway dialectic. The challenge, the role of a small group which sees itself as a philosophic/action group, is to jam those other two forms of organization together. There is nothing mechanical or formulaic about this role. It means that group has to have within it the organization of thought and the self-organization of masses in motion and to concretely work out ways for their unity. What a far cry this is from all the old post-Marx Marxist concepts of organization. It is a tremendous challenge, but without it there is simply no way of moving from Universal to Individual and from Individual to Universal. It seems very integral to what Raya wrote about Hegel's categories being stages of revolution and thus pathways to a new society.

What's behind Clinton's calls for "sacrifice"?

The high organic composition of capital in advanced capitalist countries, which makes necessary a comparable technical composition in any single society, demands sacrifice in the sphere of the production of articles of mass consumption. That the resulting distribution of the scarce means of consumption is at the expense of the proletariat as whole is only the "natural" result of value production.

—from "The Nature of the Russian Economy," in *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings* by Raya Dunayevskaya.



To order your copy of these 17 essays by Raya Dunayevskaya send \$8.50 plus 85¢ postage to News & Letters, 59 E. Van Buren, Chicago, IL 60605.

The 'Particular' of Organization

Coming in May: A Marxist-Humanist workshop-class series

Recreating the Dialectic for today's Changed World

Celebrating the 40th anniversary of Raya Dunayevskaya's "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes"

Class 1: Spontaneity, Consciousness, Organization

Class 2: The Missing Link in post-Marx Marxism, from Lenin and Luxemburg to Lukacs and C.L.R. James

Class 3: Dialectics of Philosophy and Organization

Readings include *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* which contains Dunayevskaya's Letters on Hegel's Absolutes of May 12 and 20, 1953; selections from Dunayevskaya's *Marxism*

and *Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution*, and Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation*, and Marx's *Philosophy of Revolution*; writings from the *Marxist-Humanist Archives*.

For information on dates and times for each class, and for a copy of the reading syllabus, contact the News and Letters Committee local in your area. See directory page 10.

I couldn't believe that President Clinton had the nerve to ask me to make sacrifices so he could balance the budget and improve the economy—I've been sacrificing ever since the early 1980s. If he would read Michelle Landau's article last issue on the crisis in health care he would find out those of us who no longer have any finances are now sacrificing our very lives.

Martin Almora

It's not just in L.A. that there are preparations going on against potential revolt. It's true in Detroit, too. Rulers get scared whenever there is a mass reaction to anything, like the death of seven children in a house fire here in February. There was anger at the city for having cut off water only hours before the fire. People were angry at the parents, but they recognized the context. Whenever regulations come down it is supposedly to help people but it winds up another way to control people. Those children died because the situation was so dire that people live in houses that should be condemned.

Observer
Detroit

It was great the way Mitchel Cohen's article "Cynical manipulation of hunger in Somalia" exposed that the same "progressive" organizations in the U.S. that botched the anti-Gulf War movement are now supporting U.S. troops in Somalia. He is right on target when he says that what these liberals are really for is "cleaner imperialism." He then argues, on the one hand, that Somalia's "decentralized villages and clans have circumvented prior attempts" to fully imperialize Africa, but, on the other hand, he attributes the famine strictly to U.S./IMF/World Bank policies. I think his critique of the "progressives" in the U.S. would be stronger if he were more concrete about the internal conflicts and contradictions that have played a part in fracturing Somalia rather than posing problems as merely the result of an external military and economic force. Is being "decentralized" enough to fight imperialism and capitalism if the idea of freedom is not worked out?

Jim Guthrie
Chicago

The Clinton administration is pressing for a massive increase in apprenticeship programs. Industry never passes up an opportunity to turn a well-intentioned program into its opposite, and these programs can easily become little more than government authorization to hire people at half the wage rate paid to a company's other workers. In Wisconsin, the Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Council has already gone off yet another deep end, voting recently to consider apprenticeships in the so-called "hospitality industry" (read: restaurants)—as if one needed three or four years to learn how to wait tables!—and ought to be paid a "training wage" during this extended period. Under the 20-year-old Targeted Jobs Tax Credit program, allegedly designed to reward companies for hiring "disadvantaged" youth, the main beneficiary has always been MacDonald's. Who says Burger King is the home of the "whopper"?

Skeptic
Chicago

Recently I saw "Manufacturing Consent," a film about Noam Chomsky, which was very disappointing. Chomsky is almost totally wrapped up in proving that the mass media serve to perpetuate the rulers' ideology and stop people from questioning authority. To him, ideology is an undifferentiated abstraction, so he never sees anything new in it; the film takes up the U.S. war against Iraq, but only as continued proof of the media's covering up the imperialist policies of the U.S.

Even in opposing that horrible ideology, Chomsky takes its ground: although lip service is given to resistance and "common sense," the masses are portrayed only as objects of ideological manipulation, never as subjects. I don't know if the movie was made before or after the L.A. Rebellion, but either way there's no excuse for totally ignoring

the crucial role of spontaneous revolts in breaking through all ideological barriers.

Former anarchist
Santa Barbara

Was Albert Gore really attempting to put a human face on state-capitalist reality with this inspiring quote: "It's time we had a new customer service contract with the American people"?

Uninspired
Chicago

I used up my unemployment and my extension, too. I want a job, any job. I watch C-SPAN and see them there in their suits—Clinton, Bush, Perot, Jesse Jackson. I don't like any of them. All they want is for me to get a bottle and a Saturday Night Special from the liquor and gun stores that are all over my neighborhood and to go rob a store so they can send me to jail. Not one of these politicians has done anything for me. The last people they'll do anything for are the Black people. The only ones I ever liked were all assassinated, and if I ever found any I liked again, I'm sure they'd try to assassinate them, too.

Young, Black and unemployed
New York



INCOME TAX TIME

Income tax time—when we know that 55% of the federal budget for fiscal year 1993 is allotted to current military (\$317 billion) and past military (\$285 billion) spending—fires my outrage at a national security policy based on war. I take some small comfort by continuing to deduct the federal excise tax from my phone bill. Hopefully, the thousands who do the same (although it is largely unpublicized), as well as others who withhold a percentage of their federal income tax to protest the military budget, will find some connection between an act of opposition and the theory of total and ongoing revolution.

Sheila
New York

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND REVOLUTION

In her book *Gathering Rage*, reviewed in the March issue, I see Margaret Randall seriously trying to get a deeper understanding of her past experiences, especially her involvement in the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions between 1969 and 1984. Yet she has made some contradictory statements....I can identify with a lot of her confusions having been from another country whose revolution has failed and who is still trying to understand what my experiences were all about. One's view of women's liberation and revolution changes when one tries to grapple with Dunayevskaya's body of ideas. Looking at women's liberation only politically is a limitation. While feminist theory and discourse may be helpful, it does not have the totality of a philosophy to lead us to a truly human new society.

Filipina revolutionary
New York

I feel that we all can learn a lot from Margaret Randall's questions about feminism, revolution and Marxist-Humanism in her *Gathering Rage*. I mean the way she raised the 1953 breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutism as what led Raya Dunayevskaya first to a rereading of Marx's early works and then to discovering his final writings, which she relates to her discussion of "revolution in permanence." It made me feel Randall was posing the question of how that 1953 breakthrough enabled Dunayevskaya to see Marxism as a philosophy of revolution in permanence.

At the same time, Julia Jones' Essay was exciting because she showed a process of investigation by first looking at McKinnon's book and checking her claims against Marx's own text in *Capital*, and by then contrasting McKinnon's view of freedom to the concept of a total uprooting projected in *Rosa Lux-*

Readers' Views

emburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. Nothing was posed as a "given."

Graduate philosophy student
San Francisco

Latino and women's groups here at Cal State are protesting against the intended April reinstatement of the fraternity Zeta Beta Tao. Last October a UCLA fraternity song book which was circulated among students provoked widespread indignation. One song about "Lupe the Mexican Whore" suggested violence towards women in general and Latina women in particular. Other songs were explicitly homophobic and racist. Zeta Beta Tao was suspended from all activity for 14 months. Now, after only four months, the university has decided to reinstate ZBT after pressure from their lawyers on the grounds of "free speech." But Mecha, Las Mujeres de Aztlan and other groups are demanding a continuation of the suspension.

Chicano Studies major
Northridge, Cal.

signed to keep out the anti-choice people, but certain Left groups that did not agree with NOW's conservative agenda. Two high school women were not allowed to "register" because they were under the age of 18. (Those of us who didn't sign did just fine without the darn stickers.)

Suzanne Rose
Illinois

Operation Rescue director Randall Terry, recognizing a kindred spirit in militant cult leader David Koresh, recently proclaimed: "it is time for Christians to rise up against the ATF." His wording would suggest that Christians, perhaps oppressed by the ATF's regulation of alcohol, tobacco, and firearms, have long awaited an opportunity to overthrow this agency. It might be of strategic merit that OR members, centering their energies upon interfering with women's clinics, be kept reminded of their director's wider concept of "pro-life" activities.

Tesla Coil
Normal, IL

THE ITALIAN SCENE

I do not anticipate a revolutionary year ahead. I believe we will witness the quarrels of the ruling bourgeoisie. Odilon Barrot was crying, 150 years ago, "la legalite nous tue" and now in Italy legality is killing the Socialist Party (the right wing of the Christian Democrats). The latter ruled the country for 40 years and sacked it with a velvet glove, but in order to keep power they had to take the Socialists into the "room of buttons" (the center of power). The Socialists institutionalized the robbery in the public works to such a point that they have lost support of those who didn't share enough in the booty. Presently there are 60 members of Parliament under inquiry and about 100 top officials under arrest. The workers enjoy the show but take no part in the rebellion—unless we consider that support for the Socialist Party has fallen by 80%. They now plan to do what the Communist Party did—change their name. Meanwhile the economic crisis is growing and 500,000 workers will lose their jobs this year.

R. Radames
Italy

ANTI-ABORTION TERRORISM

The murder of Dr. Gunn by the anti-abortion, anti-woman fanatic is so horrifying to me that when I think about it I feel totally sick. He was a human being who enabled women to have at least some self-determination in this misogynist society. It is clear that self-determination as an idea has nothing whatsoever to do with what life is all about as far as the anti-choice fanatics are concerned. They have the most warped view of what it means to be human—obedience to them and if not, then death. That's their view and plan for women—that our lives are to be lived as obedient objects.

This murder is about Dr. Gunn, but it is equally about women who seek to live our lives the way we want to. We will win this battle because the only other choice is death—literally, as well as the meaning of what it is to be/become human.

Sonia Bergonzi
Chicago

It was the murder of Dr. Gunn that brought many of us to South Bend, Ind. to do a clinic defense the week he was killed. But it left me feeling angry and disturbed. The first people I encountered were NOW people who had set up a table to "register" the pro-choice people. We were asked to sign a statement which said, among other things, "I am not a member of Refuse and Resist, NWROC, or any other organization that advocates violence as a means of keeping abortion clinics open." Then you had to show a driver's license or some other form of identification in order to get your orange CHOICE sticker.

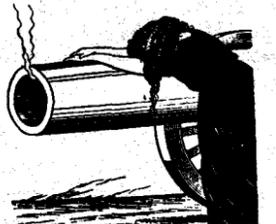
It seemed clear that this was not de-

NO 'LESSER EVIL'

The battle between the so-called "reformist" Boris Yeltsin and the Communist-dominated Russian Congress reminded me of what Charles Denby wrote 20 years ago: "There is no middle road anymore. The days when we accepted that we had to take the lesser of two evils are gone." The world today shows that capitalism, private or state, has reached its absolute and has no way to develop further. It's up to us—the workers, the women, and the minorities of the world—to rid ourselves of the old society and create a new humanism. I have no doubt we are going to do it.

Felix Martin
Pico Rivera

Editor's Note: Charles Denby was the Black production worker-editor of *N&L* from 1955 to his death in 1983. See ad p. 7 for his *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*.



SOLIDARITY WITH BOSNIA

At the International Women's Day (IWD) events this month I was glad to have the March issue to discuss with people. But the January-February issue with the Lead by Peter Wermuth was also indispensable because the situation of the rapes and murders in Bosnia was on so many minds. It was not only that he wrote of the Serbian revanchists' "brutal massacres, mutilation of bodies, and mass rapes of Muslim women..." It was the powerful way he revealed the U.S.'s role: "Like Stalin who stood outside the gates of Warsaw in 1944 while Hitler slaughtered a mass uprising, U.S. imperialism manages to come to the 'aid' of suffering peoples only after they have been decimated by the forces arrayed against them. The 'benign imperialism' offers humanity its 'freedom' only on the day of its burial." That kind of critique helps us to see the work needed to create genuine IWD solidarity.

Women's Liberationist
Chicago

It has been very frustrating to try to involve people from the peace movement here in an effort to help the people of Bosnia. I have been met with everything from lack of action at best to outright hostility. Some have gone so far as to say "if Russia is sympathetic to Serbia there must be something right about what is happening." Others say that Bosnians are Muslims and "if we help them we could get tied up with Islamic fundamentalism." And this comes from the Left, the peace movement! I've been cutting out all the articles on Bosnia I've found in *N&L* to circulate to others to try to cut through this miserable situation.

Artist
Boston

PHILOSOPHIC NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE ARCHIVES

In reading "From the Archives" which reprinted the 1983 new Introduction to *American Civilization on Trial* (January-February and March, 1993), I was surprised at how much is on Frantz Fanon and how his work could have been the basis for a new revolutionary philosophy. Then Dunayevskaya turned to South Africa and saw a whole philosophy of freedom in one word/activity—"Amandla!" Turning to Marx she saw his founding of the First International as tying him tightly to America's Second Unfinished Revolution when he came to the aid of the North, especially the Abolitionists. It all left me amazed at how open a philosophy of revolution-in-performance is and what a different vision of the future it gives you.

John Marcotte
New York

would find a worked out analysis but a direction to work one out for the new situation. Take her "Needed American Revolution" thesis in which she devoted a whole section to the categories of Hegel's Logic. (See "From the Archives" column, December, 1992 N&L.) Her thrust there was "1969 is not 1968" not only politically but philosophically. That didn't mean she was going to change her agenda, which was to complete *Philosophy and Revolution*. The point was not to critique the movement's failure, but to get down to establishing new beginnings. The periods after failed revolutions are very disorienting. That is why reprinting this thesis in N&L today was so important.

Librarian
Detroit

OBJECTIVITY OF COGNITION AND 'BLACK MASSES AS VANGUARD'

The Los Angeles rebellion may have shown how horrible living conditions in this country are, but it did not answer the question as to whether new visions of a new society will guide future revolts. Mike Flug's essay had a great impact on me because he spoke directly to the question of "what to do" given this situation. I was especially excited by his discussion of "the realm of Mind," the objectivity of cognition for projecting new visions of the future. The objectivity of cognition is what both vulgar materialists and post-modernists deny. So it was refreshing to finally find someone who presented a different view of the role revolutionary thought can play. I'm still not sure I understand all of what Dunayevskaya meant by the "objectivity of subjectivity," but Flug's essay was very exciting in probing it through a discussion of the concrete issues facing Black America.

Women's Liberationist
Chicago

In the 1963 original text of *American Civilization on Trial* women's history is there, waiting to be developed. The courageous woman editor of a student paper, Sidna Brower, was singled out along with Harriet Tubman in a way that placed women within the history that was in the making at two different periods. In the 1983 new Introduction, Dunayevskaya develops the idea of women's liberation much further—from Sojourner Truth to Maria Stewart to the Igbo women's war to Rosa Luxemburg's prescience on imperialism. As I see it, once she made a category of "Women as Reason as well as Force of Revolution," the material already there became a springboard for a whole series of possible essays. I recall one in N&L by John Alan on Ida B. Wells and the original Black anti-imperialist leagues. What about an essay now on Amy Jacques Garvey as a response to Spike Lee's latest movie?

Urszula Wislanka
Bay Area

When Dunayevskaya said not to despair when something new arose, that we could "find it" in the Archives of Marxist-Humanism, she didn't mean we

I have a question about Michael Flug's essay on "Organization, Spontaneity and Philosophy: Black Masses as Vanguard" in the January-February is-

sue. It's very comprehensive, but I had the feeling that he rushed to criticize the Black Revolution. When I read Raya Dunayevskaya's 1983 Introduction to *American Civilization on Trial* in the same issue, I saw her trying to impress on us the great affinity that exists between the Black dimension and Marxist-Humanism. It made me wonder if the essay didn't give short shrift to the Black dimension as philosophy.

The Essay made me reread Chapter 9 of *Philosophy and Revolution* and this is what stood out for me: "We may not have a Hegel or a Marx or a Lenin, but we do have what no other age has had in such depth—the movement from praxis whose quest for universality does not stop with practice but hungers for a uniting of theory to practice." If we don't begin to show how objective is this quest for philosophy I don't think we will get very far with proving the objectivity of cognition.

Mitch Wirth
Oakland, Cal.



WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

The upcoming 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising against the fascists—and the reference to that revolt in the January-February Lead—sent me back to look at where it was discussed in the first Part of *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*. Dunayevskaya there shows how crucial it was that the analysis of the transformation into opposite of a workers' state into a state-capitalist society was held inseparable from pointing to "new forms of workers' revolt," even when they were crushed. I suddenly saw that Dunayevskaya's vision of history was like Marx's after the defeat of the Paris Commune—and the absolute opposite from any theorists who thought

the idea of freedom could be compromised.

Young worker
Chicago

HEALTH CARE CRISIS

The Lead on "The crisis in health care" as the "mirror of our dehumanized society" (March, 1993 N&L) was just how I feel. It is part of the whole system. But so many in the middle class still feel we have to preserve this system. They think of the U.S. as the land where hi-tech medicine has created miracles and feel threatened by the thought that this "state of the art" might not be available to them. But it's not available except for a tiny number of the wealthy. That article needs to get a wider circulation. I wish it could be printed in a more widely read type of paper. Or, better, that N&L was read by millions more than it is now.

Nurse-practitioner
Chicago

As bad as are the conditions the Lead described, I've seen much worse. The only thing revolutionary about hospitals is when they are on strike.

Working woman
New York

There certainly is a crisis in health care in this society. I have the best health insurance and just had surgery in one of the better hospitals. The doctors were good and the nurses excellent, but the process itself is distressing. You lie there powerless. Everything is done to you. You can only decide whether you like it or not. It is psychologically down beating. They create mounds of paper on you for no reason except for legal and insurance purposes. Half the time the nurses are doing nothing but writing or recording every little item for billing purposes. You get a new needle for an injection and a bar code gets peeled off and put on your chart for billing. You can see these people struggling in a screwed up system, trying to do the best they can, but the bureaucracy makes such demands.

Reader
Phoenix

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS

—BOOKS—

- Marxism and Freedom ...from 1776 until today**
1989 edition. New introduction by author
by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$17.50 per copy
- Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao**
1989 edition. New introduction by author
by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$14.95 per copy
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution**
1991 edition. New introduction by author. Forward by Adrienne Rich.
by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$12.95 per copy
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future**
by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$15.95 per copy
- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: selected writings.**
by Raya Dunayevskaya \$8.50 per copy
- Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal**
1989 edition includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya, "Charles Denby 1907-83"
by Charles Denby.....\$14.95 per copy
- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings** by Raya Dunayevskaya. Contains "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," and 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes."
\$3.00 paperback, \$10.00 hardcover

—PAMPHLETS—

- Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis**
Contains introduction, "Today's Epigones Who Try to Truncate Marx's Capital," and Chapters Five through Eight of *Marxism and Freedom*
by Raya Dunayevskaya\$2 per copy
- The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.**
by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$2 per copy
- 25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. A History of Worldwide Revolutionary Developments** by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$1.50 per copy
- American Civilization on Trial, Black Masses as Vanguard.**
Statement of the National Editorial Board. Includes "A 1980s View of the Two-Way Road Between the U.S. and Africa," by Raya Dunayevskaya, and "Black Caucuses in the Unions"
by Charles Denby.....\$2 per copy
- Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions**
by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$1.25 per copy
- Constitution of News & Letters Committees**29¢ postage
- Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought**
by Lou Turner and John Alan\$3 per copy
- Selections from Raya Dunayevskaya's Writings on the Middle East** \$2.50 per copy
- Working Women for Freedom**
by Angela Terrano, Marie Dignan and Mary Holmes\$1 per copy
- Dos ensayos por Raya Dunayevskaya. Spanish language pamphlet**
1989 edition \$2.00 per copy

—ARCHIVES—

- The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development**
A 15,000-page microfilm collection on eight reels \$160
- Guide and Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development**
Full description of 15,000-page microfilm collection \$4.50

—NEWSPAPER—

- Subscription to News & Letters**
Unique combination of worker and intellectual, published 10 times a year.....\$2.50 per year
- Bound volume of News & Letters (1977-1984, or 1984-1987).....\$20.00 ea.**

MAIL ORDERS TO:

News & Letters, 59 East Van Buren,
Room 707, Chicago, Ill. 60605

Enclosed find \$----- for the literature checked. (4/93)
Please add 85¢ for each item for postage.
Ill. residents add 8% sales tax

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

News & Letters is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.
News & Letters, as well as other Marxist-Humanist literature, is available on tape for the blind. For information, write to News & Letters.

Black/Red View

by John Alan

This April 4th, twenty five years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. The nation has remembered that day; and there is no doubt that many eulogies have been given and an untold number of references made to Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and his philosophy of non-violence. But at this moment, is American civilization ready to recognize its own complicity in King's assassination by ending racism and poverty in this country? Obviously the answer is NO! We don't have to quote a bundle of statistics to show why the answer is no; the Los Angeles rebellion gave ample proof of it.

Dr. King was the preeminent leader of the Civil Rights Movement that radically changed Black and white relations in this country. These changes were historic in scope. Venerable practices of racism, which reduced African Americans to the status of a thing, were uprooted. Jim Crow signs were torn down and segregation in public places was "abolished" by boycotts and mass sit-ins. The movement put American civilization on trial and pressured the courts to open up the ballot boxes to Southern Blacks, who had been disenfranchised since the post-Reconstruction period.

PHILOSOPHY OF NONVIOLENCE

King advocated and practiced a "philosophy" of non-violent direct action against the forces of segregation. For him, civil disobedience was an act of "self-emanipation." Indeed, this concept was pivotal to the Movement and was the original reason for its spontaneous beginning in Montgomery, Ala.

King, in his "Letter from a Birmingham jail," raises self-emanipation to the level of a principle, when he rejects the proposal of a group of white clergymen to confine the struggle to legalism. "We can never forget," he wrote, "that everything Hitler did was... 'legal' and every thing that the Freedom Fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal'...this calls for confrontation with the power structure."

Many of us didn't realize at that time that Dr. King had broken with the past. Not just with the old dehumanizing Southern master/servant relationship, but with the method by which that relationship would be changed. Here King was not specifically speaking about "a philosophy of nonviolence," but a philosophy of human liberation, which he universalizes by joining it with the Hungarian mass uprising against state-capitalism.

After the battle was won over the legal manifestations of Southern racism, King began to urge his organiza-

The philosophy and times of Dr. King

tion, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and other civil rights groups to participate in demonstrations to "end-the-slums" in Chicago.

LESSONS OF CHICAGO

The lesson that King learned in Chicago was that it was easier to get the Federal government and many white people to support Black civil rights than it was to end Black poverty. He also discovered that there was a gulf between himself and a whole generation of Black youth living at the cutting edge of the poverty in the Black community. He never understood the mind of that generation, or why it considered Malcolm X to be their leader. And yet it is these unemployed youth who revealed the contradiction in King's philosophy and the limits of civil rights. They exploded into revolt at the very moment he was engaged in his unsuccessful campaign to end poverty in the Black ghettos.

In our haste to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King as a great leader of African Americans in the 20th century, a man who courageously led the masses in direct action against the forces of racism and believed that the masses have the power to bring about change, we often forget that King's personal philosophy of nonviolence was an abstract concept of a "personal God" in each person as "the meaning of the ultimate reality" that can "synthesize opposites." Thus, he thought that the Watts and Detroit revolts were desperate and suicidal acts, the "voice of the unheard" and "powerless" who were "so fed up with (their) existence that (they would) rather be dead than ignored." He thought that the "irrationality" of the masses was a reaction to the "irrationality" of the state, i.e., its failure to act to end poverty and racism.

By reducing the African American urban revolts to an irrational opposite confronting an equally irrational opposite, the State, King literally takes Black subjectivity (the idea of freedom) out of American history, by giving power to an abstract moral force to resolve the problem of freedom.

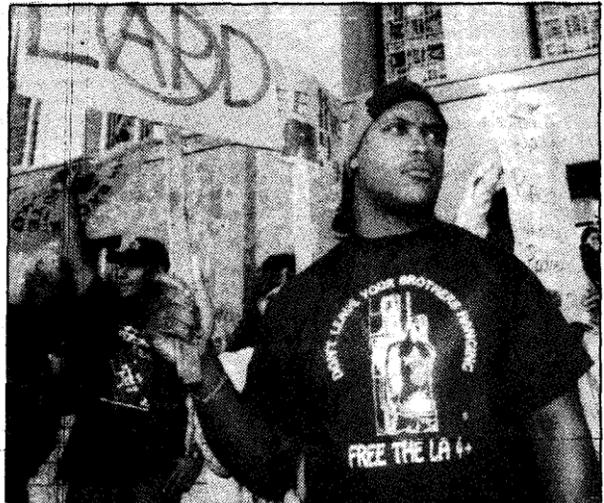
Many may ask what does King's personal philosophy have to do with Black freedom. The answer to that is: one's philosophy determines one's attitude toward actuality. When King carried his "end-the-slums" campaign to Chicago, he was not only confronting the machine politics of Mayor Richard J. Daley, but also the entrenched world of U.S. capitalism, which created the poverty in the Black urban ghettos.

Black masses living in urban ghettos have long developed their own attitude to that actuality; they wanted to rid themselves of that type of life and not just to

better it by negotiations among "men of good will," as King was doing with Daley and the businessmen of Chicago.

The vision that Black masses have had of a new society has always conflicted with the practical political attitudes of their leaders. As we commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King's death, we should remember also that while Dr. King didn't resolve this problem philosophically, his recognition of the power of the masses to change society could be a beginning towards resolving it philosophically and practically.

Demanding justice in L.A.



Editor's note: Georgiana Williams is a founder of the L.A. 4+ Defense Committee, set up to try to ensure justice in the cases of several Black men, including her son, arrested following the L.A. uprising last spring. She is also a founder of Mothers Reclaiming Our Children.

I was born and raised in Mississippi. I come right out of the cotton fields. I guess you could say I've been fighting all my life, because as a kid growing up on the plantation, I had to fight to be able to go to school. Because we had to first make sure that all the cotton and all the corn was taken care of, before we could go. As a kid I was determined I was not going to live my whole life on the plantation, so at 20 years old when I got my degree from nursing school, I took off, and moved out here to Los Angeles.

I was never involved in anything. I went to work, I cooked, I sewed, I made big dinners for my neighbors, and that was my life. I didn't know anything about politics, I wasn't even interested in politics. Then they arrested my son on May 12, 1992, and all hell broke loose. Because I wasn't about to sit back and let the media say things about my son, about my neighbors, about the other people living in South Central Los Angeles. So I went on a long fast, and I prayed, and I came out raising hell.

I've gone all over L.A. encouraging mothers and telling them: yesterday was my son, today it could be your son, your husband. And let me tell you something: just because you're not Black, that don't mean a thing. Because when you go to the jails: you see poor white people, you see Latinos, you see Blacks. The groups that I'm organizing are mothers of all colors. And I say to the mothers that together we can turn this system around.

I say, you can't let the system keep putting our boys in prison and in jail. By the year 2000, all our men will be locked up. So the women have to come out fighting like a brahma bull. If they had not taken my son, I'd still be over there on my street, still cooking cakes, making barbeque and homemade ice cream, going to church and doing nothing.

And it's time for the men, the fathers, to also get busy! There's more to do than go to work 8-4, and come home and watch football or basketball. Every place I go, I see a lot of mothers, and every now and then I see a few fathers. The men have got to get busy! If you listen to the news, our Latino young men, our young Black men, are all considered gang members. They blame all the crime on them, blame all the dope on them.

But to get rid of that stigma, mommies and daddies got to fight. Georgiana cannot turn this upside down system around by herself. But I'm going to die trying. Just imagine, if we united and said: We're tired of it. We want good schools, we want medical benefits, we want the homeless out of the streets. I was born and raised in Mississippi. You can't get any poorer than it is in Mississippi, and we didn't see all these homeless. So why do we have to have all these homeless people? Why do they take money and send things into space, and leave the people on the streets hungry? Why, if you don't have money, do you have to go out to the county hospital and wait 24 hours for medical care? And they say we have equal justice. It's not true.

They say my son is a threat to society. His bail is \$580,000. And I turned in two or three thousand letters saying he was not a threat to his community, and we welcome him back.

Rodney King and Reginald Denny—they both were attacked. Our boys should not be charged with murder, mayhem, and torture, and those four policemen only accused of assault. This is wrong. Two men were attacked by different people, but different charges. So that goes to show you the unequal justice.

Eyewitness report on repression & resistance in Haiti

On our recent trip to Haiti, the Chicago Religious Task Delegation talked with priests, lawyers, peasant organizers, union members, development workers, members of women's groups, human rights documenters, and others in Port-au-Prince to get an overview of the desperate situation and then were able to travel out to the countryside in three groups.

Hinche is considered the hottest spot of repression right now. The 75-mile trip from the capital at one time took about two hours; the road is now so bad that it takes six hours of very difficult driving. We found a terrified people living in a town with no electricity, no water, no sewage treatment, and unbelievable poverty. Soldiers encircle the area at night and zoom around in jeeps during the day. The meetings took place behind double-locked doors, with informants who took great risks to tell us stories of arrests, tortures, and disappearances and about the notorious "Colonel Zed," the brutal army commander. We were stopped five times at checkpoints on the way into the town and searched thoroughly; evidently the army was concerned about what we might be bringing in. Recently a Mennonite Central Committee worker was detained because he carried letters with information on Haiti Solidarity Week. As he stood by helpless, his Haitian guide was beaten. Our excuse at the checkpoints was that we wanted to see the bishop, so we met with him and concluded that he works closely with the army.

Gonaives, a northern port city, has a reputation of being the hotbed of revolution, since that's where both the slave revolution and the efforts leading to the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship began. During our four days there we saw documentation on human rights abuses collected by the head of the Peace and Justice Office, who manages to function effectively as a member of the national Human Rights Platform even though he works in the shadow of the right-wing bishop. We were impressed with the many initiatives described by local doctors, teachers, and community-based organizers for meeting the needs of the poorest of the poor, all efforts promoted and supported by the Aristide government and now operating only clandestinely. In Robiteau, a slum near the wharf, we heard from activists whose main complaint is that they haven't been allowed to demonstrate since the coup. They asked us to accompany them in a "manifestation" after the UN observers arrive, and we promised we would. We appreciated their "maroon" tactics: they've torn up streets into the slum so the military can't come in easily, and fishermen told us if the army appeared while they were talking to us they'd immediately jump on their boats and head out to sea.

In Jacmel on the southern coast we witnessed an investigative hearing of seven people who'd been picked

up on suspicion of setting fire to the house of the de facto mayor. Because of the presence of North American lawyers and other observers the seven were released after being questioned about their political activities. All community organizers, they would surely have been arrested and possibly executed if we hadn't been there. We wrote to the civilian commissioner thanking him for allowing us to participate in the hearing and alerting him that we have names of not only the seven but also thirteen others targeted by the army, and that we are watching to see what happens to them. We sent copies of the letter to Amnesty International, the Washington Office on Haiti, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, and other similar groups. On the way into Jacmel we were stopped and searched several times; on the way out we were arrested. Only quick talking and a hefty bribe from our Haitian guide convinced the soldier who'd entered the van not to take us to the military barracks.

Toward the end of our stay we met with President Clinton's fact-finding mission, Representatives Conyers (MI), Payne (NJ), and Foglietta (PA) and former Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White. At least some of them seem sincerely committed to the restoration of democracy and Aristide, but they reminded us that Clinton wasn't elected by the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and warned us that we're involved in an uphill fight.

—Chicago Religious Task Force Delegate

Haiti — Clinton's shame

New York, N.Y.—"We are ashamed of Bill Clinton at Yale Law School. For the first time in our lives we cannot blame Reagan or Bush or the Communists or Saddam Hussein. Clinton was elected because Black groups, women's groups, AIDS, gay, and environmental groups all endorsed him. Now we are ashamed of him." With these words a Black Yale student announced a "national student movement" to force Clinton to free the Haitian refugees being held at the Guantanamo Base concentration camp because they are HIV positive. He said, "It will be like the South Africa divestiture movement."

A Japanese-American also spoke at this picket outside Brooklyn Federal Court, to support a case brought to force the U.S. to free the refugees. He said he was there because he was born in 1943 in a concentration camp for Japanese-Americans in Arizona, and "That was an executive order too," referring to Clinton's "floating Berlin Wall" around Haiti.

—N&L participant

Essay

Nationalism, the Artificer, and Afrocentricity

by Lou Turner

New national imperatives have made themselves felt in our epoch, a product not only of the present stage of fragmentation of capitalism's already riven superstructure, but as a result of the theoretical vacancy of post-Marx Marxism in the politics of culture and nationalism. The contradictory emergence of a new cultural politics, radiating across the ideological spectrum from right religious fundamentalism to left multiculturalism, has filled, however problematically, the vacancy left by post-Marx Marxism.

On the ground, this dialectic is localized in sites as divergent as Morocco and Los Angeles. In Morocco, the Marxist intellectual Abraham Serfaty critiques the Left for failing "to integrate two fundamental problems of the masses of the population: that of identity, and that of political responses to their aspirations.... The result is that those who bring a mythical response to the question of identity—the fundamentalists—have taken the space left by the progressive movements" (*Middle East Report*, November-December, 1992, p. 25). In the aftermath of the L.A. rebellion, Left commentator Mike Davis argues that "Part of the problem...is that the Afrocentric stuff has its strengths, but very quickly its weaknesses are going to be up front: particularly the Farrakhan view of the world, its prejudices, its emphasis on black capitalism, and so on. So the crucial question here is whether there's going to be a black left that can engage Farrakhan with any seriousness in the eyes of the home boys and girls..." (*Social Text* 33, 1992, pp. 29-30). The Eurocentric attitude that represents African American consciousness and culture as "Afrocentric stuff," of course, is what alienates the Black dimension from Marxism.

However, today's "politics of culture" confront us in multiple guises and various degrees of determinacy. Nearly forgotten is the revolutionary impulse that infused Third World nationalism throughout the twentieth century, so seemingly complete are its unfinished revolutions. Broadening the concept of Marx's philosophy of revolution as a totality has, therefore, become a necessary precondition for comprehending the dialectic development and origin of the "National Question."

There are two areas in which I want to explore this dialectic: 1) Raya Dunayevskaya's insight into the affinities between nationalism and Hegel's concept of the Artificer in *Natural Religion*; and 2) Molefi Asante's Afrocentric metatheory of "intercultural communication."

I

Concluding that there was something too political, or not sufficiently philosophic, in her view of Lenin's concepts of the "National Question" and "administrative mentality," Raya Dunayevskaya began to rethink the question anew. Dunayevskaya had employed Lenin's expression "administrative mentality" as early as 1959 in her *Afro-Asian Revolutions* to characterize those Third World leaders and intellectuals, nationalist and socialist, who, after independence, were so weighed down by the state of technological backwardness of their countries that they turned to the world market and embarked on the state-capitalist road to economic development, while demanding ever more "sacrifices" from the people. Later, the category "administrative mentality" became pivotal in her analysis of the unfinished African Revolution in *Philosophy and Revolution* (1973).

With the transformation of the Iranian Revolution into its counter-revolutionary opposite under Islamic fundamentalism, and the tragic implosion of the Grenadian Revolution in 1983, Dunayevskaya concluded that we had entered a new "changed world," one which called for a rethinking of the "National Question" and her own category of "administrative mentality." The reversals of the 1980s had by no means dissipated the explanatory power of the latter, on the contrary, it reaffirmed it. But the new phenomenal appearances of counter-revolution emerging from within the revolutionary movement evinced a new rethinking of nationalism and the "administrative mentality," because the two had not been "as starkly and precisely articulated as in Hegel," Dunayevskaya wrote, "when he talks of the backwardness of so-called natural religion that still worships an object [i.e.,]...whatever is dead and materialized and thus depends on the artificer, who makes a fetish of it, to acquire meaning".¹

Dunayevskaya had already pointed to the powerful polarizing force that Marxism exerted throughout the Third World where there had been attempts by various religions, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, to build bridges to it. But in the aftermath of the fundamentalist usurpation of the Iranian Revolution, Dunayevskaya renewed her exploration into the affinities between nationalism and Hegel's treatment of non-Western religion, specifically Persian, Indian and Egyptian "Natural Religion," in his *Phenomenology of Mind*.

It isn't difficult to see the irredentist impulses which so predominate in the present historic moment reflected in Hegel's formulation that "The actual self-consciousness of...dispersed Spirit is a host of separate, antagonistic national Spirits who hate and fight each other to the death."²

It is, however, the work of the Artificer who, through the rhetorical conditions of language, lowers an ideological incubus upon the national spirit of the people

and constitutes himself the productive power over them. What the Artificer, as "administrative mentality," combines is the material outer existence of the people with the inner being of their national consciousness.

Not only is meaning imposed on the underdeveloped conditions of their material existence, but any vision of their future also gets its meaning from the Artificer. In the course of articulating the purpose and needs of the nation, a fetish is made of development, and such seeming opposites as cultural nationalism and technological development are blended.³

"The artificer, therefore, combines both by blending the forms of nature and self-consciousness; and these ambiguous beings, a riddle to themselves—the conscious struggling with what has no consciousness, the simple inner with the multiform outer, the darkness of thought mated with the clearness of expression—these break out into the language of a wisdom that is darkly deep and difficult to understand."⁴

The ideological power necessary to bring such disparate forces together as premodern cultural nationalism



and postmodern high tech capitalism means that the "administrative mentality" must assume the form of an Artificer, whose determinate activity, the use of language, signifies "the darkness of thought mated with the clearness of expression." That Hegel, in the *Phenomenology*, treats natural religion in its ideological capacity was alluded to by Kojève who referred to the whole section on religion as the "dialectic of social ideology." Hegel's recurring references to "nation" and to "national spirit" throughout the section on Religion in the *Phenomenology* further underscore the affinity.

That a people are a nation because of their consciousness of themselves as a nation, however, is more often a question of what Hegel calls self-existence than self-determination. In the self-reflection of the people's independent existence in the national ideology, the self-determination of ideas and subjective forces which brought the nation into existence, or gave shape to the people's national consciousness, are reified as an artifact, or mere artifice. Which is why we must be attentive to the "determinateness of the form" in which national consciousness and existence appear.

The need to distinguish the determinate forms of nationalism arises in the present moment out of the deadly conflicts of competing nationalisms, a consequence of the diverse categories which predominate in different experiences of national self-determination. The collapse of that diversity into a single dialectic of consciousness and self-consciousness represents the fundamental duality of nationalism. This dualism is rooted in the dual concept of objectivity found in cognition itself, i.e., the form in which an object is externally presented to consciousness versus the form in which the objectivity of consciousness that is conscious of itself appears as self-consciousness. The goal of national consciousness, which is not narrow nationalism, is to transcend this contradiction in a movement which turns national into social consciousness, that is to say, into a humanism.

II

One form of self-reflection which claims to mediate this transcendence of nationalism is Molefi Asante's communicative theory of Afrocentricity, a theory whose point of departure is his critique of the parading universalism of Western "civilization." While cogent, Asante's theory lacks the urgency found in Fanon's critique of Leopold Senghor's hybrid universalism of Western and African culture, written as Fanon was active in the searing context of actual revolutionary struggles, national and ideological.

It is not alone context but concept which distinguishes Fanon's revolutionary critique of Western "civilization" from Asante's contemplative critique of Eurocentrism. What Edward Said recently referred to as Fanon's reinscription⁵ of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic

tic within the Black experience carries no legitimacy at all for Asante: "Marxism is not helpful in developing Afrocentric concepts and methods because it, too, is a product of a Eurocentric consciousness that excludes the historical and cultural perspectives of Africa."⁶

Though Asante seems unaware of Marx's voluminous writings on non-Western societies, especially the ethnological notebooks of his last decade, filling in the gap would not resolve the issue, for two reasons. First, Marx himself is critical of any "Marxist" attempt to "metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory of general development, imposed by fate on all peoples, whatever the historical circumstances in which they are placed."⁷ Marx termed such metatheories "supra-historical."

The second reason concerns the centrality of revolution in Marx's view of the historical determinations which explain cultural and social phenomena. It is this dialectic of revolution, as the engine of historical development, Asante wishes to replace with an Afrocentric nation of "harmony," i.e., a blending of real social antagonisms.

While Asante is surely correct that "Accounting for different perspectives or allowing them to emerge becomes the principal aim of a truly liberating perspective" (p. 15), such a "principal aim" can either be eclectic or dialectic, and only the latter is "truly liberating," while the former is merely contemplative. There is no reason to deny Asante's critique that Eurocentric philosophy and science "have not been fully expressive of the extent or power of human ways of knowing" (p. 15). But that is the crux of the question of so-called dominant and subjugated paradigms and philosophies. In other words, what does account for the power of human cognition, and is it reducible to any particular paradigm? Or, can we afford to disregard Sekou Toure's admonition that:

"The science resulting from all human knowledge has no nationality. The ridiculous disputes about the origin of such and such a discovery do not interest us since they add nothing to the value of the discovery."⁸

Asante's Afrocentricity derives from his uncritical combining of various behavioral sciences into a rhetoric of "intercultural communication" to which is added popularizations of African cosmology. The blending of disparate traditions and epistemologies into an essentially positivist paradigm, i.e., "a metatheory for African communication" (p. 17), reduces Afrocentricity quite literally to a question of either rhetoric, or revolution? Asante virtually poses the question in that manner himself when he asserts that African American oratory and symbolism as "resistance to dominant ideology" represent "the totalization of the Afrocentric perspective" (p. 17).

Such a perspective does not so much spirit away the revolutionary nature of the Black dimension as turn it into a mere rhetorical device, an artifice. Can it be that the rhetoric of revolution has very nearly taken the place of the actuality of revolution after so long a philosophic vacancy? Or conversely, does such a communicative epistemology as Afrocentricity, especially given the objectivity of its appeal in the African American community, presage new openings, new beginnings toward working out a genuine philosophy of revolution? Or, can it be both? The naive reversion to a premodern epistemology in order to reinvent a mythical identity for the ethical life of the Black community is as objective as the competing class impulses which want either to find a career niche in high tech capitalist society, or desire to tear it up by its roots.

Like the Artificer, Asante's Afrocentricity is operational within the motion of these alternating tendencies as an "attempt to create harmony and balance in the midst of disharmony and indecision" (p. 35). It is this position as mediator, though, which also relegates Afrocentricity to the interstices of capitalist consumer society. For Asante's perspective that an Afrocentric metatheory would "explain the peculiar social focus of black language in America and, by that explanation, become interpretive of symbolic engineering in a multiethnic situation" (p. 35) is not only realizable in a specifically African American milieu but has already assumed a fetishized existence in the commodity consu-

(continued on page 10)

6. *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987), p. 8; hereafter, all page references are cited in text.

7. Cf. Marx's *Collected Works* 24, p. 200.

8. Quoted in Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*, p. 214.

Don't miss the special News & Letters bulletin on the Black dimension:

American Civilization on Trial:
The Needed American Revolution

Includes 19 presentations on
Black struggle, Black thought

98 pgs. only \$2 + \$1.05 postage
News & Letters, 59 E. Van Buren, Chicago, IL 60605

1. This quotation is taken from the notes Dunayevskaya made near the end of her life for an unfinished work on the dialectics of philosophy and organization; c.f. *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #10865.

2. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, p. 420.

3. The espousal of Pan-Africanism "for the purpose of canalizing African movements and making them function within the order of world state-capitalism" was Dunayevskaya's 1959 critical evaluation of the Pan-Africanism of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and C.L.R. James who championed Nkrumah's hybridization of "Marx, Lenin and Gandhi"; cf. *Afro-Asian Revolutions*, p. 9.

4. *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie, p. 707.

5. *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), p. 210. See my review of Said's latest work, forthcoming in the May issue of *News & Letters*.

Behind Yeltsin's threatened coup: economic crisis, ethnic unrest

(continued from page 1)

in the current crisis. Yeltsin's opponents want to distance themselves more from U.S. policy, especially in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Asia. In addition, they want to slow down the rate of privatization of the economy. They also want the Russian government to be more forceful in reasserting some sort of at least indirect domination over all of the lands of the former Soviet Union, and to exert far more control over the restive non-Russian nationalities within the Russian Federation.

Far from a "left" opposition, Yeltsin's opponents tend toward even greater authoritarianism and chauvinistic nationalism. Waiting in the wings as the economic situation deteriorates are outright Russian fascist groups such as Pamyat, today allied with die-hard Stalinist elements who have tried to reconstitute the Russian Communist Party.

There is also a small independent Left which has emerged since the late 1980s, with some connection to labor, environmental, and women's movements from below. As the crisis deepens, there is always the chance that left revolutionary ideas could gain a foothold among the workers councils and strike committees, and among the equally restive rural population.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND RUSSIAN LABOR

The events of March 1993 occurred as the Russian economy continued its nose-dive, with growing unemployment and homelessness, hyperinflation, shortages of consumer goods, deterioration of housing conditions, and breakdown of the country's infrastructure, including its transportation, educational and health care systems.

In 1991, the year that he was pushed out by Yeltsin, Gorbachev too had been moving toward authoritarian rule, seeking to gain tighter control of the economy in order to "reform" it. Like Gorbachev then, Yeltsin promises that these "reforms" will eventually lead to better conditions of life and labor for the masses. Meanwhile, with Yeltsin well into the second year of his Presidency of an independent Russia, conditions continue to deteriorate rapidly. In 1992 alone, the Russian economy shrank by 25%.

Amazingly little is published in the Western press about labor unrest in Russia. Under Communism, when such reports were far harder to obtain, even rumors of labor dissension were put on page one of major newspapers.

But here are two examples of Russian labor struggles which made it only into the back pages of the Western press. Beginning in December, miners went on strike in Vorkuta, the nation's largest coal fields and scene of the historic labor camp strike which broke out in March, 1953 in the immediate aftermath of Stalin's death. This February, 500 miners occupied the giant Vorgachorskaya mine for three days, coming up only after one of their leaders was released from jail.

A larger strike involving more than four dozen mines in Vorkuta and in Siberia's Kuznetsk region took place on March 1, under the banner of the Council of Workers' Committees. The last major coal strike was in the spring of 1991, a few months before the failed revanchist Communist coup of August.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The other looming crisis was the ethnic unrest inside the Russian Federation. Yeltsin's referendum, designed to bolster his power, may actually have an unintended

effect. Recall how a referendum in the last months of Gorbachev's rule on the future of the Soviet Union was used by Ukrainians and other oppressed nationalities to vote for independence.

This problem has persisted even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Tatarstan near Central Asia, the mainly Muslim population voted for autonomy by a landslide a year ago. Will the Bashkirs, the Chuvash and other minority nationalities in the Volga region now do likewise? What about the vast region of Siberia, which is also claimed to be "Russian"?

The Nationalities problem is not always a clear-cut issue, with Great Russians versus national liberation movements. As in the murderous conflict between the newly independent lands of Armenia and Azerbaijan, oppressed nationalities have also turned upon each other. These conflicts were of course stoked by the old centralized system, which played one group off against another, but narrow nationalism among the oppressed groups has also taken its toll.

Today, in the northern Caucasus, a particularly bloody three-way struggle has involved the mainly Muslim Chechens, the mainly Christian Orthodox Ossetians, and the mainly Muslim Ingush. A tiny ethnic group numbering little more than 300,000 people, the Ingush were deported to Central Asia by Stalin in 1944. They were allowed to return in the 1950s, but were not able to get all of their lands back, some of them by then occupied by the Ossetians.

Late last year, after the Ingush demanded restitution, the heavily armed Russian-backed Ossetians massacred hundreds of Ingush. After Yeltsin sent in 10,000 Russian "peacekeeping" troops, the massacres and "ethnic cleansing" continued, to the point where tens of thousands of Ingush have fled the region, their homes and villages destroyed. Meanwhile, the Chechens, who number 5 million, have declared independence, and are being attacked by private Russian militias.

In addition, 25 million ethnic Russians are today living outside the borders of the Russian Federation, in now independent lands of the former Soviet Union. This fact, and Russian imperial ambitions, are behind several recent conflicts.

On February 28, Yeltsin asked the UN to "grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the former [Soviet] union. Russia has a heartfelt interest in stopping all armed conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union." (NYT 3/1/93) Vice-President Ruskoi, a former Air Force colonel, went further, calling for "the renaissance of Russia as a great power" (Le Monde, 3/2/93). There was little public response from Western governments, but Ukraine's Foreign Minister reacted angrily. He said that putting Yeltsin's idea into effect would be "a gross violation of existing international standards and of the United Nations Charter" (Le Monde, 3/3/93).

In Central Asia, Russia hardly even keeps up the pretense that these are independent countries. For example, in February, Russian Defense Minister Grachev visited Tajikistan, where Russian-backed former Communists routed and massacred liberal and Islamic oppositionists last year in a conflict which claimed 20,000 lives and created 350,000 refugees from among a population of only 5.1 million. Grachev stated that Tajikistan was "strategically important" to Russia, and that the 201st Division of the Russian Army would stay there indefinitely to keep the "peace." This was applauded by Islam Karimov, the authoritarian ruler of neighboring Uzbekistan, who had also intervened in Tajikistan. Karimov, a hard-line ex-Communist who supported the 1991 coup, now calls for a "Warsaw Pact" type military treaty between all of the nations of the former Soviet Union.

In newly independent Georgia, Russian forces are openly aiding the separatists in the Abkhazia border re-



Russian miner

gion, despite pleas from Georgian leader Edward Shevardnadze, himself the former Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union. In February, Defense Minister Grachev gave Russian troops still stationed in Georgia the authorization to "shoot to kill" in response to attacks by an increasingly hostile population.

In newly independent Moldova, Russia openly aids ethnic Russians who are trying to pry the Trans-Dniester region away, because they do not want to live in a country where ethnic Romanians are the majority.

WHERE TO NOW?

As the crisis deepens, all signs are toward increased authoritarianism, ethnic conflict, and economic collapse no matter who wins the current power struggle in Moscow. While there is the clear and pressing danger of a move toward the Right, toward some type of Russian chauvinist, neo-fascist system, which could come to power promising "order" amid the chaos of the collapse of the decades old totalitarian system, there is also the emergence of a small left and signs that revolutionary ideas are being taken up at the grassroots level. One small but important example is the plan of an independent Left publisher to issue later this year a Russian language edition of Raya Dunayevskaya's key Marxist-Humanist work, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*. The full potential unleashed by the economic political and ideological crisis of Russian society is yet to be seen.

Afrocentricity

(continued from page 9)

merism of American capitalist society. The so-called "captains of consciousness" of consumer marketing have more powerfully realized the "symbolic engineering" of African American culture and experience than anything envisioned by Afrocentricism. Indeed, it could be said that Afrocentricity arrived on the scene only after the commodification of African American culture was fully underway, almost as if it were the Rosetta Stone to decipher the cultural hieroglyphs already inscribed on American commodity society.

Whatever its theoretical limitations, Afrocentricity does possess an objectivity of its own, the explanation of which may however lie as far outside the theory itself as the theory is outside the actual course of African and African American history and reality. That it fulfills a profound need in African American consciousness to locate a cultural identity for itself far removed from the gnawing inequities and debilitating contradictions of American "civilization" is unquestionable. But does the desire to transcend the present moment of American racism also signal an escapism from the need to fight it? Does generating a world of our own, whose "dawn is not yet red with blood," relieve us of the responsibility to fight for our freedom in this world with its real battlefields? The spiritual migration from American "civilization" to African "civilization" can either be a flight from reality, or the kind of "interior migration" that presages a revolutionary upheaval, personal as well as political.

While the real street-level concerns and struggles out of which a new African American social consciousness was born in the retrogressive decade of Reagan and Bush may explain the objectivity of Afrocentricity's appeal, it also explains another phenomenon, namely, the resurgence of an earlier narrow nationalism that reached its ideological dead-end in the 1970s. Striated with religious fundamentalism (Christian and Islamic), petty bourgeois cultural nationalism and recycled Black Belt theses, narrow nationalism has taken advantage of a new form of existence in Afrocentricity. Thus, we witness the resurrection of old political agendas in the face of new social realities.

Afrocentricity would neither represent an objective moment of African American consciousness, nor could the old narrow nationalism find a new life within it, if it weren't for the fact that the new racist topography of American "civilization" signified that as American cities got Blacker, they also got poorer. Espousing separatism in the face of white social abandonment of the cities, or the social engineering of an American apartheid, may seem ludicrous, but it is that new social reality which explains the objectivity of Afrocentricity, not Afrocentricity the social reality. Just as it is Afrocentricity which explains the resurgence of its narrow nationalist fellow-traveller, not narrow nationalism Afrocentricity.

Because the social realities which govern the development of Black language and culture presuppose a self-developing subject into whose "interior migration" the language of revolt has penetrated, it would be ill-advised to separate what Black women writers and young bloods of the rap/hip-hop generation labored to express in a new language over the last two decades from its Afrocentric form of appearance. For contained therein are social categories that extend beyond a spiritual migration back to Africa, and rather like the dialectic that pulsed beneath the facade of Garveyism, at the beginning of the twentieth century, signals the immanent emergence of revolution.

Thus, the sea change we have experienced in our perceptions of nationalism, culture and identity cannot afford to settle into a motionless movement where dialectics turns into the logic of equilibrium, i.e., into contemplative discourses on culture. Rather, we must reach for an "energizing principle" that enables new commitments to a liberatory dialectic of philosophy and revolution.

Practicing dialectics

(continued from page 4)

What has all this to do with us today? Outside of talking about how to practice method not only theoretically but in political and organizational matters, I hope we will all now actually do so on at least three issues to face us at the convention: (1) the working out of Perspectives and the lively discussions that will follow the draft [perspectives]; (2) confronting the question about how to set the events at Columbia University¹⁰ and the general student revolt in America in an international context; we surely are not in the pre-revolutionary situation the French students and workers are trying to develop into an actual revolution, but there is no situation anywhere that doesn't have its international repercussions, and we will have to work these out both theoretically and concretely; (3) the Black revolt as it is at the moment in "Resurrection City" and as it will be this summer, on the one hand, and a new edition of *Black Mass Revolt*,¹¹ on the other hand.

The only reason I do not list the anti-Vietnam war movement is that I take for granted that will be central to working out political perspectives. By the time we meet, the Democratic and Republican conventions will have been held and we will see whether the horrible "choice" will once again narrow down to Nixon-Humphrey and the horrors of that in relationship to Vietnam—there surely will be Vietnams if that is the "choice!" Instead, let's settle down to some "seriousness, labor, patience, suffering of the negative" which is the only way to produce some very positive revolutionary results.

10. In 1968 there was a student sit-in at Columbia University in New York.

11. See The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, microfilm #3526.

HOW TO CONTACT NEWS & LETTERS

CHICAGO: 59 E. Van Buren, Rm. 707
Chicago, IL 60605 (312-663-0839)

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)

Mondays, 7:00 p.m.

390 27th St., Oakland

(between Telegraph & Broadway)

LOS ANGELES: P.O. Box 29194
Los Angeles, CA 90029 (213/960-5607)

Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

Echo Park United Methodist Church (side door)
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

Youth

We need revolutionary thought, not more cops

by Maurice Miller

President Bill Clinton's announcement to employ nearly 100,000 new police officers and create more space in jail for criminals portends a bleak future for many young Blacks and Latinos in South Central Los Angeles and the other urban ghettos in America's big cities. The increasing attempt to portray Black youth as criminals opens a door to their further victimization by the police.

This reality is very well comprehended by Black youth, who are constantly harassed and belittled by the police, many times for doing absolutely nothing. The police will often follow us in our cars for several blocks without a real motive or the knowledge that a crime has taken place. The experience is very humiliating, and you feel convicted before being presented with any type of evidence. This is what Black and Latino youth felt last April 29th with the verdict that acquitted white police officers who beat Rodney King.

In South Central Los Angeles, the acquittal of those racist police officers was immediately linked to the Watts Rebellion of 1965, and to the injustice handed down when the grocery store owner who killed Latasha Harlins was let off with no jail sentence. In the months since the L.A. rebellion, that acquittal has been linked to the handling of the L.A. 4+ court trials of those accused of beating up a white truck driver during the rebellion.

"TRUTH" IN A NAME

In the most recent period there has been an increased interest in the life and ideas of Malcolm X. Afrocentricity has begun to emerge as an alternative to the Eurocentric way of life. When Bush was putting forth his "New World Order" some Black youth were saying it was a return to slavery, and that they would refuse to go back without a fight.

I know Malcolm X gets a lot of credit from the youth for changing his last name from Little to X because of his alienation from American society. Yet in *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* we can read about the African-American women's liberationist, Sojourner Truth, including "a whole philosophy of freedom in a chosen name..." way back in the

Youth in Revolt

by Tom Parsons

"No suspension for freedom of speech!" read one picket sign as students from Morton East and West High Schools in Cicero and Berwyn, Ill. protested the suspension of 150 students who had staged a walkout to protest the misuse of funds by school board members. The system, which is \$9 million in debt and cutting back on educational programs, has spent over \$135,000 this year on two public relation firms and has been sending board members on trips with lavish expense accounts.

"We're trying to save our school, and they're kicking us out," said one student. All the suspensions were dropped after repeated protests. At one of them 700 angry students, parents and teachers dominated a school board meeting with their demands for the resignation of the school board.

* * *

Jens Mueller, the 22-year-old East German born rapper known as J, has recently released his anti-fascist hip hop album, "We Are the Majority" in the U.S. on A&M Records despite numerous death threats, and one actual attack. Last May four fascists entered J's recording studio in Paris, put guns to the heads of J and the album's producer, and stole all the lyric sheets and original tapes they could get their hands on. Luckily the master tapes had already been sent to the record company.

J is using his \$75,000 record advance to publish *Germany Alert*, an English language anti-fascist tip sheet, which he edits and distributes to journalists worldwide by fax.

Robotic work, and 'new revolutionaries'

Los Angeles, Cal.—"For the purpose of your exit interview, could you tell me why you are quitting your job at Samco Scientific Products," the personnel director asked me, looking up. "It's just too robotic, entirely too dehumanizing," I told her.

"What do you mean 'dehumanizing?'" she said. "I told you it was hard work trying to beat the machine. I told you it takes time to learn the technique to trim the plastic from the test tube pipettes. I told you the job involved 12 hours of standing. Yes, 12-hour shifts for four consecutive days and you did have four days off to recover before coming back. I told you everything beforehand. You had a choice."

"Because I had a 'choice' doesn't mean the work is not dehumanizing," I said. "Besides, why should I keep up with the machine?! At the minimum wage you pay, I would be making money for the company at half the speed it's producing those pipettes."

WHEN SHE WENT ON to tell me that I was not aware of things like the cost of health insurance and how much the company had invested in the physical plant and equipment, I realized an honest conversation was not likely. I told her that my real difficulty was with the fact that the company even existed. But that was too much for her, too fast.

1800s before the Civil War: "Listen to her story. She said she 'talked to God,' told him she refused to bear a slave name, and asked what should she do? 'He' answered her as follows: Sojourn the world over and tell everyone the truth about American democracy, that it doesn't exist for Blacks. That was how she decided to call herself 'Sojourner Truth.'""*

Having a whole philosophy of freedom in your name is striking because, even though there is a new social consciousness since the Los Angeles rebellion, it has not emerged from within the Black community without contradiction. Thus, you can have Afrocentricity but retain the illusion that this concept can be created and sustained without a fundamental uprooting of this system. Or you can ignore the revolutionary role of Black women in this country.

THE CREATIVITY OF THOUGHT

Revolutionary Black thought has always been key, whether in a Sojourner Truth or in the 20th century Black African-Caribbean revolutionary Frantz Fanon, who wrote: "The consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension."

We must recognize and develop this creativity of revolutionary thought. It is not separate from the creativity

* Raya Dunayevskaya, 1983 Introduction to *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*

PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION

From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao

by Raya Dunayevskaya



Youth defy police, Birmingham, Ala., 1963

"By their self-activity, self-organization, self-development, the Black youth struck out against white supremacy in the quiescent South, and with unparalleled courage took everything that was dished out to them—from beatings, bombings, and prisons to cattle prods, shootings, and even death—and still, unarmed, continued fighting back. They initiated a new epoch of youth revolt, white as well as Black, throughout the land..."

"The transformation of reality has a dialectic all its own. It demands a unity of the struggles for freedom with a philosophy of liberation. Only then does the elemental revolt release new sensibilities, new passions, and new forces—a whole new human dimension."

—Philosophy and Revolution

Order from literature ad, p. 7

of the great historic Black movements for freedom. The multi-dimensionality of the Spring uprising in Los Angeles disclosed the non-viability of this society.

For Black youth, a Democrat in the Oval Office is perhaps no better than a Republican when it comes down to responding to the fundamental economic, political and social needs of the Black community. Today's economic crisis has created astronomical unemployment for Black youth, forcing them into underground ways of surviving. The racism of American society responds by establishing larger and larger police forces to protect white economic interests and exploitative relationships. The Los Angeles rebellion and the many revolts waiting to happen can become a fundamental challenge to this society if we, particularly Black youth, can work out a way of combining revolutionary Black activity and revolutionary Black thought.

Clinton's Reaganite 'market environmentalism'

Handpicked by Vice President Al Gore to be Bill Clinton's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator, Carol Browner was supposed to initiate a total reversal of the Reagan-Bush policy of "growth" at the expense of the environment. Instead, she horrified environmental groups by announcing a proposal—her very first as EPA head—to repeal the law banning pesticides that leave carcinogenic residues in processed food.

The public would actually be safer, Browner claimed, because of lower economic costs! Clinton himself summed up his environmental policy by saying, "Adam Smith's invisible hand can have a green thumb." And the Feb. 13 *Chicago Tribune* reported that Browner "intends to avoid traditional command and control methods that set limits on pollution."

Just as the pesticide proposal was actually first carried out by the Reagan administration (and recently struck down in court), the "market mechanism" approach to environmental regulation was first enacted as law in the Bush administration's 1990 Clean Air Act. Under its terms, utility companies can buy and sell "allowances" for sulfur dioxide emissions—in other words, permits to spew pollution into the air.

Supposedly this will reduce pollution more than laws that just set limits. In fact, it does not rule out an increase of pollution in specific localities, especially those where acid rain is already the worst. Many environmental activists are very critical of "market solutions," yet even such opposition is no guarantee against remaining on the same ground—trying to reduce pollution within the capitalist system.

THE LARGER TRUTH is that no regulatory system can do more than slow down capitalism's inherent destructive impulses. Regulations cannot keep up with the never-ending creation of new kinds of poisons.

Thus the first two decades of modern environmental laws have witnessed the continued deterioration of the planet's ability to support life. It should be abundantly clear by now that there is no solution short of a revolutionary transformation of production—and not just in technology (again) but in its very nature, in the human relations it rests on.

Here lies the ideological trap: whereas many environmentalists celebrate the linking of economic programs to recognition of "environmental limits," it is useful to the rulers insofar as it binds the environmental movement to "economic realities," that is, to the laws of the existing capitalist economic relations—as if they were a law of nature. The ideological campaign is intensified now precisely because of the depth of the global economic crisis, which puts a question mark over the sustainability of those moribund economic relations.

Carl Pope, head of the Sierra Club, fell right into the trap. "At long last," he declared, "we have an administration that recognizes the link between a healthy environment and a healthy economy." It would be easy to dismiss this illusion on the grounds that the Sierra Club is hardly a radical organization. But one only has to look at last June's Earth Summit to see that radicals too can fall into the trap.

It was through that gathering that proponents of "sustainable development" became visible to the mass media. Yet it became all too clear there that full human development was not on the agenda. On the contrary, the phrase "ecological capital" was accepted, as if capital were not a power that grows, as Marx pointed out, "only by sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the laborer." It must be recalled that the physical body of capital gets used up—destroyed—in the process of reproducing itself; only its value may be preserved. Can we afford to accept such a horrifying, if unacknowledged, vision of nature's future?

That ideological opening is what Clinton is prepared to take full advantage of. Whereas Bush was too much a prisoner of the right wing to mouth the proper rhetoric at the Earth Summit, Al Gore was there loudly proclaiming: "The effort to save the environment must become the central organizing principle in the post-Cold War world," but without ever forgetting to put "economic realities" first.

"Saving the environment" will really mean ecological destruction so long as the real, unspoken "central organizing principle" remains capital's drive to accumulate.

—Franklin Dmitryev

—Black worker

Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The crisis begun in December when Hindu chauvinists were allowed to destroy the Ayodhya mosque as police watched passively still continues. (See January-February N&L) The official death toll in the riots and pogroms which followed now stands at nearly 2000, with most of the victims from among India's Muslim minority, who comprise 14% of the population. Today, the walls of Ayodhya are covered with chauvinist slogans, including ones calling for Muslims to choose between "Pakistan and the cemetery."

It has also been revealed that the Bombay police cooperated in the systematic murder of 600 Muslims in January. With a touching solicitude for top officialdom, the *New York Times*, Feb. 4, reported: "The extent of police cooperation with the Hindu mobs appears to have spread through the entire police force, excluding only the most senior officers."

On Feb. 25, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators from the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to take over the capital and were repulsed only by one of the largest police mobilizations in modern Indian history. The BJP platform calls for setting up a "Hindu" government. This would mean acquiring nuclear weapons, limiting foreign investment ("Coca Cola and Pepsi are something we can do without") and even teaching "Vedic math" in schools.

This combination of Hindu chauvinism and narrow nationalism has drawn mass support among the Hindu urban poor, who are reeling under the impact of the world economic crisis as well as Congress Party Prime

Japan's auto cutbacks

The Nissan Motor Company announced in February that it will shut down the huge Zama auto assembly plant near Tokyo. When the plant is closed in 1995, 2,500 workers will be either reassigned, asked to transfer to other plants, forced to retire or to quit. Zama, built in 1964, is the first auto plant to ever close in Japan.

Nissan has attributed the shutdown to slow auto sales and the weak Japanese economy. However, the crisis lies more accurately in capitalist production, and the preponderance of dead over living labor: among Japanese automakers, Nissan invested the most heavily in robotics.

By the mid-1990s, Nissan plans to eliminate 5,000 of its 53,000 Japanese workers, including those at Zama. Other companies have also announced cutbacks—Nippon Telegraph and Telephone intends to eliminate 30,000 workers over the next few years—and more are sure to follow.

The current wave of layoffs has hit workers aged 45-55 years old, with the aim to make them take early retirement, transfer, or in some cases, simply quit. Over half the workers at the Zama plant are in this age group.

One auto worker in his mid-50s, who worked at Nissan for 28 years, said the assembly work is so demanding that he would not consider transferring to the plant where one of the production lines is being moved, because it would require him to make a 90-minute train commute.

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 (1910-37), 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 in 1967. 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

Minister Narasimha Rao's quixotic package of "free market" reforms. The latter have included allowing prices of basic commodities to skyrocket, while "opening" India's villages to Coca Cola, even if they still lack safe drinking water!

In March, bombs went off in Bombay and Calcutta, killing hundreds of civilians. The initial evidence released by the police seemed to point to a link to one or more of India's many oppressed ethnic and religious minorities. But the demagogic BJP was quick to blame Muslims and Pakistan for the blasts, without producing any evidence.

In recent weeks, a prominent Hindu cleric has made a pronouncement that the world famous Jamma Mosque in Old Delhi, a monument of world renown which is one of the largest functioning mosques in the world, was originally built on the site of a shrine to the Hindu god Vishnu. This implied that it too should be razed, as was

the mosque in Ayodhya. Will the Taj Mahal be next?

The Rao government, like previous Congress Party governments for over a decade, has appeased the Hindu chauvinists, moving away from the secular policies of Gandhi and Nehru. It has now been outbid by the BJP. One bright spot is that the religious rioting has so far been confined mainly to urban areas in northern India's Hindi-speaking belt. We leave it to proponents of "free market" modernization to explain how Bombay, India's most "modern" and capitalist city, founded by the British, has witnessed the most murderous outbreaks of chauvinist violence.

UN report on El Salvador

The UN-sponsored "Commission on the Truth" report on El Salvador issued March 15 has officially condemned what revolutionary guerrillas, peasants, workers, women and student youth have known for years: that the torture, disappearance and murder of thousands of civilians over 12 years of civil war—from the massacre of mostly women and children at El Mozote to the public assassination of Archbishop Romero and countless others—can be traced directly to El Salvador's rulers, their military and death squads.

President Cristiani of the ruling ultra-right-wing Arena Party reacted by immediately calling for amnesty for all those involved in past crimes. The former guerrilla front, the FMLN, has demanded full implementation of the report's proposals, beginning with a purge of the military and reform of the courts.

The Clinton administration seemed to justify the reliance on it by some tendencies within the former FMLN, by supporting the report and announcing a halt in further military aid to the government until a purge has been carried out. However, in this "benign" phase of U.S. imperialism in Central America, the Clinton administration is more in line with the call for amnesty for past crimes since it has not criticized the Reagan-Bush administration for its billion-dollar support of El Salvador's counter-revolutionary butchers the past 12 years.

Somalia



Somali women marched on International Women's Day for peace, carrying a banner saying "Somali women stand for the unity of Somali people."

'An era of revolution asking itself questions'

Unmasking Reality: Lectures given to the John MacLean Society 1990-92, ed. Paul B. Smith

"The genuine, honest scholar is being driven out of the academy and onto the streets," writes Paul Smith in his hard-hitting introduction to this collection. Like much of this book that statement seems to be informed by the vision of John MacLean, the great Scottish Marxist who emphasized workers' education, and also by the continuing worldwide mass struggles like the movement against Margaret Thatcher's Poll Tax which saw millions taking to the streets in Britain.

The call for uncompromising critical honesty also is a challenge to the Left itself. Smith's words will ring all too true for many activists: "Anyone who has taken an active role in advancing the movement for workers' liberation is acquainted with what can happen. You end up exhausted, isolated and desperate. Your allies let you down and disappoint you. Your closest friends are

turned into your deadliest enemies...When desperation and exhaustion take a hold, then it sometimes looks like every struggle is a defeat—every flicker of hope and enlightenment extinguished by blasts of invective and ignorance or smothered in a blanket of malevolent gossip."

No punches are pulled in describing the bad effects of the hierarchical party with its "megalomaniac leader," his flatterers and hangers on, or the new fetishism of the market which is "parroted by the so-called 'Left.'" The proper response lies in the power of ideas and honest debate. That sense of liberation is indeed what makes this book so enjoyable to read.

These lectures can be seen as falling into two different categories, the philosophic and the historical. An example of the first is Hillel Ticktin's "What Is A Socialist Society?" This is an attractive description of that society but, in rejecting Hegel's (and Marx's?) concept of the relation of freedom and necessity, Ticktin ends up with this as "necessary" to its realization: "The forces of production must have reached such a high level that machines make machines. Robots will be making robots."

Charlie McMahon's piece on "What Are Marx's Basic Categories?" has the same kind of problem. It is good to remind us that Marx's categories are philosophic, but in ignoring Hegel's influence I would argue that McMahon misses the fullness of Marx's view of free, creative human labor which is not "referring exclusively to the capitalist system" but embraces humanity in the "absolute movement of becoming." (*Grundrisse*)

These philosophic pieces challenge one to think about revolution itself, and so form a good dialogue with the more historical lectures on the First International, the I.W.W. and the Bolsheviks inasmuch as these forms of revolutionary organization did attempt to get there from here. Because no obnoxious party lines are expressed here, and also because there is so much of interest, I recommend people write to the various authors or find other ways to continue the dialogue.

Many of today's youth, fed up with the organized Left as they are, will likely find something familiar in veteran activist Farquhar McLay's "Anarchism In Glasgow." Though McLay ends up avoiding much theory, he has that in common with lots of young activists today, and so his lecture ends up questioning the others and the reader in yet one more way it would be important to follow up.

From MacLean's time to 1968 and the founding of the John MacLean Society and down to today, what I hear in this collection is the sound of an era of revolution asking itself questions and searching for new beginnings—not an artifact, but a lived moment.

The John MacLean Society can be contacted via: The Convenor c/o 11, North Laggan, by Spean Bridge, Invernesshire.

—Gerard Emmett

End the division between readers and writers
Subscribe to and write for
News & Letters