

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Decatur war: for time to live



by John Marcotte

Decatur, Ill. is more than a place. Workers say it is a "war zone." The *New York Times* calls Decatur "a national metaphor for the turmoil within an American labor movement," and a "testing field in labor relations." I like the workers' description better. It's a war zone.

In Decatur the three biggest employers—A.E. Staley, corn milling; Bridgestone Corp, the world's number one tire company, and Caterpillar the world's number one producer of earth moving equipment—are on strike or lock-out, with their 4,000 union workers out on the street. They are running production with scabs.

The Jan. 24 *Times* article said the strikers "are nearly all men 45 to 60 years old who earned \$30,000 to more than \$60,000 a year." Forget the \$60,000, that's the one guy who's going to drop dead from overtime. But this sounds like the Teamsters I work with, and our freight strike this past spring, where we held the line against the companies' demand for part-timers at half pay. That too was a strike to hold on to gains of the past.

What is the *Times* trying to say? They're saying we're a privileged holdover from the past, we just don't understand progress or competition, why don't we get with it? They said only one in eight workers is union now, like we should give it up. I guess that's what the scabs think too; management's gotten to their brains.

When someone walks off a job making \$30,000 a year and gets by on \$60 a week in strike benefits, there's got to be something powerful, something deep involved. Decatur is the testing ground for new conditions imposed on U.S. labor by the NAFTA and GATT treaties. Listen to how the *Times* explains management's thinking:

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Black World

What's behind NAACP crisis?



by Lou Turner

Their cause was just, their motives pure, their goals noble and practical; but they were perhaps too far removed from the masses to inspire them to action—too conscious of their own privileged position as a black elite.

—Henry Lee Moon on the Niagara Movement, forerunner of the NAACP

Following months of organizational turmoil in the nation's largest and oldest civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the organization's 64-member board elected by one vote on Feb. 18 to remove the corruption-tainted Dr. William F. Gibson from the chairmanship of the Association and install Myrlie Evers-Williams, wife of civil rights martyr Medgar Evers. With the organizational crisis resolved for now, and the NAACP retreating back into its preferred posture of low-profile anonymity, now is as good a time as any to analyze what was actually behind the organizational crisis, and what contradictions remain unresolved and threaten to flare up at the very next political crisis.

Upon being elected, the first words from Evers-Williams reflected the political urgency needed to confront the retrogressive climate in this country, an urgency that was absent from the Gibson/Chavis agenda. She urged the NAACP to be vigilant against threats to civil rights gains, stating that "The attitudes and positions of the 104th Congress will challenge us on a daily basis. We will be watching very carefully and we will be very vocal."

Nevertheless, the Association's rhetorical opposition to the current rightwing backlash appears less compelling when viewed against the wreckage of today's Black leadership that the NAACP so epitomizes. The organizational crisis that led to Myrlie Evers-Williams being elected chair of the NAACP is rooted deep in the historical recesses of the ideological divide of Black political thought that the NAACP helped articulate at the beginning of this century.

Founded in great part to counter the political conservatism and economism of Booker T. Washington's "Tuskegee Machine," the NAACP had always propounded,

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IN PERSON REPORT

Mexico at a turning point



Mexican army transport stirs up dust on road around Indian woman as troops invade Chiapas.

by Mary Holmes and Mitch Weerth

The failure of the Mexican army's invasion and occupation of EZLN-held lands in Chiapas state, ordered Feb. 9 by President Zedillo to end the year-long organized rebellion of Indian peasants there, is linked to an array of government "failures"—both economic and political—to solve Mexico's accelerating crises.

The army and federales were able to wound and kill an unknown number of civilians and capture a handful of Zapatistas, but not their main target, Subcomandante Marcos. Entire towns have been abandoned as residents fled into the jungle with the insurgents rather than face the tanks, artillery, and tens of thousands of troops invading their homes.

The town of San Miguel, for example, was occupied Feb. 12 and immediately the water supply was cut off and several houses destroyed. The town of La Estrella has been completely abandoned and every building, including the store and the church, was flattened by the army's tanks. As we go to press, we have received news that the Mexican army has surrounded the city of San Cristobal in Chiapas, flooding the hospital in the nearby city of Comitán with casualties.

What is already clear, however, is that Zedillo's move is backfiring: not only has he now driven thousands more directly into the ranks of the EZLN without capturing the majority of the leadership, but the massive anti-government response of the rest of the population is once again being heard, especially in the streets of Mexico City (see article p. 9). Together with arming the landlords who are now on a rampage against all who oppose them, these tactics are part of the reason why millions of students, women's groups, workers and intellectuals in the rest of the country have been speaking out, writing, and protesting the government's moves. The sting of

state-capitalism's tentacles are felt everywhere.

The Zapatistas, at this moment, embody the truth that "subjective" factors can change "objective" events.

ROOTS OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

As one indication, everyone we spoke with during our trip to Mexico in late January raised the sequence of events last December which ushered in the current crisis in the Mexican economy. On Dec. 19, the EZLN briefly moved into some 38 towns in Chiapas. On Dec. 20, after investors, primarily foreign capitalists, pulled \$900 million out of Mexico, Zedillo was forced to initiate steps which began the monetary free-fall of the peso.

Then, with a Clinton-engineered U.S.-IMF \$50 billion bailout at stake, plus a series of political defeats in his wake, Zedillo was forced to act again, this time preemptively, against the Zapatistas. The government's so-called unmasking of Marcos, as well as the purported finding of arms caches in several cities and hints of insurrection plots, were widely discounted by people as a pretext for the Feb. 9 invasion. The EZLN has gone back into the Lacandon forest in Chiapas, and the army will not find them, or diminish their impact, anytime soon.

The Feb. 9 invasion was not simply initiated by a cabal of U.S. and IMF bankers anxious to protect their investments from "instability," as some would have it. Instead, a brief look back at the most recent events will

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ON THE INSIDE

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China looks to the future

Editor's note: We are proud to publish the following article by Liu Binyan, China's most prominent writer. He began 21 years of prison and internal exile in Mao Zedong's 1957 "anti-rightist" campaign and emerged in 1978 as a reporter and sharp critic of official abuse in Deng Xiaoping's China. Expelled from the CCP after the 1986-87 democracy movement, his Marxist voice remains outspoken in this essay written for News & Letters, and regularly as editor of the Chinese-language Da Lu (The Road), P.O. Box 209, Princeton, NJ 08542.

by Liu Binyan

Five years after the Tiananmen movement was suppressed, China seems to find itself back to 1989. The inflation rate in 1994 reached 27% — the highest since the economic reform was launched in 1979. The students in 1989 were merely protesting "Guan Dao" (official profiteering). Now, the existence of a genuine bureaucratic capitalist class is more than conspicuous. Even some Chinese officials admit that the corruption within the current regime surpasses that of the Kuomintang in 1949. The rampant corruption of the Kuomintang was one of the main factors why the Chinese Communist

Party (CCP) was able to take over the country and maintain a stable rule for a long period of time.

What made the CCP most fearful in 1994 was that the Chinese factory workers would play the leading role in the next Tiananmen movement.

In the anti-government protest movement that spread over a couple of hundred cities in Spring 1989, college students were the main participants; only a few young workers got involved. Though the workers in the government-owned businesses and industries shared similar dissatisfaction with the students, under the threats of being fired or withholding pay from the officials, they merely sympathized but did not get involved. Now these kinds of threats are becoming empty, for a lot of workers are either unemployed or facing unemployment in the near future, only being paid a fraction of the minimum

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As we go to press, 12 Chinese intellectuals—including Marxist humanist philosopher Wang Ruoshui—have petitioned China's parliament to investigate corruption among the CCP leadership. Now is the time to solidarize with the brave actions of dissidents in China!

Right's assault deepens in Foster hearings

The "botched" nomination of Dr. Henry Foster for Surgeon General, after his history of performing legal abortions became the focal point of the confirmation hearings, is yet another example of the seemingly infinite expanse of retrogression greeting us in the (attempted) hundred-day rollback of American humanity. Unlike the silence that usually surrounds a "botched" illegal abortion, this story grabs headlines day after day, compactly showing the interrelated dimensions of oppression in this age.

The links in the chain of hypocrisy must start with the rightwing Republicans. Clinton cannot nominate an African American to a high position without the right unleashing its most virulent attacks. This was clear enough with Lani Guinier and Joycelyn Elders, who tried to speak from the realities of Black women's experience.

But the Foster case proves the point, since even with a Black nominee whose views are sexually conservative, the self-righteous right still reflexively attacks any Black professional. This is in lock step with the current anti-affirmative action and anti-welfare rhetoric of the right, in which they arrogantly question the abilities and "morality" of every Black from doctors to mothers.

Strategically Clinton intended this nomination to eradicate the perceived radicalism of Dr. Joycelyn Elders, who was pushed out of office one month after the Nov. 8 elections. This is a given which determines that the nominee has to be more concerned with social graces than health. The context of health, which should be the focus of any doctor's work, including that of the Surgeon General, is neglected in favor of political expedience and the sham of "moral values."

Given that the poor, the queer, the youth are all demonized in the current public climate of this country, the implication is clear—if you are poor, you should not have sex; if you get AIDS, it's your own fault; if you are sick, you can expect to be ignored; if you reject the moral advice of the government, you can expect to be considered contemptible (and dispensable).

The press spews forth an unending stream of speculation about what this nomination means for the Clinton administration and very little speculation about what this nomination means for the subjectivity of women—from the expulsion of Joycelyn Elders to the seeming criminalization/shaming of abortion, to the sterilization of women, to the silencing of women about their own lives.

For his part, Dr. Foster assures us that he "abhors abortion," preaching against teen pregnancy and proclaiming the glories of abstinence (presumably without the comfort of masturbation—the point that Elders was skewered on!). It was later leaked that he participated in the involuntary sterilization of women who were judged (by the same medical profession, of course) to be severely mentally deficient. The link in these moments is that women's own activity, reason and subjectivity are suppressed or denied.

Perhaps most frightening is the timing of the moralistic attack on Dr. Foster's abortion record. The explicit anti-abortion tenor of this debate would be frightening for women at any time. But, given the recent killings in Brookline, this rhetoric confirms that those killings were acceptable to rightwing politicians. They would rather unleash their fury against Dr. Foster for obeying the law, than attack the virulent Christian right for its escalating war activities against women.

It is imperative to see the events of Brookline and the nomination battle over Dr. Foster as part of the same historical moment. When seen simultaneously, the implications for women's lives are staggering. Poor women are already losing their lives in back alleys and to lack of medical care. Whether portrayed as irresponsible mothers, clinic workers, or mere wombs, this debate between men has reduced women to objects rather than subjects of their own lives.

Despite all of these forebodings, I would suggest that this situation allows for a candid feminist re-evaluation on the entire range of reproductive freedoms. The futility of not connecting feminist and Black struggles for freedom is made obvious by these events. Our self-development should render moot these tiring displays of pathetic, self-devolving, self-serving politicians.

It is the responsibility of feminists to call this debate back to its foundations and to think philosophically; to insist that women have control over their bodies, their own lives and the development of their own thought.

—Jennifer

Women protest welfare cuts

Oakland, Cal.—On Valentine's Day, 75 people gathered at the Oakland Federal Building to protest welfare "reforms" at a rally sponsored by the Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP). The crowd was dominated by Black women who made sure the focus of the rally wasn't limited to poverty, but women's rights as a whole. Many people wore bandanas across their mouths to show how poverty is criminalized by the system. They banged empty pots and pans to show their anger at so many people going hungry.

At the open microphone, one woman of color who has been on AFDC and welfare for two years spoke of how the rulers say they will force welfare mothers to work, but she knows capitalism can't afford to employ people anymore. "I would die for my child. An orphanage wouldn't do that for her. They have the money to incarcerate our children, but they won't spend the money to educate them. That is why I'm a revolutionary." Her six-year-old child also spoke, saying, "There are too many homeless children out there starving. We should all come as a team and fight together."

A Black man who organizes for homeless people said he was a victim of the prison system. Money that could be going to help the community is used to jail them instead. "I was on drugs so they put me in jail. That money could have been used to help me get off drugs and keep my family together rather than splitting us apart."

One young Black woman walked to the podium on crutches to speak about domestic violence and sing a song she wrote called "Me and My Pain." She said women don't have to stand being abused by the system or by their husbands and lovers. Another woman got up to the podium and said, "I'd like to see Newt Gingrich live on just \$609 a month! It's hard!"

I heard about the rally waiting in line to get food stamps. A Black woman from WEAP was handing out fliers. She spoke to us about how the country is using Black women in poor areas of the country as guinea pigs for welfare "reform" because they think these women won't be able to do anything about it. The rally was part of a national day of action to show the people of this country that women will fight back!

—Julia Jones

Algerian feminist slain



A prominent Algerian feminist, Nabila Djahnine, was murdered, Feb. 15, outside her home in Tizi Ouzon by Islamic fundamentalists who have declared open season on unveiled women, intellectuals and anyone who opposes a strict Islamic state. The 35-year-old architect—who headed the Berber feminist group, The Cry of Women—was the first leader of a women's group killed in the northern Kabyl region, home of the Muslim Berbers who strongly oppose the fundamentalist fanatics. Algerian women held a protest (pictured in photo) in Paris, Feb. 18, denouncing her slaying.

Djahnine was one of at least 11 well-known Algerians, among more than 500 people, killed by fundamentalists during a one-week period in this escalation of the bloodshed begun in 1992. On Feb. 13, assassinations included the head of the Algerian National Theater, Azeddine Medjoubi; Belkacem Fettah, Islamic Renaissance Movement leader, and an unnamed student leader. The next day gunmen killed a Foreign Ministry administrator and wounded his wife and murdered a high school principal.

On Sunday, Feb. 19, a senior intelligence officer in the Algerian Army was shot to death with his two bodyguards and driver—the highest ranking officer to be slain by militants in the three-year war between the military government and Islamic fundamentalists. At least 30,000 people have died in clashes during this time.

Algerian security forces say they have killed the five Islamic militants suspected of murdering Djahnine.

—Mary Jo Grey

Maquiladora fight goes international on March 8

Tijuana—"We decided to fight back because we all felt courage and supported each other."

These are the words of a young Mexican woman, a worker at the E-MOSA plant in Tijuana, owned and operated by the Downey, Cal.-based National O-Ring company. In November 1994, E-MOSA employees suddenly found themselves out of a job when company president John Shahid shut their plant down. Although Mexican labor law mandates that a company that terminates its operations must pay its employees severance equal to 90 days wages plus 20 days for each year of employment, the women received nothing.

It was the women's fighting spirit that precipitated their plant's closure in the first place: they had brought charges of sexual harassment against president Shahid. At their annual picnic in September 1994, he had his assistant compel several of them to participate in a "bikini contest." He videotaped the parading women from the waist down.

"It was very humiliating," one woman told News & Letters. "Here comes the president from a U.S. company, who doesn't put any value on Mexican women, and he takes a video that he can show his friends and say, 'Look, I have these little Mexican women in Tijuana.'"

When, in October, a group of women workers met with Shahid to discuss their demand for the return of the videotape plus the need for wage increases and better working conditions, he took some cash out of his pocket and threw it on the table. "We said, 'No, we don't want money for ourselves, we want it in our paychecks, for everyone,'" one participant told N&L. "He said, 'What will I get in exchange for the money?' We said, 'Our hard work.' He said, 'No, No, I want a lot of love.'"

The women filed a sexual harassment complaint in Mexican court, but Shahid failed to appear as ordered by the court, and soon after shut the plant and fired the workers.

With the help of the San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, the women have now filed suit in California court on charges of sexual harassment, non-payment of wages and infliction of emotional distress. In addition, the women are developing lines of communication with National O-Ring employees in Downey and have planned a demonstration outside the Downey plant—on March 8, International Women's Day.

The women say: "What he did is inhuman. He kept all of our money and now we are suffering." "We are workers, and live by our work. The same thing that happened to us with this company happens to all, and the power is in uniting. We are Mexicans, and we do have rights."

For more information contact: Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, 3909 Center St. #210, San Diego, CA 92103.

—Michelle Landau

Starting in March in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Oakland...

A NEW CLASS SERIES ON

Can a Dialectical Philosophy of Revolution Point A Way Out of Today's Retrogression?

In response to the ongoing effort of the Gingrich-Republicans to "complete the Reagan revolution" through a concentrated attack on women, immigrants, Blacks, youth, gays, and working people, News and Letters Committees is holding a class series on the development and future of the Marxist-Humanist concept of organization. We are doing so in order to discover whether this concept of organization can help

provide the ground and direction for unfurling a banner of total opposition to the deep retrogression sweeping this country today.

We will focus on the full expanse of Marxist-Humanism — from its origin in Raya Dunayevskaya's 1953 *Letters on Hegel's Absolutes* to its development in the face of new objective and subjective events in the 1960s and 1970s, to its

new moments in the 1980s when the need to work out a new relation between dialectics and organization became of paramount importance. Far from viewing this history as past, we will view these developments in relation to the challenges facing us today — both in terms of unfolding objective events and the theoretic challenges posed by such thinkers as F. Fanon, T. Adorno, C.L.R. James, and J. Derrida.

Class 1

New State of Production, New Stage of Cognition, New Kind of Organization
The Todayness of Marxist-Humanism's Breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutes

Class 2

Towards a New Relationship Between Philosophy and Forces of Liberation
From *Marxism and Freedom* to *Philosophy and Revolution*

Class 3

The Discovery of Marx's Philosophy of 'Revolution in Permanence'
From *Philosophy and Revolution* to *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*

Class 4

The Task That Remains To Be Done
The Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy

For a copy of the syllabus, as well as dates, times and locations, contact the News and Letters Committee in your area — see page 8

Czech, German workers protest austerity

Prague, Czech Republic—The present Czech government that rules under the aegis of "free market forces" is now trying to dismantle every kind of state social assistance. It is only the unions that are attacking new pension and state social assistance bills. The pension bill proposes raising the retirement age two years for men (from 60 to 62 years) and by up to

five years for women (from 56 to 61 years) starting Jan. 1, 1996. It would also stress more individual voluntary insurance and diminish the "firm" component derived from earnings.

The main trade unions—like the Czech and Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions—disagree sharply. It called for workers' protests, with its call for a warning 15-minute strike being followed by 1.45 million workers. The unions also staged a series of 11 public meetings between Jan. 31 and Feb. 16 before the parliament started discussing the bill.

What is remarkable is the peaceful character of all these protests. While there are some more radical unions calling for a strike if necessary, the top leaders are not willing to cross the line between the lame protest meetings hardly reported and sharper actions.

The way of the Czech unions is in sharp contrast to the militant trade unions in neighboring Germany. There the dispute between the employers and the employees in the metal industry—over the annual wage settlement—is foundering on the employers' demand for further "cost relief." While the metal trade union agreed last year to "freeze" leave and workers' Christmas bonuses for the next three years and asked for no more than a 6% rise in wages for 1994 and 1995 (in spite of forecasts for a continuing boom), the employers demanded delaying the 35-hour week that should start on Oct. 1, 1995. Only then would they be ready to begin negotiations on a new wage agreement.

The metal workers, however, answered by staging warning strikes—first in the big Mercedes Benz factory in Sindelfingen and then in Bavaria, in West Berlin and in the state of Saar. Thus the conflict—for the time being in the metal industry at least—is heating up. This is a sharp contrast to the quiet way of the Czechs. Perhaps the "tradition" of no open disputes for 40 years under the Communist regime may be stifling their fight.

—Stephen Steiger

Today's serfs and slaves

by Felix Martin, Labor Editor

I had to go to the hospital in January. When I walked in to be admitted, the clerk put me in a wheelchair and wheeled me to my room. Then she began getting my bed ready. I said, "You remind me of a stewardess where they now clean up the plane and then take your tickets." The clerk said, "This is what they are now trying to do to us, to be janitors too."

A worker told me about a professor at Loyola University in Chicago named Al Gini who has found that slaves under Rome worked less than Americans, about 15 hours per week. He found that serfs in the Middle Ages had off some 200 days to celebrate holidays. How do the slaves in medieval times compare to the blue collar slaves of today? Slaves today average 50 to 60 hours a week, and the white collar so-called "mental" slaves work 60 hours or more a week.

Americans work the equivalent of eight weeks a year more than Swedes or Germans. Only Mexico has fewer holidays of all industrial nations. Sweden has 30. In the last 15 years American workers have lost ten hours of leisure a week, leaving leisure time only to shop. Today American workers average 6.8 hours of sleep each night.

Today we have Newt Gingrich's so-called educated politicians in government talking about "revolution," how they are going to take mothers off welfare and put them to work, and put their children in orphanages. The same worker said, "Where are the jobs to do this?"

He said, "These damn Republicans talk about family, and all their actions show that they are out to destroy any time one could have to spend with the family." I would think that this idiot Newt Gingrich will find out what a real revolution is like, one that comes from the bottom up.

Mushroom pickers march for UFW vs. company union

Watsonville, Cal.—On Feb. 16, over 500 mushroom pickers and their supporters marched through the city carrying United Farm Workers flags, chanting "Cesar Si, Pablo No." They were demanding to be able to join the UFW of the late Cesar Chavez instead of the company union, the CCU. In the last four years, under the CCU, workers' wages have dropped from \$7 per hour to \$5 per hour. Other UFW members came to the march as well as some students from De Anza College. Out of 420 mushroom workers, 80% signed up with UFW. On March 28 they are going to apply to decertify CCU and join UFW.

One worker told us: "Mexican workers are hired not because U.S. workers won't work this hard but because they won't work for this kind of wage. Now Proposition 187 has really shored up the confidence of the employers. They can use Prop 187 to employ more people who are unable to fight because undocumented workers have no rights under 187. They can be laid off easily and made to feel they have no way to fight back."

"Here is how the corrupt Pablo and CCU can now use 187 to manipulate the membership into accepting lower wages. They excuse themselves by saying the employers have so much power now."

"Prop 187 means we need a new union movement today. Workers are feeling more and more under siege. We have to reunite behind the UFW because it is one of the few organizations that was very forceful in fighting against Prop 187. There is a resurgence among the new generation for the UFW and groups like that. Prop 187 has created a new unity in the movement. You can see this new unity in this march." —Supporters

Janitors on strike

Chicago—We service workers have been on strike since September because the new building owner wants to cut workers' wages—three dollars in my case—and to cut vacation from three weeks to one. He only wants to give us three holidays and absolutely no paid sick days or personal days. He also wants to cut our health insurance. It's not the money really, we could make adjustments; we're on strike because the new owner wants to get rid of the union.

The union has really helped us out and wants us to stay here because if we walk away the strike is over. The union does not want to let this building go, because if this one goes they'll lose all of Chicago; the union will be out of business. If this guy wins, all the other owners will think they can get away with getting rid of unions.

When we went on strike four months ago, they hired a whole new crew. They fired them and hired another new crew two weeks ago. There is one guy here who gets only \$500 a month, and he is on call 24 hours a day. They fire these guys and, when they can't find work, they come back and work for less and less money. If the boiler blows, the whole high rise would blow up, but they are hiring unskilled people. Since last January, about 28 people have been fired.

If more people had come out to support us, we would have won by now. We keep telling the other workers nearby that this could happen to them, but they don't care. It's not like the old days when people came with baseball bats and didn't let anyone go through. The owners were afraid to fire anybody because they were afraid of what the unions would do.

I'm prepared to support the union and go on with this for as long as it takes, even if it takes ten years to break this guy. —Striking service worker

UFCW rejoin tax unfair

Chicago—We found a notice from the union posted on our bulletin board at Sinai Kosher saying in part:

"Union members who do not request a withdrawal card at the time of leaving their employment will be charged for that month's union dues. If dues are unpaid or three (3) months, your membership will be suspended upon the fourth month. Once suspended, a rejoinment fee will be required upon your return to work within the United Food and Commercial Workers Union's jurisdiction."

Local 100 is saying that it's your duty to call the union if you leave the plant temporarily. But the notice doesn't say that if you don't, the rejoinment fee is the same \$100 you have already paid when you got hired in the first place. Paying it again—that's just unfair.

The local knows that nobody will stop short of returning to work just because they owe the union an extra \$100. The economy is already hard enough. Why make it harder? And why not let us contribute unpaid back union dues as soon as possible when we return to work?

Ruben Ramirez, our Local 100 president, put out the notice in Spanish, Polish and English to make sure he covered himself. Why can't he go to that kind of trouble to put the Local 100 contract into three languages!

—Angry Local 100 member

Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

"But with the erosion of trade barriers [GATT and NAFTA], the companies say they must work in a global economy and vie with competitors, foreign and domestic, whose costs are lower. They want fewer workers and they want to use them more efficiently—on days, nights and weekends—so that they never need to stop production."

This is so full of lies. First, the trade barriers were taken down deliberately to cause this result; they did not "erode" by themselves. Second, capital competes against itself and always has. That excuse is not new. "The competitors whose costs are lower" is themselves and is a vicious circle called capitalism.

Third, "...so they never need to stop production" is the key: That is the law of motion of capital, more and more production. That is the real need behind the attack on the living and working conditions of labor, not "competition" with others.

Capital is trying to get the full 24 hours out of the workers in its frenzy to increase profits: At A.E. Staley, they went to a 12-hour day, three days in a row, then three days off. What is to stop them from changing that to two days off, or one day, later on? They will use the same excuse of competition. Workers cannot let them get their foot in the door for the 12-hour day as standard! Then the next month, the worker is supposed to shift to 12-hour nights.

GIVING WHOLE WEEK

The struggle at Bridgestone is over the same way management wants to turn the whole of the workers' lives over to the company. They too want "shift schedules, permitting plants to run all week."

It is the same issue that had workers at the Saturn plant in Tennessee vote down two tentative contracts in November and December 1994. Saturn works ten-hour shifts "in which workers continually change from day to night shift and back again, all for straight time. They get 5 days off every 3 weeks. 'You don't know what day it is,' was a common complaint." (Labor Notes, Jan. 1995)

The workers are not buying this. When Automation was introduced into the mines and factories in the '50s and '60s, workers wildcatted against it. Their actions raised the question, "What kind of labor should human beings do?" And the unemployment caused by automation is with us today: "When I went back to work at Chrysler after the 1956 model changeover, they had introduced Automation as their 'forward look.' I was shocked at how many workers were missing. There used to be over 12,000 workers in my plant. Today there are fewer than 2,000." That was written in 1960 by Charles Denby in *Workers Battle Automation*. In 1950, there were 450,000 coal miners. By 1960 there were 175,000. From Jan. 1 to May 6, 1956, there were 170 wildcat strikes in coal.

But the companies got their Automation. Now this is not enough for their greed for profit. Now they want to chain you to that automated machine 12 hours a day, at nights and on weekends. I think that is what the strikes in Decatur are against. What kind of life will be left outside work, the workers are asking. Since all labor is forced labor, since it is alienated, you build your life outside work, in the time you have left. The eight-hour day and weekends off is very, very precious to that end.

If we don't defend it now, the next generation of workers will never know even that. It would make us more slaves of the companies, slaves of that machinery that must work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We must win as a first step in defending our humanity.



Striking Decatur workers haunt AFL-CIO leaders.

'You're re-engineered'

St. Louis—Monday morning, a co-worker asked the director, "Are we going to be laid off?" Three hours later, she and two others were told to pack up and were escorted out, cutting one-third of our department.

We all stopped working. The bosses were terrified that more people would quit—as four others had just done. We stood around talking about how we'd all like to quit and let them figure out what to do.

Computers make office workers more productive, including programmers, resulting in greater capacity—or reduced staff. But why must "technology-driven change" and "re-engineering" translate greater productivity into the wasting of human talents, the impoverishment of human lives?

It's happening in for-profit businesses because lower labor costs mean higher profits. It must happen in non-profits like our company too, the director told us. The money they save by hurting employees is money that can go to charitable programs.

Then a strange thing happened, and not just to me. I experienced a sudden loss of knowledge. I've lost the ability to anticipate problems. I'm not sure I'll recognize them if my boss doesn't tell me exactly what they are and what I should do. And if my laid-off co-workers deleted some files, I wouldn't even know it.

—Computer worker

Chinatown union spreads

New York—At the largest restaurant in Chinatown, Jing Fong Restaurant, management takes 30% of workers' tips. Workers work 70 hour-plus work weeks with no overtime pay. Reminiscent of slavery, no more than three workers are allowed to congregate at a time.

With such conditions, a traditional union drive is inadvisable if not impossible. The Silver Palace Workers, the only unionized restaurant workers in Chinatown, and the Chinese Staff & Workers Association, a workers' center, have decided to launch a community struggle against these illegal slave conditions at the suggestion of supporters inside the restaurant.

Mainstream and Chinatown press say Chinese workers want these slavish conditions because their culture makes them. This attitude leads to scapegoating of Chinese workers. Wing Lam, in a speech at a 300-person kickoff picket, said, "Chinatown workers should be treated the same as all workers, and when they treat us like this, they bring all workers down. Don't just be involved in this struggle to help us, be in it for yourself."

Picket lines are at 20 Elizabeth St. (Call 212-619-7979 for more information) The workers' practice shapes the consciousness of all Chinatown workers, as do the actions and active support of people who identify with the working class. The battle of ideas is taking place on Elizabeth St. Join us! —Union supporter

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

*Editor's note: Since the relationship of subjects of revolt to dialectical method remains a critical issue in today's freedom movements, we print here excerpts of Raya Dunayevskaya's letter of Jan. 3, 1969. The letter was written to Will Stein, an important activist in the Columbia University student revolt of 1968 who had become highly critical of the New Left's view that theory could be picked up "en route." Dunayevskaya is here responding to several letters written to her by Will on the draft chapters of her work-in-progress, *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*. The full letter can be found in *The Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, microfilm #14057.*

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Founder of Marxist-Humanism

By way of introduction to the central questions you pose on Man as Subject and the relationship of Method, I should like to point out that what appear to you as "digressions" are, in fact, method. I detest "name dropping" in philosophic works especially, and I am conscious of that in a work such as *Philosophy and Revolution*, since the work is directed toward the proletariat. Therefore, if I am compelled to mention other names than Hegel, such as Fichte and Schelling, it is because none but these names represent so concrete an "inevitable development" in every philosophic turning point that there is no way to escape mentioning the names in order to show the movement of ideas.

Thus, [my critique of] the question of triads—which has always been maliciously attributed to Hegel instead of Fichte and Schelling—is, in fact, an attack on the mechanical conceptions of all Marxists since Marx up to 1915.

This [notion of] thesis-antithesis-synthesis has plagued the movement and blinded it to seeing transformation into opposite instead of synthesis, so that none were prepared for the collapse of the Second International. This is why Lenin was so insistent that one, and only one, "category" is crucial to any single period and that his dialectic principle was transformation into opposite...

Now then, you asked about the most difficult of all questions in philosophy when you asked "how to connect man as subject and method." The first difficulty in answering derives from the fact that there is no answer, or rather that there are several answers, all equally valid and yet completely opposed. Moreover, there is no way to know which is correct at any one time because the proof is in the practice.

When a Jean-Paul Sartre places all of his emphasis on "contingency" alone, as if there was nothing inevitable or "pre-determined," he is very wrong. And yet contingency is crucial to any Hegelian-Marxian concept of inevitability and necessity which, though truly not pre-determined, nevertheless inevitably emerges out of its own dialectical development.

Let me see whether I can restate this in clearer terms. Man as subject determines the final outcome, shapes the course of history, anticipates its future development. At the same time, not only is he himself a product of history, and bound by it, but in the dialectic—that is to say, development through contradiction of his relationship to the objective situation as well as the relationship of various class forces—the new dialectic that emerges out of this confrontation of conflicting forces may be something altogether different than what man's pre-conception was.

Thus, there can be no simple answer to what is method because each situation as well as each period has its own dialectic. Thus, there is a dialectic in history and in each historic period. There is a dialectic or self-development in man. And not a single one of these forms of development is unrelated to the other.

For example, you seem to think that it was a digression [on my part] to speak of Aristotle's Absolutes when it was difficult enough to come to grips with Hegel's Absolutes. But, since neither Aristotle nor Hegel were exactly proletarian revolutionists, it was necessary to show that the division between them was nevertheless so great that one could be "stood right side up" (not "upside down"). The reason this was so was the difference in the historic period.

In Aristotle's time there was not only the division between the philosophers and the workers, but the work-

Spontaneity and logic of the dialectic

ers were slaves; Aristotle, therefore, could not conceive them as self-developing subjects. So when he spoke of the Absolute, he meant contemplation of all the wonders of the world that the "thinkers" could enjoy.

Hegel lived in the period of the French Revolution, where the sans culottes were very active, and indeed this movement from below penetrated even into the ivory towers of philosophers, especially the philosopher-genius Hegel. Therefore, though consciously he, too, thought of Absolute as that unity of theory and practice that the philosophers understood best, Absolute was no longer contemplative, but active; no longer limited to but one class but could, through labor, achieve a dimension beyond himself.

When Marx got to standing Hegel "right side up," that is to say disclosed that the dialectic of thought was, in fact, the dialectic of history—that "consciousness" could not possibly exist outside man and therefore the



struggles of consciousness and self-consciousness were men struggling, indeed classes in conflict...rooted in the mode of production in any single historic period—Marx was doing a great deal more than standing Hegel "right side up."

All that the Second International—and I am here including all because Lenin, too, was then a member of the Second as it was the only Marxist International—got from Marx's modest statement about his relationship to Hegel was that now they did not need Hegel anymore; that now they "knew" it was the class struggle, and not the struggle of consciousness and self-consciousness that was at the root of the evils of capitalism etc., etc., etc. The result was that dialectic was reduced to a catechism about the class struggle, a denigration of theory, and, above all, a complete failure to see what new emanated from the specific stage of class struggle which characterized their period and did not characterize Marx's.

Dialectics is a spontaneous development, not a logical necessity, and yet both logic and necessity are integral to this spontaneous development. It is not that Hegel "got man...into the dialectic." It is that the history of thought and the history of man are so interrelated, it is impossible to have history without man and it is what forced Hegel into a dialectic far beyond his own consciousness. But to get beyond something, one must first reach the level of that something. And the Marxists had not reached the level of Hegel, though they were all materialists and not "idealists."



VOICES FROM WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS

We have heard the notion unceasingly repeated that the one and only intention of "criminals" is to damage society without the slightest bit of remorse. Because of their "belligerent" behavior "criminals" are considered "uncontrollable"—and so the way to reduce crime is to incarcerate them in "correctional facilities" for their entire natural life.

What we really have here is a capitalist propaganda tool. The media is working overtime to implant within society a belief that individuals convicted under the current criminal (in)justice system are animals and not human beings.

Even just analyzing the statistics can help us understand the injustice prisoners are made to suffer. At the beginning of 1994, 79% of those incarcerated were in the lower income bracket, which included an unemployment rate of 29%. Minorities accounted for 63% of the incarcerated, and the median age has decreased to the point where those under the age of 30 in prison are 61%.

Now with these basic statistics it is easy to see that the biggest crime being committed today is against poor, young members of minority groups. There is no denying that wealthy persons are in prison, but their numbers are small—and their time spent incarcerated is minimal and statistically undetectable.

First let's examine "crimes of survival." A majority of these are related to monetary hardships. To earn livable wages an individual often turns to crime, such as property offense—which accounts for 31% of those in prison.

I believe there is some confusion on the question of [Hegel's category of the Doctrine of the] Notion. The Doctrine of the Notion is the doctrine where Being and Essence have united, where the unity of Theory and Practice has achieved the Absolute.

It is also what, to a Marxist but not to Hegel, mean the realization of freedom—for the unity of theory and practice cannot be achieved other than in the process of revolution and the movement to a new society. (Hegel did place Freedom and Reason as the two most fundamental, dynamic, "eternal" strivings of man but, to the extent that he limited his Freedoms to thought, the Doctrine of the Notion remains in a rarefied atmosphere.)

The concept of Notion is the concept of totality, that is to say, when you see all aspects, ramifications, and implications. Notion is not fetish. Fetish is the idolatry of a thing, rather than a person. If a person is degraded, or to use the strictly Marxian phraseology, reified, i.e. made into a thing, then clearly we are dealing with a perverse society.

What Marx did in that superb section on the "Fetishism of Commodities" was to take that ordinary thing of exchange, a commodity, and show that it was not just the unit, the being of capitalist wealth. That was only its appearance. Nor was it only a production relationship essential and more fundamental as a production relationship is when contrasted to market exchange.

In truth, [Marx was saying] we are all slaves to what appears so simple a thing as a commodity, precisely because it appears so simple. We accept this thing without realizing that 1) in fact, what we are dealing with is an exploitative relationship of production, a product of alienated labor. That, and not exchange, is the Essence. But 2) above even that Essence stood the Notion, only instead of this being a unity of theory and practice in the sense of something superior, it was "the fantastic form" in which human relations appear as things because, that is truly "what they are" UNDER CAPITALISM.

In a word, Marx had split the concept of the Absolute into two: the Absolute that would be the new society were "the new passions and new forces" that would uproot the old and construct the new; the Absolute of the existing society was this perverse relationship of man to thing, where machine dominated man. It is the duality in this concept of Absolute which makes it so very difficult to grapple with and yet without which we cannot advance at all.

Finally, there is the question of negativity. Of all the categories of Hegel, none is greater; none is such a repudiation of the formal Absolute, none is so absolutely crucial to Marxists. First of all, you can see the absolute contradiction in the term, "absolute negativity." If something is absolute, it most certainly cannot be negated, at least if you think Absolute is God and Hegel did think so. If something is negated, then it certainly isn't absolute; it has just been "abolished." And yet there it is, both words are Hegel's. Both are a necessary new beginning for Marxism, for a new social order, for negation of "all olds" (to use a Maoist expression) and the creation of the new. Without that second negation, the abolition of the old society would lead, not to Humanism, but to a relapse into some form of the old.

Lenin tried to get around the absoluteness of the contradiction here by showing each stage is an Absolute, that in every such Absolute, there is a relative when it is related to another stage that once again repeats the cycle, but always on a higher level. In a word, the only thing that is Absolute is motion itself.

Please forgive me for not getting into concrete situations. I feel that if we got to those too fast, we would not really grasp method so that each of us could apply it by himself. It is better to be confused, in doubt but stubbornly persisting, than to come to ready-made conclusions too fast—then one day the dawn will break and you will see. Anything else is what Hegel called a "pillow for intellectual sloth."

The true roots of 'crime'

This includes burglary, theft, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. Nonmonetary related crimes of survival would include for example a woman who had nowhere to turn for protection, so she murdered her abuser in order to stop the madness.

The second type of crime in this society is what I would call "learned capitalist behaviors"—those individuals who put little value on people's human rights because they feel that they can murder, rape, kidnap and engage in crimes like embezzlement and fraud. Though these persons' behaviors are very troublesome, through reeducational programs, an individual's behavior might be corrected. But the current prison system refuses to offer this.

Last but not least is the third type of crime—those jailed for "specialized criminalization." These are laws designed for a certain class of individuals who would not be considered criminals in a humanistic society. This includes homelessness, vagrancy, immigration violations, rioting, and many other "offenses" that are defined as such by the greed of the ruling class.

Despite all the talk of our "crime-deluged society," the statistics actually show a reduction in crime reported to the police over the past five years—while in the process more "criminals" than any other time in U.S. history are being assembly-lined through the overburdened criminal (in)justice system. There is no logical sense to this madness.

—D.A. Sheldon

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Essay Article

by Olga Domanski

From its birth in 1911 as an act of solidarity with the organizing struggles of U.S. garment workers, through its convergence with an actual revolutionary moment as in Russia in 1917, to its rediscovery at the end of the 1960s by a totally new Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) which forced the Left to confront the fact that the "new society" it was fighting for had to mean totally new human relations and that means and ends could not be separated—the concept of International Women's Day was rooted in struggle.

What makes the struggle so difficult today is that two kinds of battles must be waged at one and the same time. One is the strongest action possible against the vicious demonization of welfare mothers, the lethal attacks on abortion rights, and the alarming increase in rapes, battering, poverty and unemployment. The other is the struggle against the retrogression in thought within the WLM that is manifested in the ever-widening gap between feminist theory, inside the academy and out, and the lives of Black and working women. The crisis has become so deep, with seemingly endless rollbacks on all fronts, that everything has to be rethought anew to find a pathway forward again.

It is significant that when the retrogressive "changed world," which has reached such an alarming point today, first appeared in the mid-1980s, Raya Dunayevskaya was impelled to call attention, in her Introduction/Overview to *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, to the "practicality of philosophy" when objective crises are so deep that you are facing an historic point. The specific philosophic point she was asking the WLM to investigate was Hegel's concept of "Life" in his *Science of Logic*.

It isn't that other feminist theorists have not seen the importance of studying Hegel to confront the challenges facing the WLM. Yet it is almost always the relevance of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* they have debated (in particular the section on "Master and Slave," as seen most notably in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*) while the *Science of Logic* has had very little discussion. It may be because Hegel's presentation of the dialectic he discovered in 2,500 years of humanity's struggle to be free is made in far more concrete categories in the *Phenomenology* than in his *Logic*. It has, in fact, been a matter of astonishment to many to find such a title as "Life" in so abstract a work.

Whether or not the very abstractness may help us to follow the dialectic more clearly, the section on "Life" Dunayevskaya was pointing to has enormous ramifications for what is facing us today. In Hegel, "Life" is key because it becomes the path to the Absolute Idea—the point he called "an absolute liberation" when he got to the final paragraph of his *Science of Logic*.¹ The journey to get there is so full of the contradictions from within that have to be overcome—indeed, that transcendence is the only thing that moves you forward—that, while it is important not to map Hegel to history too literally, a look into the chapter on "Life" seems to offer special insights for the WLM at this moment.

A LOOK INTO THE HEGELIAN IDEA OF LIFE

The chapter on "Life" appears, significantly, in the Doctrine of the Notion—which Hegel called "the realm of Subjectivity or Freedom" (p. 205). We have already been taken from the Doctrine of Being, through the Doctrine of Essence, to reach this final Doctrine, where Hegel develops the categories that will finally overcome the division between objectivity and subjectivity and reach "absolute liberation" in the Absolute Idea.

In the very last section of this Doctrine, "Life" is one of three chapters that comprise what Hegel calls "The Idea." That category does not mean, Hegel stresses, what is commonly thought of as "only an idea," which implies that it is merely an abstraction. Rather, Hegel's Idea is the unity of Notion and reality, for "whatever is actual is only insofar as it contains and expresses the Idea." Hegel tells any who think it strange to take up Life in so abstract a work, that it is only because they think of Logic as "empty and dead thought forms." In his *Logic*, Life is a form of the Idea.

Most important of all, Hegel's Idea is a "process." In his *Phenomenology*, which Hegel had written as an "Introduction" to his *Logic*, he described the process he would be tracing almost poetically: "Life is the universal fluid medium, quietly, silently shaping and moulding and distributing the forms in all their manifold detail, becomes by that very activity the movement of those forms, or passes into life *qua* Process."² In the more rarified air of the *Logic*, he simply announces that the Idea as process has three stages: the Idea of Life, the Idea of Cognition, and the Absolute Idea—which turn out to be the titles of the three chapters of this final section. The first, on "Life," is the one we want to investigate here to see what illumination it might give us as Women's Liberationists.

Following his usual triadic structure this chapter also has three sections: "The Living Individual," "The Life-Process," and "The Kind." We soon find that what permeates each of them is the movement from the Universal, through the Particular, to the Individual, as well as the reverse. These are not only the general categories of the Notion, they illuminate Hegel's whole "journey."

Revolutionary feminism, 'private enclaves,' and Hegel's notion of Life

What is key to this concept is that, either way—whether the movement is from Universal-Particular-Individual or Individual-Particular-Universal—the movement from abstract to concrete through particularization necessitates a first and a second negation. Far from the common misinterpretation that Hegel considers only the "Universal" as determinate, in his philosophy the "Particular" is the mediation. The urgent question becomes when does the abstract Universal particularize itself, in order for the Individual to become the concrete Universal?

Thus, in the first section on the "Living Individual," Hegel follows how the Individual finds the sensibility of "self-feeling," which turns to the "power of resistance," as the impulse to move outward and thereby discover one's "actual Individuality." We might say it is the kind of personhood we have all experienced as we have moved into the world. (It is surely what women experienced when they were drawn into the factories "to support the



war effort" during World War II and then refused to be pushed back out again when it was over. It was the very threshold of the new WLM.) Yet, as soon as the Individual comes up against the objective world, a great "tension" arises. This is what Hegel discusses in the second section on the "Life-Process."

The tension results from the Individual relating to "an indifferent objectivity which is Other to it," and wanting to not lose itself but preserve itself within that relation. Hegel calls this tension between the individual and the external world an "absolute contradiction," identifying "pain" as the existence of this contradiction in life. But he considers this pain "the privilege of living natures"—because from the pain you gain the impulse to move forward by transcending the contradiction. And here is how Hegel describes that transcendence: "In the coincidence of the Individual with its objectivity... it transcends its particularity and raises itself into universality" (pp. 412-413). The movement here from Individual through the mediation of the Particular to the Universal describes, in my view, the point at which Women's Liberation moved from an Idea whose time had come to a Movement.

It was the point at which women refused to any longer consider the contradictions of life in a male-dominated society as only a private matter. The personal was political. We were making history and, far from any woman feeling lost in a collectivity, each "preserved herself within that relation" to use Hegel's terms, or felt "individualized through the historic process," as Marx put it. Most important of all, in moving from an Idea to a Movement, where every woman felt part of the whole, a totally new subjectivity was released for our age. In reaching this great new stage, I see the WLM reaching a stage that corresponds, philosophically, to the section of "Life" that Hegel calls "Kind."

Although none can deny the power of tens of thousands of women marching down Fifth Avenue in New York in 1970 to announce the birth of a new Women's Liberation Movement for our age, "Kind" is not merely a question of numbers but the way the word is used in asking: What kind of freedom are we fighting for? or What kind of organization can help us get there? It may or may not help to understand what Hegel means by this category to see that what Johnston and Struthers translate as "Kind" is translated by A.V. Miller as "Genus."³ Whatever the translation, what makes it clear that Hegel is not talking about either a "biological" or a quantitative question is his brief section on "Kind" in the *Encyclopedia of Logic* where he states that "for the animal the process of Kind is the highest power of its vitality. But the animal never gets so far in its Kind as to have a being of its own; it succumbs to the power of Kind."⁴

It appears to me that Hegel wants to again show us

the "privilege" of our humanity, as we are faced with how to overcome the contradictions we face even at this high stage. The contradiction is, he continues, that "In the process of Kind the immediate living being mediates itself with itself, and thus rises above its immediacy, only however to sink back into it again. Life thus runs away, in the first instance, only into the false infinity of the progress *ad infinitum*." To get out of this trap, we have to move from being only "Kind in itself" (i.e., implicitly) to become "Kind for itself."

THE TASK THAT REMAINS TO BE DONE

This is the section we are most in need of working out, because 25 years after reaching such a great stage we are facing deeper contradictions and tensions within the WLM than feminists have perhaps ever before confronted, a contradiction that is seen the most sharply in the persistent separation between "theory" and "practice." The ground-breaking questioning of the "kind" of society we are fighting for is still only "in itself"—i.e., implicit. The task is hardly over just because of a "sensibility" to the need for totally new human relations. Without explicitly and concretely working out what "no separation of means and ends" entails, the movement runs the risk of "sinking back" into "immediacy"—or what Dunayevskaya called "private enclaves," in the same Introduction/Overview in which she challenged the WLM to grasp the "practicality of philosophy" to confront the contradictions today.

The expression "private enclaves" resonates with what Adrienne Rich critiqued as the "tendencies in feminism toward a kind of 'inner emigration'" which she spelled out as including "not just lesbian separatism" but the kind of thinking where "women-only space," often a strategic necessity, becomes an end in itself." It may also be what Patricia Altenbernd Johnson, in relating Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* to the problems of the WLM in the 1990s, called the point where "we are generating a world of our own creation, but do not yet have freedom from and in this world." Gila Hayim, in an article on the *Phenomenology* that looked at what happens after we have gained a "mind of our own" put the problem this way: "this self...can posit itself as something beyond reach, enigmatic and unspeakable, or hide in a subjective land of its own making, detaching itself completely from the world, or emerge in the form of the preaching philosopher or cynical critic." Each of us surely knows some theoretical or activist tendency that fits one or another of these descriptions.⁵

When Dunayevskaya looked at this section of Hegel's *Logic*, she was not limiting the problem of "private enclaves" to the WLM alone. She was speaking to any attempt to escape from "Absolute Method," whether on practical, theoretical or organizational questions. Absolute Method is the method of "absolute negativity," the simultaneously subjective-objective, continuous process of becoming Hegel had discovered, which made his philosophy so revolutionary. Absolute Method is not discussed by Hegel until the very last chapter of the *Science of Logic* on the Absolute Idea, but we have been seeing Hegel working toward it in this section on Life. Indeed, the critical nature of Hegel's chapter on "Life" is that it becomes the transition to the Idea of Cognition, in the process of dialectically working out our way to Freedom.

Hegel says that this transition is achieved once we grasp the Idea as totality, through what he calls "Intro-Reflection." I would call it taking a hard look in the historic mirror and asking ourselves what are the totally new relations we need, between woman and man, woman and woman, and most of all between the movement from practice and the movement from theory, to achieve a new integrality between the Idea and the lived experience of each and all of us.

What still remains for us to investigate in the chapter on "Life" is what we can make of Hegel's discussion of "the living generations" at the very end of the chapter. This question of "the living generations" appears to be closely connected with his concept of "absolute negativity," which Hegel implies has to permeate every facet of our lives, as individuals and as a movement, to ensure a forward movement to Freedom. Whatever else it means I want to suggest it means that for the dialectic to live it has to be constantly re-created by every new age. Marx re-created the Hegelian dialectic as "revolution in permanence." Standing on that ground, Dunayevskaya re-created it as Marxist-Humanism and, returning to Hegel for a new age, saw "absolute negativity as new beginning."

If we do not take responsibility for continuing that revolutionary dialectic for today, if we think "philosophy" is not our job but for someone else, if we don't see there is no "organizational answer" for women's liberation or any other question that doesn't begin with a profound organization—or a re-organization—of our thought, we will not yet have escaped the "private enclave" that prevents us from finding the way out of the deadly retrogression that threatens to destroy us today.

1. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. Johnston and Struthers (New York: MacMillan, 1929), Vol. II, p. 485. All quotations are from this edition, and hereafter page references will be cited in the text.

2. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* trans. J.B. Baillie (Lon-

3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1989), p. 772.

4. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Logic*, trans. Miller (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 114. This is commonly referred to as either the *Smaller Logic* or the *Encyclopedia Logic*.

5. See "Living the Revolution," by Adrienne Rich in *The Women's Review of Books*, September 1986; Patricia A. Johnson's discussion of Dunayevskaya's work on Hegel's *Absolutes* in *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, Vol. 13, Number 4, 1989; Gila Hayim's "Hegel's Critical Theory and Feminist Concerns," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 16, 1 (1990).

UNDER THE WHIP OF GINGRICH'S COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Our local UAW retirement meeting on Feb. 7 was a very exciting meeting, because one member said what was on his mind about the November 1994 election. He asked what the rightwing taking over power of the federal government means to the great majority of the people, especially the working class and poor. This worker said that both parties of government represent capitalism and we have to vote them out.

Another retired worker said, "Vote them out, hell. Thomas Jefferson said if the people of this country are to hold on to what little freedom they have, the people need to go to Washington every 10 or 15 years and hang the damn rascals." This brought on a most lively union retirees' meeting like one I haven't seen in many years.

Retired GM worker
California

When the Republicans took out their "contract on America," it was a revelation for everyone because it showed the liberals' true colors.

Philosophy professor
Illinois

The parade of speakers at the convention of the "conservative" faction of the Republican Party, from Pat Buchanan and Oliver North to Bob Dole, struck me as an eerie procession of political dinosaurs from some kind of political "Jurassic Park." Only the actual person of McCarthy was missing, although the presence of his spirit was palpable! To think that the fate of the U.S., and perhaps even all humanity, might be decided by this little fundamentalist, backward-looking bunch is frightening. Is it too farfetched to foresee that when mass protests begin to erupt, it will be tempting for these reactionary forces to take off the thin veneer of a "democratic" front and attempt an openly fascist dictatorship?

Laszlo Gati
Vancouver, B.C.

Kids getting out of high school today can't go to college or find a factory job. They have to go into the military. We used to be able to make our own minds up about our future. Now it's the military or MacDonalds.

Locked-out Staley worker
Decatur, Ill.

All the government's "fact-finding" on worker-management relations has discovered is what the rest of us already knew—that we are having a hard time living.

Martin Almora
Illinois

As a Canadian labor historian I am struck by the intelligence, courage and dedication of the workers who write to you. In the academy we tend to talk about bureaucratism, corruption, retreat and defeat when the American working class is discussed. It's refreshing to see a Marxist-based organization that recognizes the L.A. riot was a rebellion of the unemployed. With Newt's help others

may come to realize that the discourses of multiculturalism, anti-racism, post-structuralism and post-modernism have been co-opted by the right and serve to buttress, not weaken, the forces of capitalism and reaction. Capitalism fetishizes language as well as commodities, which is why we must constantly return to the sentient human being and the struggle for freedom.

Peter Campbell
Ontario, Canada

I am a CUNY student and very angry about the financial cuts. I'm also discouraged about the lack of student involvement in our protest. 173 classes (most of them required) are being cancelled; 6,000 freshmen, a lot of whom are Black and Hispanic, are being turned away. We were not able to get on the air to state our case about a N.Y. State Education law which is being violated. Eight of us are plaintiffs in a lawsuit. Why aren't the people standing up?

Charmaine Bailey
Bronx, N.Y.

Just dealing in concrete reality is not enough to answer the questions we face today. Just as there is a danger of being too abstract with revolutionary philosophy, so there is a danger of being too "concrete" in facing reality without digging deep in thought. Reality should not dominate thought. Thought has to dominate and transform reality.

Black revolutionary
Los Angeles

LABOR 1955 PLUS 40



The Archives piece from 1955 printed in the January-February issue was so contemporary it was hard to believe it was 40 years old. There is so much in there that is important to the labor movement and the left. I could almost feel myself in that article, as though I was being spoken to directly. Workers really do think for themselves are in advance of would-be revolutionaries of all kinds.

Daniel
Springfield, Ill.

Raya Dunayevskaya's talk to the founding conference of News and Letters Committees in 1955, and the writing of *Marxism and Freedom* that followed it, made me think back to the 1848 revolutions in Europe because her talk anticipated the movements of the 1960s. Workers don't need a program, they need to know the roots of the historic moment they are living in. For that, a "specter" isn't enough, you need a document.

Black worker
Los Angeles

Reading the document from 1955, when the decision to publish a paper like *News & Letters* was first being made, I had to agree that "the only thing holding back the workers is their lack of confidence in themselves." Today there are even less workers organized than 40 years ago. Yet Labor produces everything. The whole system depends on us—but workers have to depend on the system for a job. We have to break from that "dependence" before we can get to revolt. Marxist-Humanism gives us the ground.

Labor editor
California

When I was a boy, growing up in Kentucky, you could set your watch by the time a worker passed by with this bucket, going to or from work. When a worker went to the job each day, he knew how many hours of work he had ahead of him. But how did we get to where we are now, where a worker doesn't know if he or she will be working 8 or 12 or 2 or no hours on the job?

A worker all my life
California

Readers' Views

THE MEXICAN CONDITION



Greetings from the most polluted city of the globe and most impoverished on the continent. Pessimism haunts every corner of our battered land. These difficult moments make us reflect on the crisis of ideas and their connection with practice. We are living in an age in which we have to change the categories of a degenerate capitalism in order to initiate a profound change that alters its roots so that a new society will arise to create a future.

Revolutionary teacher
Mexico City

We have been living here in Tijuana for 13 years. When we came here, everything was very clean. It looked to us like an ecology reserve, with the Alamar River. A few years later the maquiladoras came in. We were glad to see that we were going to get more jobs close to our home, but later we realized that the river was contaminated by the factories.

The children started to get sick. We have documented the death of 12 children born with anencephaly [congenital absence of all or a major part of the brain], and four others who were born deformed between 1990 and 1993. We have sent in some 900 pages of complaints to different government offices, but we haven't received any attention from the authorities.

Maurilio Pachuca
Tijuana

When President Zedillo of Mexico declared an all-out war against the impoverished peasants of Chiapas, was this a precondition for Clinton's bailout package? It is more than plausible. You have to see and physically experience the thousands who were born, live and die on the street; the Indians and peasants living in virtual serfdom; the maquiladoras working for U.S. companies at pennies an hour in the midst of incredible squalor and pollution—to know that the literal declaration of war against them is a call for action, not just in Chiapas, but everywhere decent human beings are ready to stand up and be counted.

Radical thinker
Canada

Cecilia Rodriguez, the chair of the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, and an EZLN representative in the U.S., has been on a hunger strike in La Placita since Feb. 16. Hundreds have come there and are forming brigades to leaflet neighborhoods to join a protest in front of the Mexican consulate.

Cecilia Rodriguez says: "The government has barred Physicians Without Borders from entering Chiapas. 20,000 refugees have fled to the jungle. EZLN supporters are being arrested and tortured. We just can't stand by and watch, while all this is happening."

Cyrus Noveen
Los Angeles

THE BRITISH SCENE

A flurry of political interest has arisen about Tony Blair, new leader of the Labor Party. Depicted in the mass media as a modernizer, working out a new vision for the left, Blair speaks of "key values" like "social justice, solidarity, partnership, equality, democracy."

In the politics of "New Labor," it is fine to denounce poverty, inequality and insecurity in British society, provided the blame is directed narrowly at Tory ideology and "sleaze" in government. To attack the capitalist system in its entirety is taboo. Anyone who dissents is ridiculed by the mass media as an ideological dinosaur. Blair's "partnership" will be one with the stock exchange, banks and big business, while "socialism" is reduced to a set of ethical values to be applied within the existing socioeconomic order—not the reconstruction of society in line with human values.

Richard Bunting
Oxford

BOSNIA AND ARMS

I see the American arms industry as the single greatest threat to world peace and human survival. As horrific as the suffering in Bosnia has been and continues to be, I simply do not see lifting the arms embargo as a solution. When the American government and the Iranian government have something in common, socialists should start to worry.

Professor
Ontario

ARISTIDE AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

I found Eugene Walker's review of Aristide's books in the January-February N&L very important. Yet while Aristide does not develop a philosophy of liberation from Marx, what directly brought him down was ignoring a political, "class struggle" conclusion of Marx on smashing the army. So the philosophic critique is not followed out all the way to the end. Was there something internal to the very logic of Aristide's theology of liberation which led to the "new" Aristide, the neo-liberal, the prisoner of the U.S.? As theology of liberation seems to have largely collapsed along with the rest of the left, with the fall of Communism, is there something internal, philosophically, that led theology of liberation to collapse?

John Marcotte
New York

CAN YOU HELP?

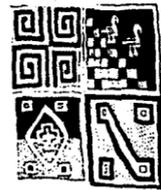
In India we receive almost no Marxist interpretations of what is happening in the U.S. and around the world. Can you find a donor to let us continue reading N&L? Many activists and teachers use the information in your pages, especially in their economics and feminist classes.

Women's Studies Research Center
Bombay

As I see it, the root to all injustice and social problems lies in the love of money, not the money itself. I always thought we should only like things, but love people. I'm a 39-year-old political prisoner doing 16 years on fabricated charges pending an appeal already submitted. I find your paper fabulous. Is there some way an indigent incarcerated without resources can obtain a subscription?

Prisoner
California

Editor's note: We have established a special Donor's Fund for readers who would like to pay for subs for prisoners or others who cannot send us the money themselves. Can you help?



WANTED:
NATIVE
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MATERIALS

I'm writing to tell your readers about our Native American Spiritual Cultural Council. Presently there are 38 men in the "Indiana State Prison" who are striving to follow the spiritual path. The path is hard to follow in a "Maximum Security Prison." We represent different Tribal Nations such as Lakota, Blackfoot, Cherokee, Creek, Arapahoe, Aztec, Yaqui, Cree, Taino, Apache, Lumbee and Cheyenne. We are trying to learn the ways of our people and need Native American material such as books on beadwork, arts and crafts material, culture books, new or used, on history and religion of different tribes. We could also use audio-visual tapes and music tapes, in the traditional language or in English.

All incoming material to us must be routed through the Chaplain's office to meet security regulations. If you are in a position to help us with a donation of the above items, please send them addressed to the Native American Spiritual Cultural Council, c/o Rev. Taylor, Chaplain's Office, Indiana State Prison, P.O. Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46361.

Enrique Thunder Eagle
Michigan City, Ind.

IN MEMORIAM: ROWLAND WATTS

Those who are or have been involved, at some point over the past six decades, in what the bourgeois press likes to call "unpopular causes" mourn the death of Rowland Watts, the civil rights lawyer who defended sharecroppers and laborers, conscientious objectors and anti-war protesters, illegal immigrants and citizens forbidden to travel abroad for nearly 60 years.

Many came to know him as the head of the Workers Defense League, a legal-aid group for the poor in Manhattan. Especially remembered for his early work in the South, investigating working conditions there when he took up the cause of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union after World War II, he continued to work with the Workers Defense League in New York as a volunteer into his seventies. He died in February at the age of 82. We mourn his death and honor his memory.

'IS MARX'S CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM STILL VALID?'

I liked the essay article "Is Marx's Critique of Capitalism Still Valid?" in the January-February N&L for restating some of the basics of Marxism for today. It made me remember how important was Dunayevskaya's category of Automation creating a divide in thought between all the planners on one side, and those fighting for "what kind of labor should man/woman do?" on the other. It was so basic to N&L I think we took it all for granted! Here in this essay, Peter Hudis reaches for such a generalization of our high tech age, but doesn't yet quite reach it. If the new divide is between the "increasingly abstract forms of social domination," on the one side, and "the still uncertain search for new human beginnings," on the other, I want to know, first, what is this abstract form of social domination. What is it to the welfare mom, to the Delta Pride workers, to the Caterpillar worker? And second, it is not exactly a call to the barricades, it sounds hesitant. If what is really new today is "the death of the very idea of philosophy," what does that mean for the person in the street?

Labor activist
New York

* * *

Peter Hudis' critique of Postone in his Essay-review shows that if you separate the production process from the human being, then the whole of history is lost. If you try to theorize like that, you're a dead man, just like capitalism is a walking dead man. Hudis shows that if you skip over the human being, you also skip over philosophy. If philosophy is not human, what is it? You're left with a skeleton without flesh.

Marxist-Humanist worker
California

* * *

Peter Hudis did a good job of pointing out the weaknesses in Moishe Postone's very significant new book. It isn't so much Postone's considerable Marxian scholarship which is at issue as his constricted view of Hegel's philosophy. A study of Postone, who is good on many points, can help us to see where Marxist-Humanism differs from any expression

of Post-Marx Marxism, that is, in its attitude toward philosophy.

Gerard Emmett
Chicago

Coming next month...
A dialogue on "Is Marx's critique of capitalism still valid?"
A number of important responses to the review-essay of Moishe Postone's *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, published in the last issue of N&L, will appear in a special section of "Philosophic Dialogue" in the April issue.

WELFARE REFORM NEEDED

It's become obvious that we need welfare reform to assure that those not deserving funds don't get any. No more free rides. Those who have become dependent on the government must be cut loose. I'm referring to all the companies that are receiving corporate welfare. Did you know that subsidies to agribusiness exceed that given for food stamps? Or that corporations get to graze or mine government land for fees well below market prices? All the tax breaks and incentives go to those who can't exactly claim that the "hand-outs" they get go for things like food and heat, rather than lining the pockets of those already wealthy.

Neil Wollman
Manchester, Ind.

* * *

When I heard from my sister about the crisis welfare recipients are facing in Massachusetts, it hit home that national welfare "reform" proposals coming from the reactionaries in Congress are following the lead of individual states--not vice versa.

She works with a job training program for women on AFDC in Boston. "All the people I work with just got a letter say-

ing their last welfare check will be in February," she told me. "Last year Governor Weld allocated funds for only 8 out of 12 months of AFDC. My program may be cut, but it's much scarier for those who depend on welfare as their sole support—even if the legislature decides to bail them out this time."

Weld also just hired a new Human Services Secretary from Wisconsin, she said, who won a reactionary welfare "reform" bill there. "Weld wants to make people work at community service in exchange for a welfare check for six months before they are even eligible to enter a training program. It's like retribution."

Angry feminist
Chicago

* * *

The House Judiciary Committee on Feb. 16 voted a potential multi-billion dollar blank check to large wealthy landowners, saying they should be reimbursed when a federal regulation, such as one to protect the environment, lessens their property value 10% or more. If this became law, it would create what its Republican sponsors call a new "right to compensation" for the rich landowners. This is government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich. I am on welfare now because my job was replaced by a machine, and they want to take away what little money I get to survive. How much longer are the people to put up with this?

Welfare mother
Los Angeles

●

ZHIRINOVSKY IRRELEVANT?

You appear to have been correct in predicting the growth of fascism in Russia, but I was also correct in dismissing Vladimir Zhirinovskiy as the source of this threat. In *The New Socialist* I called Zhirinovskiy an irrelevant sideshow who only talked about doing what Boris Yeltsin has really been doing all along.

Ivan Bachur
Michigan

WHY READ N&L



I find N&L to be an insightful and concise publication, one of the least doctrinally hierarchical around. The angles you take on the global situation are necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of what we face. I'm impressed most by the news from around the world, and by the commentary from "ordinary folks," especially the youth.

History student
Milwaukee

* * *

What is going on these days? N&L has become a sclerotic and parasitic entity. You closely resemble bourgeois leftism. Whether in supporting base unions, defending the Bosnian capitalist state, subscribing to racial ideology, or telling workers to give N&L as a holiday gift, you confuse those trying to make a critical assessment of the class struggle and the prospects for proletarian revolution. Can N&L return to the Marxist method and the objective reality of the class struggle?

Disappointed but optimistic
Maryland

* * *

It's very curious to me that there should even be a debate about whether Marx was a humanist. The Stalinists disliked the term, except as when, in the late 1930s, they got into trouble and turned to the bourgeoisie to aid them as writers. How wrong people went, to miss Marx's message and character so badly.

Fred Whitehead
Kansas

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Black/Red View

by John Alan

Affirmative action faces probably its most serious challenge in California next year. Conservatives and the Republican Party are so encouraged by their success in getting voters to support Proposition 187, the so-called illegal immigrant initiative, they are now preparing to gain another racist victory by placing on the ballot an alleged "civil rights" proposition to end affirmative action.

The co-authors of this initiative are Tom Wood, the executive director of the California Association of Scholars, and Glynn Custred, a professor at California State University in Hayward. Both are long-time conservative ideologists with a burning desire to shape public policy.

Custred had stated he tells his students that the "truth" can be found in Adam Smith, David Hume and the "free market." He didn't elaborate upon the nature of this "truth" or say that Smith and Hume were the

Eyewitness in Haiti

The popular movement that led to the overthrow of the Duvalier regime in Haiti continues to grow in spite of severe repression during the last three years after the coup that ousted President Aristide. A Peace Studies class from Manchester College (Indiana) recently visited an area of the Central Plateau with a long history of peasant organizing and met with young people just coming out of hiding, who said their first priority is to rebuild grassroots support.

Izma Louise Delima, the only woman in the country elected as a Communal Police Agent, the position substituted by the 1987 constitution for the brutal Section Chief, expressed the determination of women to reorganize: "Our many enemies thought our movement was crushed, but now they see us rebuilding, we women who have always been the prime target of exploitation and repression."

Izma and many others assured us that they understand Aristide is a prisoner of the U.S. government that brought him back with a military occupation, but they consider him a very clever prisoner who carefully makes changes that will help future governments. For example, while we were there, Aristide transformed the infamous military headquarters in Port-au-Prince into the office of the Ministry of Women. Several of our informants told us the military in Haiti will never be the same: it is "decomposed." However, a grave concern repeated over and over is that tens of thousands of weapons issued by the army are still in the hands of former paramilitary, who are only biding their time until the foreign troops leave and they can again embark on a reign of terror.

In general the sentiment expressed to us is that the situation last fall was unbearable, and the presence of U.S. troops allows for at least temporary relief from the overwhelming terror. The head of the Catholic Church Justice and Peace Office referred to a list of 200 leaders of the pro-democracy movement targeted for death at the time of the U.S. intervention. The repression was so bad that people welcomed the troops in spite of their hostility to the thought of another U.S. occupation. But now they're asking questions: What are the troops doing? Why are they not disarming the paramilitary? Why did they bring so much equipment and so many armaments? There are no signs of any road-building or other technical projects. Why are soldiers seen digging in the ground in several locations? A student at the state university quoted a relevant proverb: sometimes necessary actions have evil consequences.

Next to disarmament, what people want most is justice. The recent replacement of former Duvalierist and do-nothing Justice Minister Mallebranche with attorney Jean Joseph Exume may help; the newly-appointed Truth Commission should soon begin assigning lawyers to document human rights violations. Setting a firm date for the parliamentary/mayoral/local elections will give people a goal for organizational activity.

—Cinny Poppen

California's racist 'son of 187'

philosophers of early English capitalism and that the "free market" was the historic foundation upon which the Atlantic slave trade rested.

The leadership of California's Republican Party doesn't give a hoot about the philosophic origin of Wood's and Custred's conservatism. What they see in their initiative is an appeal to America's racism being presented as a "democratic principle" that would prohibit the use of "race, sex, ethnicity or national origin as a criterion for either discriminating against or granting preferential treatment..."

There is nothing original about this; it's the old abstraction which de-socializes people by presupposing "pure individuals" unencumbered by inequalities of race, sex and class. Affirmative action was born out of the militancy of Black labor and the Civil Rights Movement before it became a part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In other words, affirmative action was a concrete confrontation with the undemocratic nature of American society and not a veiled abstraction about an alleged universal right.

Now, three decades later, Wood and Custred offer the voters of California a "civil rights" initiative to protect white males from preferential treatment given to African Americans, women and Latinos in the workplace and universities. This an absurdity. Minority students have only a marginal presence on the campuses of top universities. African-American workers, in a world of high-tech "free market competition," are on the verge of becoming completely superfluous.

This plea for democracy in the interest of the "victimized white male" indicates a fear of impending crisis in American society which is not any direct threat coming from Blacks, Latinos and women but an economic uncertainty and a lack of national unity following upon the demise of the Soviet Union. In a Feb. 12 interview in the San Francisco Chronicle Wood claimed that the passage of his initiative would be a unifying force in American politics, because "the policies we are fighting have proven to be a Balkanizing factor and very divisive."

Obviously, Wood thinks that his initiative will not only gain the support of right wingers but white liberals as well. He is correct. Senator Diane Feinstein, who opposed Prop. 187, now supports the repeal of California's Affirmative Action law. She said, "If Bill Clinton opposes the anti-affirmative action initiative, it could cost him five or six points in California's voters support."

The unifying nature of American racism has long exceeded the principles of American democracy. Racism has stood in the way of class solidarity, and has dominated politics to the extent that it has even corrupted the thinking of American socialism.

However, historically, African-American masses have challenged the existence of any kind of absolute white political unity founded on racism; they have made a human principle of their resistance. We can be sure that this will happen again in these circumstances, when such a political unity is being fabricated by the creation of a white male victim and an alleged felonious Black mother on welfare.

Police murder homeless man in shelter

Warren, Mich.—On Jan. 10 at the Warren Ave. M.A.T.S. (Macomb's Answer to Temporary Shelter) 26-year-old Steven Saad was shot and killed by Warren cops.

The staff had attempted to wake him in the morning. He was highly upset and refused to get up. The staff notified the Warren police, who arrived at 10:37 a.m. When they attempted to remove Steven Saad, he shoved a bunk bed against an officer, who sprayed two blasts of pepper gas in Saad's face. Saad began shedding his clothes and when he was completely nude he ran into the women's quarters. The police pursued him. He brandished a 15-inch screwdriver and went after the police. He ran past them naked into the 15 degree cold. One officer shot Saad in the knee.

He was already past them and posed no harm to the officers. He then turned and ran at the officers with a screwdriver held over his head, and at this time the officer shot him in the eye. He died at Warren Bi-County

Hospital two hours later. Two backup officers had joined the four already there, making a total of six officers.

Steven Saad was obviously mentally ill. He had a history of being such. There were six officers to one man. They certainly didn't have to kill him, and they shouldn't have shot him. This stinks of the police brutality surrounding the L.A. rebellion, the Malice Green shooting, and the attack on the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Many officers have this macho thing; they don't care about human life; they want to be a Rambo of some sort.

I work at a homeless shelter nearby, and we do a good job. I'm not saying that we don't have problems. All shelters do, but generally it runs smoother. We take people in the shelters without prior knowledge of their histories, though we do the best that we can. We are trying to get funds to get another shelter to house the mentally ill. It wasn't the person's fault who attacked the officer. It was the officer's fault; he was 38 and an eight-year veteran. He should have known better.

—Dan P.

Black World

(Continued from page 1)

what Harold Cruse derisively refers to as, an integrationist ideology of "noneconomic liberalism." Despite Cruse's hyperbole that DuBois's critique of this ideology precipitated his break with the NAACP during the Depression, the truth is that neither a Washingtonian program of "economic empowerment," nor a Marxist perspective of material transformation of the capitalist system ever co-existed very long with the NAACP's "talented tenth" ideology.

Today's reality of heavily Black central cities, self-limiting Black political power, and the gnawing indignities of resurgent racism has exhausted significant aspects of the integrationist program, especially in the minds of Black folk. Armed with much nationalist bravado and tempered by little political smarts, Ben Chavis sought, in his 14-month tenure as executive director of the NAACP, to move the organization out of its traditional orbit by extending the Association's hand first to Booker T. Washington ideologues like the Nation of Islam (NOI) restaurateur Louis Farrakhan, and then to left intellectuals like Angela Davis.

Chavis's single-minded drive for leadership unity was bought at the expense of the Black leadership's credibility as a serious challenger to the white power structure, Democrat and Republican. That Chavis's vaunted Black leadership summits had not one word to say in opposi-

tion to Clinton's draconian welfare "reform" plan is proof enough of that. Chavis was politically naive about the ideological contradictions that he was arbitrarily trying to synthesize. Instead of a synthesis of leadership perspectives, organizational strife ensued, ending with his ouster and that of his shaky benefactor Gibson.

Among the various philosophical points that Chavis didn't bother to acquaint himself with, and which led to his undermining of himself, is that the NAACP has always limited itself to fighting for equality of opportunity and only secondarily or reluctantly concerned itself with the struggle for equality of condition. This is because at its ideological core the NAACP is predicated on the egalitarian myth that equality of condition already exists in the U.S., and that the only thing standing in the way of realizing it are the juridical barriers that structure racial inequality.

Because the historical traditions of racism in America are fed on the material conditions of class inequality, those racist traditions get reborn every other generation, thus threatening, if not entirely sweeping away, the juridical gains won in lengthy legal battles by the NAACP. It goes without saying that even the legal battles are really won in the street. Hence, so long as the material conditions of inequality of American capitalist society are not fundamentally altered, the equality of opportunity so nobly championed by the NAACP will remain a sieve through which Black aspirations are filtered and dispersed. The result is the very one we see today: political demobilization of the Black community, and its frustration with all Black leaders and organizations.

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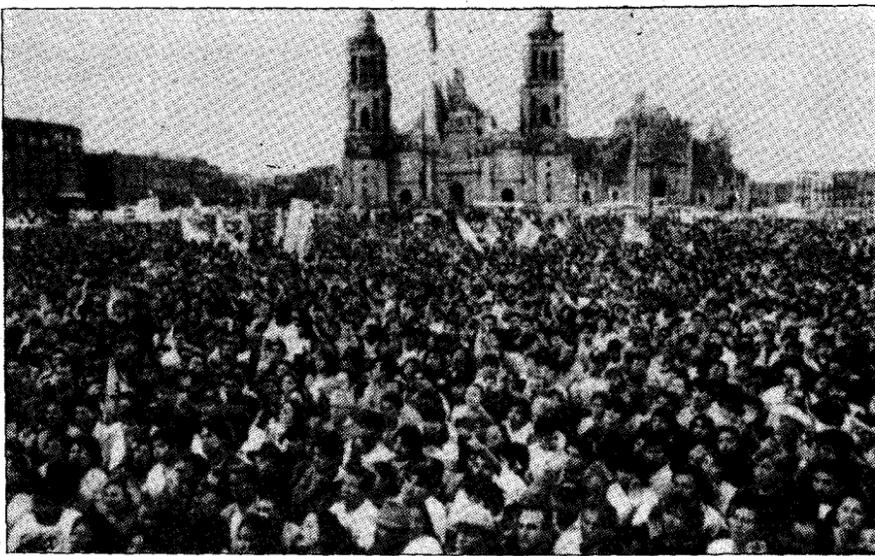
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Zapatista supporters protest Zedillo's occupation of Chiapas

Mexico City—"Todos somos Marcos" (We are all Marcos) was the cry of tens of thousands on the streets of Mexico City, Feb. 11. Almost 100,000 were protesting Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo's double order to arrest Sub-Comandante Marcos along with other leaders of the Zapata National Liberation Army (EZLN), and to have the Mexican army invade and occupy the pueblos in Chiapas that have supported the Zapatistas. Hand-painted banners and signs were everywhere. "Yo soy Marcos" (I am Marcos) was the most popular. The three miles of the march was a sea of banners with chant after chant pulsating throughout the two hours it took to reach the Zocalo, Mexico City's central square.



Mass demonstration of 100,000 Zapatista supporters in Mexico City's Zocalo after Zedillo's occupation of Chiapas.

This first massive response to Zedillo, a scant 48 hours after his provocation, was organized without the benefit of any announcements in any major media. In fact, it was organized against the massive campaign of disinformation that the government and parts of the media have carried out since Zedillo's Feb. 9 military order. Even this massive march of 100,000 "disappeared" in the papers the next day.

So much was spontaneous, from the chants to the thousands who watched and cheered from the sidewalks. At a U.S. business, Kentucky Fried Chicken, an EZLN-style mask was spray-painted on the Colonel's face.

What was clear to the marchers was that Zedillo's proposals of democracy, negotiations and a peaceful resolution, during his first weeks in office, were a facade to hide his preparations for war.

Under Zedillo's orders the Mexican army has taken possession of territory formerly controlled by the

Zapatistas. A virtual air bridge between a military base in the area of Tuxtla Gutierrez and the zone of the Zapatistas has been put in place with planes and helicopters transporting military personnel into the region.

In Guadalupe Tepeyac, a principal bastion of the Zapatistas, dozens of tanks and armored vehicles have occupied the town and over two dozen surrounding rancheros which had been in the hands of the insurgents. Reporters have not been allowed into the area to report on the military occupation. Even the International Red Cross was forced to abandon Guadalupe Tepeyac.

On Sunday, Feb. 12, reports of the Mexican army using bombers against the Zapatistas and any others taking refuge in the Lacandon Jungle appeared.

After almost two hours, the massive Mexico City march entered the Zocalo. The speakers were listened to and cheered, and yet they too were overwhelmed by the constant cry from that 100,000: "Marcos, Marcos, Mar-

cos." The protestors refused to be taken in by Zedillo's melodramatic "unmasking" of Marcos. "We are all Marcos," they responded. Many months ago Marcos had said he would take off his mask when Mexican society would take off its mask. Perhaps this has begun.

San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas—As I write early in the morning light, the plaza in front of the cathedral is encircled by dozens of state police, each dressed in hightopped paratrooper boots, batons and large rectangular shields. Others are helmeted with face shields, armed with tear gas shooting rifles. Inside the plaza are small groups of indigenous women hunched against the cold over the last charcoal embers of fires that have burned throughout the night.

Traveling here by bus I passed through communities that the Zapatistas occupied some 14 months ago at the start of the rebellion. But today members of the EZLN and many of their supporters have had to flee deep into the Lacandon Jungle and mountains of Chiapas.

Sunday, Feb. 19, in San Cristobal, a mob organized by the cattle ranchers, small property owners and business groups attacked parishioners coming out of the church of Bishop Samuel Ruiz whose support of indigenous peoples has been crucial. At present Ruiz is head of the Commission on Mediation, CONAI, which is trying to start a new set of peace talks.

In the week since the attack on the cathedral, a 24-hour vigil has been organized in support of Ruiz. After a march through San Cristobal to the cathedral, hundred upon hundreds of indigenous people sang and chanted and cheered. They were women and men and children, many carrying white mums and carnations as well as white lit candles. Some had handlettered small pieces of paper pinned to their shirts with the word "PAZ".

Whether or not the latest protests throughout the country will lead to a new round of peace talks we cannot know. What is clear is that the Zapatistas still stand firmly for the ideas that brought them into rebellion—freedom for indigenous people, land, health, education, and human rights.

—Eugene Walker

IN PERSON REPORT

Chiapas revolt puts Mexico at a turning point

(Continued from page 1)

disclose that the invasion was also prompted by the instability felt by the Mexican government itself.

First is the actual situation in Chiapas. Since the August elections, two parallel governments have existed in Chiapas. One is led by Eduardo Robledo, candidate of the PRI, which claimed victory and has sided with business interests, landowners and their paramilitary gangs.

The other is the "government in rebellion" of Amado Avendano, candidate of the leftist PRD, who protested fraud in the election and initiated a series of civil disobedience actions to make the state government non-functional. In the period since the Feb. 9 invasion, Robledo was forced to "resign" and a local PRI politician has been appointed interim governor.

Beyond the political parties and established arenas of power, the Indian peasants of Chiapas have continued to take over farmland and town halls in an attempt to establish their own centers of power, spreading out past territory which has been controlled by the EZLN.

Looming over all for Zedillo's rule has been the new kind of guerrilla movement represented by the EZLN. The sympathy and identity that tens of thousands of Mexicans express with the Chiapas revolutionaries is the reality which gives rulers in Mexico and the U.S. nightmares, and ultimately forced Zedillo to react.

THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY

Second is the impact of Mexico's monetary-economic debacle on the lives of the vast majority of people, and the depth of their rejection of the status quo. Overnight, they were "devalued" in terms of their living conditions by more than the often-stated peso drop of 35%. Nearly every working person has more than one job, often two or three. The cost of staples—beans, cooking oil, milk, eggs—began to soar after the devaluation. Inflation is now running at 45%. Nissan and other manufacturers shut down plants and laid off hundreds of workers in what they call a "technical" closure.

No one expects that the \$50 billion bailout—\$20 billion directly from the U.S., \$17.5 billion from the IMF, the largest loan in its history, and the rest from assorted international banks—will do anything to relieve the worsening of day-to-day life.

Everyone we spoke with agreed that Mexico is now reaping the bitter fruits of NAFTA which has tied it in a new kind of economic dependency package to the U.S. NAFTA, they said, was the government-peddled dream that Mexico was on its way into the "first world," but the Chiapas revolt, and now the economic collapse, showed the reality of Mexico's place in the Third World.

They also scorned the loss of foreign oil revenues from PEMEX, the state-owned petroleum industry, as collateral for the Clinton loan deal, since they said the Mexican people hadn't benefited from the national "patrimony" for a long time.

The third important factor is the increasing disintegration of the PRI. The economic stress has forced Zedillo to attempt peace nationally with the PRD on the left, and PAN on the right. It has resulted in the most virulent opposition coming from within the PRI itself. This is especially seen in Zedillo's arrest of the brother

of former President Salinas for allegedly ordering the murder of a deputy leader of the PRI.

Internal tensions in the PRI came to a head in Tabasco in January, when word spread that Zedillo intended to call new elections there and upset the PRI victory. PRI party members rioted in the streets against the PRD—which had blocked the governor from going into his office since last August's elections—saying they would quit the PRI if new elections were held as the PRD demanded. Zedillo suffered another blow in early February, when the PAN won elections in Jalisco, only the fourth time that the PRI has lost a governorship.

Elections in four other states are slated this year. While the PRD has stated that the Feb. 9 invasion in Chiapas abrogated its political truce with Zedillo, it is still willing to deal: one of its prominent members in Chiapas has recognized as legitimate the interim PRI governor. On the other hand, the rightwing PAN supported the invasion of Chiapas and has stood behind the PRI's economic policies. Further splits from within the PRI seem inevitable, and it can't be ruled out that a situation may develop similar to what occurred where other one-party rule has decayed—whether Russia, East Europe or Yugoslavia.

NEW FORMS OF REVOLT

Together with the immediate mass demonstrations in Mexico against the invasion of Chiapas and attack on the EZLN, other acts of opposition have broken out. At least one group of workers in Ciudad Juarez, on the U.S.-Mexico border, went out on wildcat after the loan deal was first announced in January. Workers at Thompson consumer Electronic Company, who make TV parts for GE and RCA, said they could not live on what the peso is worth now and demanded a 30% raise. They went back with 13%, after shutting down two other U.S. manufacturing plants by their strike.

New ways of establishing solidarity between Mexican and U.S. workers, such as the committees now being formed in the border plants, are even more crucial. The "official" minimum daily wage for Mexican workers has sunk to \$3, and U.S. companies will increase their threats to move to Mexico to force workers in the U.S. to accept concessions.

On the other hand, the racist scare tactics of Clinton, by raising the "specter" of 300,000 jobless Mexicans invading the U.S., has caused outrage in Mexico. One school teacher we spoke with said, "the U.S. tried to take all the credit for the Berlin Wall coming down, and now they turn around and want to put up a new one at the border."

The crisis in Mexico has also reverberated in other so-called "emerging" economies of the 1990s—those which have opened up to foreign investment as a means to "leverage" the accumulation of capital necessary for development in the global economy. The crisis in Mexico has reverberated around the world, causing near panic especially in Chile, Brazil and Argentina.

Mexico is poised at a unique moment. Ever since the Chiapas revolt erupted onto the world's consciousness on Jan. 1, 1994—with a main tenet being the rejection of NAFTA as the course of Mexico's future development—it has posed challenges to the left to find a genu-

ine alternative.

A new form of explicitly anti-"focoist" struggle has come with the "wind from the south": a guerrilla movement with solid roots in the Indian peasant resistance to a centuries-long succession of exploitative rulers. By issuing an arrest order for Marcos and other EZLN leaders, while offering amnesty to the rest of the indigenous army, Zedillo aims to divide the voice of the insurrection from its body. But in a handwritten communique Feb. 10, the EZLN responded, "We indigenous people know Subcomandante Marcos well, and we will not allow anything to happen to him, and if something happens to him, we won't stand still with our arms crossed."

The revolt has arisen from factors that have little to do with the conception we have of the isolated Indian. The EZLN itself is composed of multilingual youth, men and women, with experience in salaried labor on the coffee plantations. Perhaps most crucial is what kind of labor that has meant for the past twenty years, from the moment in 1974 when, as a result of the global economic recession, the price of coffee dropped and salaries were reduced. By the early 1980s the reserve army of labor had doubled in the southern states, and already in that time the peasantry had radicalized considerably.

The challenge facing us now is hearing what the most oppressed are saying. The least difficult part is that the Mexican rebels speak in at least four different native languages, plus Spanish. The greater problem is that we are confronted with a "language of thought" that we must participate in to hear. A quote from Marcos illustrates this: "The only way to succeed in a peaceful transition to democracy is for the movement to be massive, organized, and at all levels; thus the secret is to search for the banner that unites us and not that which divides us. This is why we say that we must first agree on what we don't want, and then on what we do want...the only advantage we have is that we know we don't want to continue being soldiers."

Some, such as Alma Guillermoprieto writing in the *New York Review of Books* (March 2, 1995), have become impatient with the writings of Marcos, claiming: "It is hard for Mexicans to know which of the many voices of Marcos—the wisecracking, self-mocking one, the voice of the rapturous letter writer, or the voice that speaks for a visionary community—they should take the most seriously." This is an odd conclusion, especially when a moment earlier she quoted Marcos as saying: "We found that people here had a way of explaining the struggle with their own traditional symbols, and using a language that is so clear that one cannot possibly look for hidden meanings."

Regardless of what one thinks of Marcos or his poetry, it is that language from below which has spoken clearly to millions, precisely at a historical moment when so many argue that it is useless for the subjectivity of the human being to oppose the might of the State.

In the coming months we will undoubtedly witness new creative energies released from the spontaneous uprisings. An important contribution to that revolt can be made by those interested in learning how to hear this new language coming from below, and practice the new humanism in their own writings and activities.

Editorial

Time is now to oppose Gingrich-Republicanism

The Republican Party 100-day program to make good on its Contract With America passed the half-way point Feb. 22. The name attached to that program, House Speaker Newton Leroy Gingrich, proclaimed that "completing the Contract With America is only a beginning...to build a true civil society." What working people are getting in the bargain is a shockingly uncivilized United States.

Each week brings news of measures to roll back the clock to times when poverty, segregation, unwanted pregnancies, and dangerous work were yet to be challenged by the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation movements or even the Great Depression's social movements. Most harrowing is the contract's fine print which includes repeal of the successful school lunch and breakfast programs serving children since 1946. When these rollbacks finally became news, they stunned the country. Republicans intend to end a poor child's guarantee to a free lunch (affecting 14 million children) or breakfast (4.9 million), and the supplemental feeding program for pregnant and breast-feeding women, infants, and children (6 million all together). The national nutritional standards for both programs would be ended as well.

The bills now coming out of House committees outline the scope of retrogression which attacks all but the rich and powerful:

- Block grants, intended to replace federal nutritional programs, that exclude children of the undocumented.
- Measures that limit the liability of manufacturers

China's future

(Continued from page 1)

laying its plan to close those businesses that have been losing money for a long time. Now three quarters of all the government-owned businesses are losing money, and the subsidies to them are the main cause of the double digit inflation rates.

The Chinese government can still hold onto its power not because of its strength, but because the Chinese people, including the workers, lack the determination to break away from it. The economic difficulties and political turmoil after the revolutions in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe make the Chinese treasure the stability within their country. There is not a political force that is powerful enough to replace the CCP. The more fundamental reason, though, is that the bankruptcy of the Marxist ideology and the failure of the socialist experiment left the Chinese with no ideological armor.

The damage caused by Mao Zedong and the CCP regime in the last 30 years was more severe than that which occurred in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but the trust and obedience the Chinese placed in the CCP exceeded what people displayed for their own governments in those countries. Consequently, the effects of the failure of the pseudo-Marxist ideology are felt more strongly in China. All the popular slogans, creeds and concepts from the past 30 years have been discarded. Mao's theory and policy on class and class struggle are proven completely wrong, so the concepts of class struggle, revolution and imperialism are regarded as preposterous, and the substance these concepts represented are denied as well. Ideals, idealism and altruism were used by Mao to deceive the Chinese people, so people buried them with Mao. Everything in the West is good now. Long live capitalism! Together, liberalism, egoism and consumerism take over in the ideological market of China.

Since 1992, Deng Xiaoping has used economic means to head off political crises, and material benefits to curry favor with the public in exchange for stability. His tactics are most effective with some of the upper strata intellectuals. Unconsciously or deliberately, they become the defenders for Deng Xiaoping's policy and the status quo.

The workers lost everything in Deng Xiaoping's reform. They will not accept their fate as second class citizens, but the effort in organizing themselves is severely limited. The censorship of news and ideology bars the Chinese workers from borrowing experience from the workers' struggles in the former socialist countries, limits the vision of the dissidents and makes them more vulnerable to factional strife.

It is encouraging that the best of the young intellectuals born in the '60s are starting to appear on the political stage of China. They do not reject the part in Marxism that is useful to China and firmly believe that it should be adapted for the special situation in China, working for the majority of the people. So they choose to go to the bottom of the society, studying the social reality and exerting an influence on the farmers and workers. They believe that the road for China is still socialism, but not the kind Mao and Stalin held. Though Eastern Europe has given up on the search for "The Third Road," these newcomers have reintroduced it in China. But this force is very weak compared to the needs of China, and the effort started too late.

The death of Deng Xiaoping will be within months. As in 1989, China is ill-prepared for this upcoming important historical event. The turbulence has begun, and different degrees of local upheaval will be unavoidable. The situation will be like that in the period from 1966 to 1976, but then the idol of Mao had not fallen and the CCP still had the capability for social control. Now the process of social disintegration and human self-destruction begins. Anarchy in a country of 1.2 billion people is horrifying, and it would appear that China will again have to pay a heavy price before its rebirth.

whose products kill or maim consumers.

- Penalties imposed upon people for using the judicial system, when their lawsuits fail, by making them pay for legal costs, even of corporations and governments.

- Closing agencies like the U.S. Geological Survey which helps anticipate natural disasters and monitors the water quality of the nation's lakes and rivers.

- Ending programs that weatherize poor people's homes, modernize public housing and assist poor people with rent.

Not even Reagan dared to end nutritional programs for children. His idiocy of tampering with the nutritional standards by equating catsup to a fresh vegetable evinced incredulous howls from liberals and the left and he backed down. But now the Gingrich "revolution" stands to complete Reagan's counter-revolution. This offensive contains not less than four attempts to refashion the Constitution in a retrogressive way.

REAGANOMICS FOR THE 1990s

First, the balanced budget amendment championed by Gingrich's House Republicans narrowly failed in a March 2 Senate vote. However, if it is passed and ratified later, it will be a hammer that will nail the coffin shut on every progressive bit of legislation that poor and working people fought and died for in the twentieth century. In any event, two of U.S. state-capitalism's big three items in the national budget will not be touched: defense and servicing the debt. These are the very parts of the budget carved into stone by Ronald Reagan whose economic program in the 1980s rested upon unconscionable spending for defense and borrowing to the skies—and slashing all else. Congress is hesitant to loot the third item: Social Security. Yet on its own Social Security for senior citizens is headed toward insolvency and Congress has curbed cost of living adjustments.

Second, the same week that it suggested ending school nutritional programs, the House Republicans opened their attack on affirmative action, a central legacy of the Civil Rights Movement. Clinton's equivocal statements on affirmative action—"We shouldn't be defending things we can't defend"—are making all the groups that lined up behind the Democrats rethink their allegiances. In this case, Rep. Charles Rangel is correct: "White folks have had affirmative action all their lives and their granddaddy's lives. The only time Blacks get affirmative action, really, is when its time to go to combat."

Third, while the tenor of the debate on crime was set well before the November elections, when the Democratic Congress, Black caucus in tow, passed Clinton's crime bill, the House now has voted to rewrite the bill. Under rhetoric of turning spending over to the states for crime

Oppose the Ecuador-Peru war between brothers!

New York, N.Y.—In the midst of the recent border war between Ecuador and Peru, the following leaflet circulated in immigrant communities here. It brought out 50 people, mostly young Ecuadoran factory workers, to a meeting the day after a peace treaty was signed; fighting along the border continues.

When I heard the ambassador from Ecuador to the U.S. say that Ecuadorans are ready to spill their last drop of blood in defense of their territory, I wanted to ask him whose blood he is talking about, because being a representative of Ecuador in this country, it's for sure he's not a worker or a poor soldier, nor would it be the blood of his sons or family, nor that of his colleagues. No more than it will be the blood of Peruvian President Fujimori and his followers. In Ecuador the youth who don't have influential friends (or are simply the poorest) are the only ones who have to do compulsory military service, at least they are the only ones sent into combat. Thus, it's easy for the ambassador to talk about spilling blood and sending young men to die.

They say that 47 are dead from the war, although we never will know the exact number. Both countries are asking for the intervention of the Red Cross to retrieve the dead bodies. But even were there only one person dead, the war isn't worth the loss of one brave young life of a person who could have used his energy to fight for a world without borders.

Aren't borders established precisely so governments can better dominate their own people? Aren't the Ecuadoran and Peruvian workers equally exploited within their own borders? Don't both Ecuadoran and Peruvian workers have to abandon their countries in order to be exploited in other countries, like the U.S.?

I believe it urgent to call on the conscience of the workers not to fall for false patriotism. I am worried to hear Ecuadorans say they are ready to return home to defend their country, forgetting that they had left their country because of their urgent need to survive.

And then there are the poorest people, who aren't able to leave the country, such as the street vendors who, to their small boxes of candies and cigarettes, have added the Ecuadoran flag and gone to the Presidential Palace to support the president, as you see on TV. They remind me of children who are abused by their parents, who feel so worthless and defenseless that they look for protection to the same parents who are victimizing them.

On the other hand, it seems like more than a coincidence that only a week before the war Ecuadoran President Sixto Duran was repressing student demonstrations against his economic measures and against a new law requiring religious classes in lay schools, a law that

control, the "Take Back Our Streets Act" cuts funds for crime prevention like drug rehabilitation and community activities while increasing funds for prison construction. It limits appeals by death row inmates.

Most insidious is a provision that essentially wipes out Fourth Amendment protections against warrantless searches. The House "Exclusionary Rule Reform Act of 1995" and a similar bill in the Senate—and state versions sure to follow—give police a frightening amount of power to repress in a manner reminiscent of the 1919 Palmer Raids.

SHAM 'STATES RIGHTS' DEBATE

Finally, notwithstanding the protestations emanating from the recent National Governors Association meeting, the tensions between the federal government and the states over so-called unfunded mandates will be resolved on the backs of poor and minority men, women and children. Affirmative action, environmental protection, workplace safeguards, and union organization are all rights that were extended at the federal level because of the pressure of movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Now the cry of "states rights" is being raised following from the conservatives's interpretation of the tenth amendment which draws a line between state and federal powers.

That very same cry was raised by the Democratic Party's Southern oligarchy in the 1960s to prevent the federal government from extending constitutionally guaranteed civil rights to Blacks. Today, the impetus comes from the Gingrich-led Republicans paving the way for a return to the Magnolia jungle of the 1960s that looks today more like a high-tech jungle in every state.

The truth is that the drive backward is hardly limited to Congress. State governments dominated by Republicans are likewise driving to complete the Reagan counter-revolution. New sentencing laws in California may add as many as 300,000 new inmates to the 126,000 already imprisoned. And the Mississippi House of Representatives has allowed judges to order "paddlings."

The November elections opened the door to turning up the retrogressive rhetoric heard during the first 50 days of the Gingrichian onslaught. The next 50 days of the Contract With America and the weeks beyond are bound to see resistance to the federal rollbacks and to the state and local followers of Gingrich's program. Already we see youth across the country gravitating towards movements that challenge the kind of future enshrined in California's recently passed Proposition 187 which denies social support to undocumented people. As resistance grows—some of it even from within Democratic Party ranks—now is the time to mobilize against the Republican drive.

had been abolished 100 years ago. In the demonstrations a 17-year-old student died from a police bullet in his chest, and a 20-year-old university student died from injuries to his head caused by a tear gas bomb. Now students are demonstrating in support of the president.

It seems governments never fail to use this tactic of starting a war when they are sure they have no other recourse to obtain public support, and when their economic measures that directly affect the people are not being accepted without great resistance.

In spite of this misguided patriotism that impedes people from seeing the real fight we could conduct for real freedom, there seems to be a growing consciousness against the war, especially on the part of women who are losing their sons and husbands, as seen in the statement issued by 18 women's groups in both countries Jan. 28, in which they advise people not to fall into the trap of war. "Let's stop the spread of violence," they said. "Let's not fall for the dirty game of fratricidal war."

In Huaquillas, a town on the border, thousands of Ecuadorans and Peruvians got together in a demonstration organized by the Catholic Church and human rights groups. In a fraternal embrace, they met together with tears and with white flags instead of national flags.

Brother Ecuadoran workers and soldiers: Don't we have more in common with Peruvian workers and soldiers than with Ecuadoran politicians and capitalists?

*United in one embrace,
A Citizen of the World*

!! Your articles on what's going on in different parts of the world updates us on the latest happenings as far as political issues are concerned. Your analysis on philosophical views is an important tool to awaken the consciousness of people about the present situation of countries the world over. Thank you and more power for the New Year!!

GABRIELA, A national alliance of women's organizations, MANILA, PHILIPPINES

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Youth

Abject Generation?

I found it hard, it was hard to find, oh well, whatever, nevermind. —Kurt Cobain

by Maya Jhansi

When Kurt Cobain, the lead singer and songwriter for the grunge band, Nirvana, killed himself last April, the bourgeois media proclaimed him the symbol of a generation. One writer called his suicide "a confirmation of the actual existence of (the) spreading nihilism and despair of the twentyish" (*Washington Post*, April 27, 1994). For one brief moment, Kurt Cobain's death brought the reality of youth despair into mainstream discourse.

Cultural critics and intellectuals have a name for this despairing attitude: abjection. The dictionary defines abject as "1. miserable, wretched...lacking self-respect; degraded." This certainly describes a pervasive attitude in our culture: from grunge to TV talkshows.

While mainstream society dismisses youth despair as "slacker whining," theorists are calling it subversive. Indeed, many rebellious cultural movements have used the abject to "shock the bourgeoisie." By embracing an abject lifestyle, youth from the beat generation of the 1950's to the 1970's punk movement have challenged the oppressive propriety of middle-class society.

Today, however, abjection has a more specific function. According to a recent article by the cultural theorist, Martin Jay, abjection is becoming "a cultural category of uncommon power" today because it seeks to fill the void left by the "death of the subject."¹

This concept of abjection was introduced into contemporary theory by the French feminist philosopher, Julia Kristeva, with the publication of her book, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (trans. into English 1980). According to Kristeva, abjection is generated by our horror at bodily matter, filth and pollution. It creates the boundary between the socially acceptable Subject and the marginal and rejected outside.

At the same time, however, she claims that abjection has a subversive potential. Whereas, bourgeois society sees abjection as negative, for Kristeva, reveling in the abject becomes the means of subverting social order, of resisting the totalizing control of bourgeois society. The more abject the better—"the utmost of abjection" is the corpse whose presence embodies the threat of death to life, of the outside and marginal to society. We can see here that Kristeva is at least following out the logic of the "death of the subject."

The question is: where does it get you? can abjection bring about a transformation of (living) reality? Abjection is, after all, essentially contemplative and self-indulgent. And, while abjection certainly can and does challenge the social order, it is subversion without content and disruption without objective direction. Indeed, Kristeva's aestheticization of death glorifies human self-destruction. For Walter Benjamin, this is a characteristic of fascism. In this era of counter-revolution arising from within the revolution, in the face of fascism, notions of abjection dismiss what we need most: a guarantee of revolutionary direction and content.

What probably gives abjection so much currency today is that many of these theorists are unable to discern the Subject that can transcend alienation—which doesn't mean that the Subject is not there. After all, while abjection is certainly a real and objective pull on the minds of youth, tremendous revolts have erupted in the 90s, for example, against racism at Rutgers, against Proposition 187, etc. This suggests that idealism is not some "retro" concept that died with the 60s. The theory of abjection cannot conceptualize the humanism that is the inner logic of these revolts.

Ideologues of the 1950s had likewise declared "the end of ideology, the exhaustion of political ideas in the 1950s." The youth were dismissed as the "beat generation." These theorists could not see the subjectivity of the youth who were catalyst in the Civil Rights Movement and the Hungarian Revolution. As it turns out, the "beat generation" were a whole new generation of revo-

Anti-youth vigilantism

The "community" has taken matters into its own hands with the recent Sun Valley, California, shootings of Latino youth Cesar Rene Arce and David Hillo.

The two youth are alleged to have been "tagging" a freeway underpass when the gunman, William A. Masters II, who is said to have been on a late night stroll, approached to take down their car license plate number. The youth are said to have threatened Masters with a screwdriver, the latter having claimed the situation's escalation from vandalism to armed robbery. Arce was slain, shot in the back, the coroner reported, and Hillo, shot in the buttocks. The District Attorney, concluding Masters had acted in self-defense, brought no charges against him except for gun permit violation. Hillo was charged for vandalism. If charged for armed robbery, interestingly, Hillo would be implicated in his friend's death.

Some days later, outside the Los Angeles Criminal Courts Building, a rally formed to protest the D.A. decision. One of the youth making up the majority of 60-70 protestors expressed, "They are signing our death warrants." Others forecasted an open season for vigilantism.

However, this appeal for justice has been painted over by the other aspect of the shooting event. On local radio and in local newspapers, quite a few people have defended and supported Masters. Others have praised his heroism. Having been invited to one radio station KFI, Masters called the youth "Mexican skinheads," saying that they had been raised by bad mothers.

—Steven J. and Joseph S.

lutionaries, proving that it was the theorists that were exhausted—not ideas for liberation.

What this historic example suggests is that one's philosophic comprehension of reality has a lot to do with seeing the Subjects of history. To hear the logic of freedom in the voices of youth and other subjects of revolution requires being grounded in a philosophic-historic comprehension of what freedom means. What we need today is not a "theory of abjection" but a new Humanism that can hear the aspirations of youth and provide a pathway for the transcendence of this alienating reality. This is something we should ponder before we plan a funeral for the Subject.

1. Martin Jay, "Abjection Overruled." *Salmagundi* 103, Summer, 1994.



Jacqueline Williams sparks sit-in of Black students at Rutgers to protest racist university president, Francis Lawrence.

Students dis racist academics

The right wing is attempting to abolish affirmative action in California, using a multi-pronged pitchfork including a legislative measure, a ballot proposal, and the full support of Governor Pete Wilson. One of the authors of the ballot proposal, Glynn Custred, was the key speaker at a forum Feb. 17, on the campus where he teaches, California State University at Hayward. The forum was attended by over 300 people, most of them students, and most of them people of color. The audience sentiment rode against Custred, but the passionate voices of student anger were constantly being controlled by their "elders"—moderators who were more conscious of the presence of the national media than of the students' urgent concerns.

The right wingers, including a local Black businessman, Errol Smith, consistently tried to claim the rhetoric of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as their own, saying that the "dream" of a color-blind society had been replaced by a package of "racial bean counting." But students vigorously contested this pompous thievery of the freedom struggle. One eloquent student speaker, Jesse, a young Chicano student, stated that Dr. King's dream was not a package that arrived in the mail, but rather that it was "something you have to work for."

A Black graduate student, Marc Lopes, told of racist graffiti he found in the main library, its language clearly reflecting the atmosphere spawned by Custred. But when he challenged Custred, asking if he was qualified to teach at a multicultural institution, the moderator would not allow the question. Like all of the speakers in favor of affirmative action, Lopes noted the current deepening economic crisis, and the scapegoating of the poor and people of color. Not surprisingly, Custred repeated various canards, while ignoring the objective statistics concerning income, health, and education status between races.

The presence of the national media, and their packaging of this event for mass consumption, shows the chilling extent to which the right wing manipulates the national agenda and establishes falsehoods as truths.

The electoral success of California's Proposition 187 cast its long shadow of exclusion over this forum. But the illumination from the fire in the eyes and voices of the students, as they saw and named the connections between racism, education, and economic exploitation, provided a liberatory alternative.

—Jennifer

Youth in revolt Against Prop. 187

LOS ANGELES—On Feb. 16-18, a group of six students and three community activists held a three-day hunger strike protesting the injustices here and all over the world. Four Winds, a student group that came about as a result of the passage of Proposition 187 in November 1994 in California, organized the hunger strike in view of the recent events in Chiapas and the need to revitalize the waning movement against Prop. 187.

One of the hunger strike participants, Cecilia Rodriguez, president of the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, a U.S. representative of the Zapatistas, said, "The situation in Mexico is acute...This society [U.S.] only wants work, no education, no health care." Other participants expressed: "I would like to create awareness of other cultures...to fight together" (Mark Garcia, high school student); and "I feel I am representing the youth in Fresno...There is a state of siege...Society does not want to see [the youth]. They cannot cruise the streets, hang around, go dancing without police confrontation or SWAT action" (Juan Carabajal, community activist and Brown Berets commander, Fresno).

Simultaneous with the last day of the hunger strike, a march to demonstrate the enduring struggle against Prop. 187 was organized by various Left groups, community activists, and students. Despite the diverse make-up of the marchers, compared to more than 70,000 people of *La Gran Marcha*, this passage through downtown Los Angeles was composed of about 300. People chanted "assassin government that kills peasants," "down with imperialism, down with the war against the poor, down with capitalism," and "unity is strength."

The marchers gathered at *la placita* Olvera Street. One of the speakers, Olga Miranda, Belmont High School student, proposed to continue the struggle by organizing yet another protest at the border.

Cecilia Rodriguez is still on an indefinite hunger strike until the Mexican government complies with at least one of the requests of the Zapatistas, the withdrawal of the troops from Chiapas.

—Mary H.

OAKLAND, CAL.—Half an hour into 10 a.m. classes, students suddenly stood up and walked out. At first it was only two or three people, but within five minutes, over 300 students at Laney Junior College had walked out of class to protest the implementation of Proposition 187.

Students from the other Peralta Community colleges, including huge contingents from Merritt College and College of Alameda, marched to Laney and gathered in front of the student center.

Joseph Smith, Laney student body president, gave a moving speech on the necessity of Black and other minority students to contribute to the fight against 187. "Peralta students are living in fear," said Smith, "and it is our obligation to defend the rights of everyone who lives in fear."

After the rally, students marched to the Oakland Federal Building where they had another rally, after being

joined by numerous high school students who had also walked out.

The demonstration was organized by the Association of Students at Laney College and the Black Student Union.

—Lynn Halley

JOLIET, ILL.—As a member of the Marxist-Humanist Society at Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill. taking a stand against Proposition 187 is very important to me. Proposition 187 is not only an insult directed at Hispanics, it is an insult to all of humanity. If Proposition 187 is sustained, what will it say about our country? We will be turning our backs on the very same people who helped to build this country.

Recently the Marxist-Humanist Society, along with several other student organizations, organized a protest march and rally at Lewis against Proposition 187. About 50 people from the university and the community participated in the march and rally to express their anger at a referendum that can be summed up in one word: SCAPEGOATING.

Tom Garlitz, who came to speak at the rally from the Peace and Justice Committee of the Joliet Diocese, stated that Proposition 187 would stigmatize and paralyze illegal immigrants unjustly. He stated that women and children would be affected the most with the denial of health care.

Dr. George Miller, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, recited his rendition of the famous sonnet by Emma Lazarus which is inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. He said, "Give me your tired, your poor—so I can exploit them more and more." Frank Lubarski, Professor of Philosophy, said that an unjust law is not a law, and Proposition 187 is an unjust law. Many other students and professors spoke at the rally. Many of the speakers expressed dismay at a government that is blaming the economic problems of an entire country on one group of people.

Dr. Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, faculty moderator of the Marxist-Humanist Society and Chairperson of the Philosophy Department, stated that the rally and march was not an end, but a beginning! She stated that the Marxist-Humanist Society will be organizing a boycott against the companies that were major contributors to the funding of Proposition 187. She expressed her hope that the march and rally would open up the hearts and minds of the entire student body.

A Hispanic student was overwhelmed at the support the Hispanic community was receiving, because most of the people who spoke were not Hispanic. She was shocked, because she never realized how much support she would receive from people of other nationalities.

Ken Haines, a member of the Marxist-Humanist Society, spoke of his hope of someday being a philosophy professor. He angrily stated that with Proposition 187, he would not be able to teach, instead he would have to be a "watch dog." Haines also stated that it should not be a question of whether someone is a legal immigrant or an illegal immigrant; we are all human beings.

—Jennifer Linden

Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The craven decision by the Smithsonian Institution to censor its long-planned exhibition around the Hiroshima bomb after protests by war veterans' organizations has meant an exhibit which glorifies the U.S. Air Force but does not even mention the victims of August 1945: 140,000 at Hiroshima and 75,000 a few days later at Nagasaki, virtually all of them Japanese civilians.

A few days before the Smithsonian caved in, on Jan. 25-26, ceremonies in Poland to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp—where 1.5 million people were murdered, 90% of them Jews—were marred by the Polish government's efforts to placate Polish nationalism and anti-

Fascist bombings murder Romani in Austria

In the most violent racist incident since the Nazi period, four Romani (gypsy) men were blown apart in a bomb attack on Feb. 5 in the small mountain town of Oberwart, Austria. The four were killed when one of them attempted to take down a booby-trapped poster attached to a pipe and which read: "Gypsies go back to India." Some of the old Nazi officials who created a concentration camp for them are still living in the area.

Two days later, another bomb seriously injured a worker in a nearby town populated mainly by members of the Croat minority. An underground fascist group claimed responsibility, and stated that Croats should "go back to Dalmatia." No arrests have been made in these attacks or in a spate of similar ones in 1993 which in-

Conflicts in South Africa

Several recent conflicts show the unfinished character of the changes introduced since Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) came to power in the April 1994 elections. The police force, still led by racist white officers, experienced a near uprising by Black officers recently after a Black officer was shot dead by a white one during a protest against racism in the police force. One Black officer stated: "If they treat Black police this way, how do you think they treat the Black citizens?" (New York Times, Feb. 4, 1995).

Conflict also continues in KwaZulu-Natal, where the reactionary Inkatha Party still holds power after stealing the 1994 elections. In January alone, 111 people were killed in the province, mainly in Inkatha attacks. Especially in rural areas, Inkatha-linked tribal chiefs are trying to block elections planned for October which would replace them by democratically elected councils.

In one corner of rural Natal, "Chief" Boy Mzimela lords it over 100,000 people who have to literally crawl on their knees when approaching him. Mzimela attained his position by having six of his half-brothers killed, and forces his "subjects" to pay hefty fees in order to have weddings, to go to school, or to obtain access to grazing land. His brother and cohort Obed Mzimela, when told that the ANC promises improvements such as running water, replied: "But why do we need running water? We have strong wives to carry water from the river" (Chicago Tribune Feb. 13, 1995).

Who We Are and What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that stands for the abolition of capitalism, whether in its private property form as in the U.S., or its state property form, as in Russia or China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. News & Letters was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation. We have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead."

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-87), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907-83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works *Marxism and Freedom...from 1776 until Today* (1958); *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973) and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa. These works challenge post-Marx Marxists to return to Marx's Marxism.

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

Auschwitz, Hiroshima's histories rewritten

Semitism by playing down any mention that the victims were mainly Jews.

It seems incredible that 50 years after World War II, bourgeois democracies in Poland and the U.S. are incapable of publicly and openly acknowledging the victims at Hiroshima and Auschwitz. Surely this is not unrelated to the refusal of the Western "democracies" to recognize and act upon the new type of genocide occurring today in Bosnia and Rwanda.

The American government's capitulation over Hiroshima was blatant and obvious to all. The American Legion and other similar groups trotted out once again their propagandist claims of huge U.S. casualties were Japan to have been invaded instead of bombed with nuclear

weapons in 1945. Their so-called estimates of 500,000 or even one million U.S. casualties supposedly prove that therefore "lives were saved." This would be ridiculous were it not so sinister.

The two bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed over 225,000 human beings, only 75,000 fewer than the U.S. battle deaths for the entire war! The incineration of these 225,000 people certainly did not "save lives." According to leftist historian Gar Alperovitz, author of *Atomic Diplomacy* and of a second, forthcoming book on the decision to bomb, the use of the bomb against civilians was "not only unnecessary, but known to be unnecessary" to defeat Japan (New York Times, Jan. 31, 1995).

Instead, Hiroshima was the opening shot in the coming Cold War with Russia, a gesture to the world by the U.S. government that it had a terrible weapon no one else had and that it was willing to use it. The result was the threat of nuclear holocaust that we all still live under.

The ceremonies to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz got off to a rocky start when an initial speakers' list had Polish President Lech Walesa appearing twice and World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman not at all. In addition, no serious effort had been made to invite Auschwitz survivors from around the world to attend. Only since the fall of Communism does the official plaque outside Auschwitz even mention that the victims were mainly Jews. Even today, an opinion survey found that only 8% of Poles believe that Auschwitz victims were mainly Jewish, while the majority think non-Jewish Poles were victimized in equal proportions as Jews. It was these attitudes that Walesa was catering to.

In his Jan. 25 speech on Auschwitz in Cracow, Walesa capitulated to narrow nationalism and anti-Semitism by not even mentioning Jews. Jewish groups had by this time organized a separate ceremony. The Bosnian delegation walked out because Walesa allowed representatives of the genocidal regime in Belgrade to speak.

The next day, at another speech, Walesa did make a brief reference to "the sufferings of nations, in particular the Jewish community." An equally bland declaration was issued by the assembled politicians from 14 countries, a declaration which mentioned neither Bosnia nor Rwanda. In one speech, however, Maurice Goldstein of the International Auschwitz Committee did refer to "the ethnic cleansing which has happened not very far from us in Europe" (Le Monde, Jan. 29-30, 1995).

Generally, Walesa has been let off the hook after his mention of Jewish victims. Even Elie Wiesel and Adam Michnik have defended his conduct, with Michnik stating in the Feb. 10 *Le Monde* that we must "struggle against the stereotype that the Pole is by nature an anti-Semite." It is certainly true, as Michnik also argued, that the world fails to recognize that hundreds of thousands of non-Jewish Poles were also murdered by the Nazis. But what about the needed fight against the persistent anti-Semitism and racism which does still exist in Poland and in Europe?

Resistance to Russia continues in Chechnya

Russian human rights activist Sergei Kovalyev reported on Feb. 21 that at least 24,000 civilians have been killed since Yeltsin began his invasion of Chechnya on Dec. 11. A million of Chechnya's 1.7 million people have become refugees. The Russian army finally was able to take most of the capital, Grozny, in February, after fierce resistance and unwillingness by many Russian units to fight for Yeltsin. Fighting still continues in part of Grozny and in many other areas.

Once they controlled most of Grozny, Russian secret police and military unleashed a reign of terror on the remaining civilian population. Many have been summarily executed, mass rapes of women have occurred, and thousands more have been bundled off for imprisonment and torture at the huge Russian military camp at Mozdok.

Despite Yeltsin's massive use of force and the resultant horrific bloodletting, Chechen resistance continued unabated. A long war seems on the horizon as fighters move into the hills. Not a single high-ranking Chechen leader has been captured, and all signs suggest that opposition to Russia is now nearly unanimous among Chechnya's people. Their threats to take the war to Moscow with underground attacks on police and military have not yet been carried out, but this has not stopped Yeltsin's police from rounding up and harassing all daring skinned civilians they find on the streets of Moscow.

The people of Russia also continue to resist the war. Solders' mothers have visited Chechnya to look for their sons and to protest the war, often making links of solidarity with Chechen civilians. Russian military units continue to balk at going to Chechnya, or at fighting once they get there, while youths are evading the draft in increasing numbers.

Besides the military-police nexus, Yeltsin's chief support is coming from the fascist party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. When Kovalyev attended a meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in order to speak against the invasion, Zhirinovskiy had to be thrown out of the room by the chairwoman after he brutally interrupted Kovalyev with the shout: "You belong in a concentration camp!" (Le Monde, Feb. 1, 1995).

jured immigrant activists and political leaders. Left and immigrant groups are accusing the police of being "blind in the right eye."

Several thousand people gathered in Oberwart on Feb. 11-12 to express their solidarity with the victims. That rally was without incident, but in Vienna, skinheads attacked a candlelight anti-racist vigil being held outside a



Memorial service in for victims of racist bombing.

church.

Austrian neo-fascists operate at two levels. At the illegal, underground level they engage in terrorist attacks and street brawls. At the legal level, Jorg Haider's so-called Freedom Party, a racist, anti-immigrant grouping filled with and financed by plenty of old Nazis, won 23% of the vote in national elections held last October. Haider has growing popular support, especially now that he has learned to avoid statements such as the one he made a few years ago praising the Nazis for supposedly getting rid of unemployment.

Today Haider centers his attacks on immigrants, on government waste and corruption, and has called for a "citizens movement" against the more established parties, the Conservatives and the Social Democrats.

rooted in her rediscovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a "new Humanism" and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as "Marxist-Humanism." The development of the Marxist-Humanism of Dunayevskaya is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection-Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development*, on deposit at the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in Detroit, Michigan.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and have donated new supplementary volumes to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, exploitative society, we participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our Constitution states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the Constitution of News and Letters Committees.