

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Which team are you on?



by John Marcotte

"A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organizers of charity....Bourgeois Socialism attains adequate expression when, and only when, it becomes a mere figure of speech....It is summed up in the phrase: the bourgeois is a bourgeois—for the benefit of the working class."

—Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto.

Not a thing would get produced or done at work, if we as workers did not cooperate with each other everyday to get the job done. In fact, Marx has a whole section of Capital on the new social force that is cooperative labor. Unfortunately, this cooperation is not under our democratic control for the needs of ourselves and all humanity. It is cooperation for the corporation, and appears as the doing of the capitalist. Now with Team Concept, the capitalists are trying to use the natural cooperation of labor against us even more, to make us work harder.

But the humanism of working people, as opposed to the fake "humanitarianism" of the bourgeoisie, is always creating trouble for the rulers. I was talking with a friend who works at GM. He told me, "The Team Concept is the best system I've seen, if it wasn't for GM. If it was workers controlling production, then it would be like the Paris Commune. If it was under workers' control, we'd set the amount of work we did."

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Black World

Objective Black world connections



by Lou Turner

At what moment does the class structure of the Black world reveal its material foundations in the secret savageries of capitalist accumulation? The "20th Anniversary Scholarship and Awards Gala" put on by the Chicago Association of Black Journalists (CABJ) at the posh South Shore Country Club, May 10, and sponsored by such multi-national corporations as Shell Oil Company and Waste Management, the world's largest waste company, represented such a moment.

The Black urban professionals (buppies) at this \$100-a-plate, black-tie affair were dumbly oblivious to the corporate cannibals at their table. Career opportunities, not Black misery, was their cynically naive take on these powerful corporate interests who quite literally are some of the foremost agents of genocide against Black people in Africa and the U.S., and who with impunity ply a new triangular trade of mineral riches, toxic pollution, and cheap labor throughout the Black world.

This always-on-the-lookout-for-a-job-as-a-front-for-the-capitalist-bottom-line, Black elite would scarcely conceal its irritation when one young awards recipient reminded them of the need to actively support the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Black militant journalist sitting on Pennsylvania's death row.

Of course, in the real capitalist scheme of things, the crumbs that companies like Shell and Waste Management let fall from their table to gain influence in Black governments, institutions, and organizations is just part of the process of accumulating vast amounts of capital in some of the poorest (Black) communities in the world.

Waste Management has 22 registered Washington lobbyists, and 35 former government officials—including seven from the EPA—on its payroll. And as was quite conspicuous at the CABJ "Gala," this major toxic polluter of Black communities, has former press secretary for

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Western Europe Spring 1996: new labor battles,



intellectual ferment

Recent worker's rallies in Germany (above), and France (left) protest their governments' austerity policies.

by Kevin Anderson

Berlin—Despite some modest gains by left and emancipatory forces, the overall tendency in Western Europe is to the Right. But new challenges from labor in the wake of France's mass strikes of last winter show that serious resistance can also emerge, even in today's retrogressive climate.

GERMANY: STATE-CAPITALISM THROWS DOWN GAUNTLET

In Germany, the region's dominant economy, the conservative Helmut Kohl government and employer groups have announced a whole series of cuts in wages and social benefits. These are designed, they say, to create economic growth and lower the unemployment rate, the latter having climbed from 7.6% to 10.1% since 1992.

In late April, Kohl unveiled his "savings package." It will cut social aid levels for the unemployed, the ill and the elderly, and slash family assistance. For example, workers will receive 80% rather than 100% of their pay for sick days. Employer groups also announced plans to stonewall any new wage or benefits increases.

In response, international capital collectively rubbed its hands together with glee, saying it was about time! A commentator intoned on the business pages of the International Herald Tribune (5-9-96): "It should be now be painfully obvious that Germany's cushy, consensus-

based welfare state is ill-suited to meeting the challenges of the global economy.

"The country's rigid, high-cost labor market is crushing job creation and entrepreneurial flair, and the fabled social consensus that was once the envy of other industrial countries has become an obstacle to change."

GERMAN LABOR ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE

Many on the Left and in the labor movement were taken by surprise by these recent developments, having considered Germany almost an exception to the global trend toward lowering the standard of living of the working people as a supposed key to economic "competitiveness." But within days, fierce resistance began to mount, with strikes and demonstrations filling the month of May. Union leaders accused capital and the state of reverting to "savage capitalism," while tens of thousands of workers took to the streets.

In the first weeks of May, public-sector workers in transport, the post office, sanitation, airports, and banking staged brief "warning strikes." The powerful metalworkers union, IG Metall, with 9 million members, announced its own job actions, while the national union federation warned that a "hot summer" was ahead.

As the strikes continued, Kohl blustered that he had "never been impressed by threats" and that the strikers

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Israeli elections: hair breadth victory of Likud

Jerusalem—It's a depressing day for peace and democracy in Israel. When the counting was over, Benjamin Netanyahu on the Right had squeezed past Shimon Peres by a hair's breadth. But oh what a change that little hair will bring! What's even worse is the enormous gain of the three fundamentalist religious parties—from 16 to 23 seats—in the Knesset. Considering that Netanyahu's Likud party won only 32 seats, that means that the Likud will be beholden to the religious to form a coalition, and require their assent to every move. This will be an (un)holy alliance of xenophobia, territorial maximalism, and theocracy.

To spell it out, here's my less-than-sanguine prognosis for the coming four years:

1. The peace process grinds to a halt, obstructed by:
 - a) the new government's failure to fully respect the autonomy agreements already achieved (let alone go along with the idea of an independent Palestinian state);
 - b) intransigence on removing Jewish settlements beyond the Green Line (including the 500 fanatics in the heart of Hebron);
 - c) the need to prove its "security" credentials by preventing terrorism at all costs—including maintaining the cruel closure of the territories, preferring the import of Romanian and Thai laborers to indigent Palestinians next door, and beefing up the security network (broadening the powers of the secret service, sanctioning now-denied torture of security prisoners, etc.).
2. Economically, it will be galloping privatization, a slow-down if not halt in foreign investment that had been stimulated by the current peace-liberal policies, and a sharp drop in economic growth that had surged for-

ward (at some 6% annually) following the Oslo accords—ending in more unemployment and concomitant economic ills.

3. And on other social issues, we can expect a halt to the process of democracy and liberalization that had begun (civil rights for women and gays, freedom from religious coercion), as the religious will undoubtedly be awarded the ministries of education, religion, and interior.

In short, it's a victory for reactionary politics. And it was caused by the demagoguery of installing fear plus ultra-Orthodox rabbis commanding their flocks to vote Netanyahu. The result will be the election of George Bush winning for president and Pat Buchanan holding the cabinet seats for education, labor, welfare, and rights for women and gays.

After we recover from the shock, what I envision for the 50% of us who "lost" (the election was decided by less than 1% of the vote), is a return to the streets and backbenches of the opposition. It exhausts me just thinking about it. We'll need a lot of support from our friends everywhere.

—Gila Svirsky

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND THE DIALECTICS OF REVOLUTION
by Raya Dunayevskaya

New edition See Page 4

Women demand environmental justice

by Laurie Cashdan

When environmental justice activists converged on the south side of Chicago, May 17-19, for the first Midwest-Great Lakes Environmental Justice Summit, Black and Native American grassroots community activists were in the majority. This was no accident, since the conference had been convened by People for Community Recovery (PCR), founded in the 1980s by Hazel Johnson in Altgeld Gardens—a public housing project built in the 1940s in Chicago's "toxic doughnut."

Amidst this dialogue among Black and Native American activists, white environmental activists, EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) officials and foundation representatives, women of color made their presence known. These women spoke confidently but with great

Woman as Reason

urgency, often as founders of community groups, whether that was Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice or Parents Against Lead. Though most have been activists for years, they now face direct assault from the reactionaries in Congress on even those small gains won by pressuring EPA to clean up their communities.

Few had any illusions that the government was friendly to community empowerment. Hazel Johnson, the "mother of the environmental justice movement," spoke with great passion during the first plenary session. "Environmental justice doesn't yet have a set definition," she said. "It's very important for us at the grassroots level to define it for our own communities. If we let the EPA define it, we lose."

Most women I spoke with became involved when health crises caused by deadly toxins struck their families. Maurci Jackson, with Parents Against Lead, found that both her children were poisoned through over-exposure to lead. Pat Jackson, editor of PCR's newsletter, F.A.T.E. (Fighting Against a Toxic Environment), developed severe asthma and rashes covering her entire body after moving to Altgeld Gardens. Linda King and her children nearly died from the health affects of pollutants spewed from six specialty chemical companies in Nitro, West Virginia.

Such crises provoked deep commitments to the movement and a self-education process that led them to conclude that environmental injustice disproportionately strikes low-income communities of color. Nadine Escamea, from the Oneida tribe around Green Bay, Wis., is fighting developers creating an exclusive non-Indian community, Thornberry Creek, on reservation land by stealing water rights and pushing up taxes.

Donele Wilkins, a founder of Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice and member of the National Black Women's Health Project, first got involved

Demand for radical reform of women's prisons

San Francisco—While in pursuit of information as a representative of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, I discovered a group of activists called the Coalition to Support Women Prisoners in Chowchilla. This group had been moved by stories that were coming out of Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) about inadequate medical care.

The stories about countless sick and dying women were the subject of many discussions, as were the frustrated efforts to get basic information to the women who were HIV positive or had full-blown AIDS. A lot that was sent inside never reached the hands of women needing or desiring the information.

I sat in a room listening to how women prisoners were dying. However, what I heard outside of the room was the noise that concerned me the most. It was not the screams of dying prisoners but the silence. The Department of Corrections had to be exposed for its barbaric treatment of dying prisoners and voices from the community had to be raised.

The Coalition was determined to make the general public aware of the poor medical conditions and treatment of women, and organized a demonstration in front of CCWF. People caravanned from the Bay Area and other parts of the state to express their frustration and anger over the medical treatment or lack of treatment that women were receiving at CCWF. We joined with a coalition of legal groups to bring a law suit to stop the medical abuse at CCWF and California Institute for Women.

The California Coalition for Women Prisoners was formed (in April 1995) around the idea of assisting women in their efforts to sue for better medical treatment and to support women in prison. They wanted to engage in public education and correspondence with prisoners. Last summer they organized over a hundred people and carpooled to CCWF for a demonstration.

In December, more than 100 demonstrated in San Francisco in a raging rain. In March, more than 400 mainly women heard former women prisoners speak personally about conditions of confinement, poor medical treatment and how it feels to lose a family. The California Department of Corrections will be tried for the abuses of women prisoners in both the Civil Court and in the Court of Public Opinion.

If you want more information about the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, contact Karen Shain, 415/255-7036, ext. 313 or Judy Greenspan, HIV/AIDS in Prison Project at 510/834-5657, ext. 3150.

—Dorsey Nunn

through the occupational safety movement. She realized health and safety hazards were most severe but least addressed for working-class Black communities. "Not only are we being killed on the jobs, but we take what we are exposed to home to our children. We can't afford to live further from our workplaces because of limited transportation."

These women became "experts" in chemical processes and health issues. "I have a science background and I began to read a lot, not traditional books but ones I exchanged with different people," explained Cheryl Johnson, Hazel Johnson's daughter. "There was no voice. There was no one discussing this the way it needs to be discussed." Linda King found that the government had no intention of helping her. Founder of Environmental Health Network, she urges community activists not to let the government do health studies, but to sponsor their own studies.

"It's not environmental justice, it's environmental justice and it's all about racism!" exclaimed Pat Jackson. "Until they end racism, there will never be environmental justice. So there's no such thing as environmental justice."

The other women also felt environmental justice went beyond cleaning up individual communities. "The environmental justice movement is about human rights and sustainability of communities," declared Johnson. "The society that has put us in this sub-standard housing, they're liable. When the City of Chicago built Altgeld Gardens, they knew what they were doing."

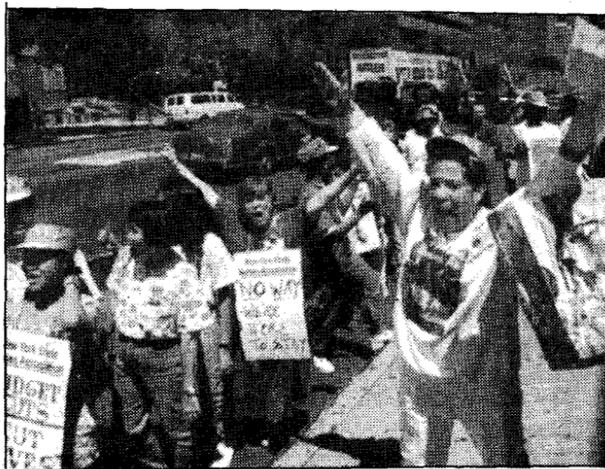
"Low-income minority families do not have the luxury to move into areas that are safe," asserted Maurci Jackson. "The areas designated for them are sub-standard. The community's name may change, but the conditions are the same. The majority of the families are on fixed income."

These women felt strongly about the importance of women's leadership in the environmental justice movement. Cheryl Johnson commented that women spearheaded PCR because they were "more concerned about the negative impact on our health, our community, especially our children." "It's a passion," added Pat Jackson. "Where some people would say, there's nothing I can do about it, [these women] get out there and want to fight. That's why they take the leadership." While Jackson argued that women of the '90s are not afraid to stand up for themselves, King cautioned that this leadership is attacked by government and foundation officials. They told her group in Nitro, "You're just housewives, you can't possibly understand these complicated issues."

The environmental justice movement faces the challenge of deepening the movement at a time when reactionaries in Congress are on the offensive. The radical critique expressed by the women of color whose passion and politicization initiated the movement has the potential to galvanize a broader social movement. "It's our responsibility, given who we are, to be radical," argued Wilkins. "To be radical is to change this world."

Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey



Nurses protested outside Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, May 22, against increased layoffs at New York's public hospitals. City money to those hospitals has been cut by more than 75%, severely endangering the quality of health care for its mainly poor patients.

* * *

After male co-workers tried for two years to sexually harass the only woman member of the Stockholm, Sweden Police Department's canine unit out of her job, Lotta Haglund succeeded in her efforts to fight back. In April, the city gave the male cops an ultimatum—the guilty ones admit responsibility or all would be fired. None did and now all 60 men are out of a job.

* * *

Despite the fact that many women and adolescent girls not massacred in Rwanda were raped, the International Tribunal for Rwanda has not included rape or sexual abuse of women in any of the ten indictments handed down. When the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia first issued its indictments, only sex crimes against men were acknowledged as torture. Later, after much pressure from women's groups, rape and sexual abuse were charged as torture. We need to do the same for women in Rwanda.

Shainape Shcapwe (Helen Moore) 1941-1996

Shainape Shcapwe bridged more worlds than most of us have walked through. She was not only an activist but a thinker and writer in all of them. A Yankton Sioux born on the Fort Totten Reservation, she spoke nothing but Lakota until she was six years old. By the time she had finished Indian boarding school and the State School for the Blind, the forced assimilation had robbed her of her ability to speak her own language.

She was active in the Civil Rights Movement, and participated in the Montgomery Bus Boycott at age 14 as a part of an historic delegation of Lakota people. She was active in CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) as an adult when she had left the reservation and moved to the city.

Blind from birth, she was a lifelong participant in the struggle of blind people for civil rights and human dignity. When forced onto welfare, she became active in welfare rights. She brought the voice of women's liberation to every struggle she was involved in. She insisted that each of these struggles hear her Lakota voice. She also insisted that the Indian movement work with and learn from every freedom movement.

In the aftermath of Wounded Knee (1973), the American Indian Movement (AIM) struggled to survive against the full force of government repression. Shainape Shcapwe's News & Letters column "Native American Speaks" (1975-1979) linked the Native American struggle in the U.S. with native voices in Canada, Australia and Latin America. She brought to light relationships between the Black American freedom movement and the origins of AIM, and the little-known labor dimension of Indian workers fighting government-corporate sweatshop exploitation in both reservation factories and in urban areas.

She wrote not only about forced sterilization of Native American women, but of their contributions to the movement, and warned AIM leaders that women's liberation was necessary to the character and forward direction of the movement.

Even after poor health forced her to cease her regular column in 1979 Shainape Shcapwe continued to write for N&L through the 1980s. With the publication of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, she became committed to a dialogue with Native American activists on Marx's writings on Native Americans in his *Ethnological Notebooks*.

Her 1985 column, "Indian movement needs genuine Marxism," critiqued movement leaders Russell Means and Vine Deloria for rejecting Marx after having experienced only the distorted Marxism of the American Left. "That is not a good enough reason to not explore Marx's own philosophy," she wrote. "You can see more clearly than ever that it was not true that Marx was Eurocentered..."

"I think that Marxist-Humanism speaks to working out a philosophy for what we really want, especially what we want after the revolution. In the past, people have taken bits and pieces of Marx to suit the time, and wound up being misled, rather than really studying Marx. That can't be the way anymore."

Her unique contributions concretized Marxist-Humanism's philosophy of liberation. She brought her multi-dimensional subjectivity into Marxist-Humanism as she worked to develop a kind of freedom that was total, and totally new, for all.

—Steve Fletcher and
Susan Van Gelder

'Assembly line education'

Fayette County, Tenn.—We just got the right to elect our school board members in 1994. Before they were appointed by the County Commissioner and they usually worked for him.

The majority of the board is white and send their kids to private all-white schools and use the public school funds for those private white schools. The majority of the teachers in the public schools used to be Black and they worked hard to get decent retirement benefits. Now the whites, who teach at the private schools, teach for two or three years at the public schools just to collect that retirement.

I have a son in school who often talks about the problems. He said, "Out of about 400 seniors, maybe 125 are going to graduate. A lot of them missed a lot of school days and they won't get their diploma. But this one guy got a scholarship for basketball and he missed 77 days and they're going to let him off."

They get an assembly line education—it keeps moving, ready or not. The teacher has to teach what's handed down by the board and keep pace with that, not with what the students need. If enough kids don't pass it affects the federal funds and the Board doesn't want to take any chances. It's kids versus the money and the money always wins.

They feel a majority of them are going to be left without jobs even with a degree or a high school education. Maybe only 10% of those 125 who did graduate get to go to college and then only if they can get a scholarship.

I told my son, we should get a report from the kids on what's going on in the system. Nobody talks to the kids about what they did in school; how did the teacher present the class? The student government needs to get involved and let the children know that if they want more things going on at school, it's going to take the student body and the student government to do it.

—Candice

Fresh load of bosses at Delta Pride

Indianola, Miss.—There is a whole new game going on at Delta Pride. You remember when the plant started up in the early 1980s, it was run by a group of rich white Delta farmers and businessmen. Then after we fought them and won in the 1990 strike, the owners brought in the "California boys" to run the plant, with new "management techniques." Now we have been told that responsibility for the whole Delta Pride operation has been turned over to a Canadian-owned company called Seafresh.

We were told that they tried to purchase Delta Pride, but the deal didn't go through. So now they have been

New tools of job control

Chicago—The fundamental perverse relation of capitalist "production" is that people equal things. But this relation is not limited strictly to production. It is true of all types of labor in this society, including the so-called service sector. This is true of the notion of abstract labor as well.

This is what I mean. On the production line, you knew that all work was geared to the Holy Grail of capitalism: production, production, production. Those of us on the outside never had to worry as much. We had some freedom of movement.

Now when we unload a truck, we have to leave the bar codes facing out so the boss can scan them and measure what day, what time and what amount was unloaded. Then the time you're done is entered in, so they know to the second how long it took you to produce.

When I talk to a friend who works in an office, whose every step is monitored by the computer or the boss, we see the nature of our jobs has so much in common now that it sounds the same. Whether I work in a service sector job, or an office, we are talking of the same kind of labor. All we are is one big mass of abstract labor.

The whole question to me is the perversity of being just thought of as a thing, an abstract laborer. The nature of labor becomes more and more in kind, and the more you can see in the struggles of others your own struggle. This means that like everything in capitalism, the notion of abstract labor does have the seeds of its opposition within it, and can be its own destruction. The more they go on with technology and rigidly treating all things as equal, the more you can see these fake walls of differences between different forms of labor come down.

—David L. Anderson

Workshop Talks

(continued from page 1)

"But we also have the company saying what the time and motion studies set. So the 'planners' (each team has a worker who is a planner) can switch work around, which makes it better for workers in a sense—but it doesn't work that way because the company says our goal is to eliminate three workers out of 60, then gives workers some little say as to how it will be done. Each job still has to come up to so many minutes out of the hour."

"He said he was at a GM plant where they had Quality of Work Life meetings. They would take a group off the line, and we would spend a week. People would break up into five-person teams, and they'd give us different exercises, acting-out types of skits I've seen workers, within a couple of hours of knowing each other, write these skits. I saw people who never spoke in front of other people getting up and speaking and doing a hell of a job."

"There was a person from the union and the company teaching these classes. They kept real good control of it. Anytime it would get a direction they didn't like, they pulled it right back. But it's amazing how people came together. To me I've seen a glimpse of what can happen, when workers are turned loose in full-blown freedom, if it was not under the control of the company. The workers kind of come out of themselves, like a flower opening up."

"Team concept seems like a very fragile kind of balance, that could tip one way or the other, to workers controlling production. I'm not quite certain the workers see the amount of control they are exercising. Every six months we make up the rules for our team—of course they still have to be OK'ed by the company and the union—we don't elect our positions, we decided we want it by seniority. We have a timekeeper, who keeps a record of our hours (we don't punch in or out), a safety person, who gives us reports of meetings and the planner. We're running our team. We do the reports."

"Thirty years ago, the workers on the line were so separated from the mental work of running the plant. I am not certain the average worker sees the amount of control they are exercising, but you never know what might happen to make it go the other way, to where workers get into the control."

At the time my friend was telling me all this, the GM workers in Dayton, Ohio were on strike over the company outsourcing, or giving away, their jobs. He said what the strikers were fighting in essence was "paragraph 8 of the UAW contract, which gives full control over the means of production to the company. It says they can put the means of production wherever they want, and they have the right to hire and discharge for cause. When paragraph 8 was put in the International contract in 1948, that stopped the whole labor movement in this country." Workers' control of production is not some far-off Utopian dream, but is the immediate form of the concrete Humanism of working people.

hired by Delta to run the plant and run us, for the next two years. At the end of December 1996, either Seafresh or Delta Pride can terminate this agreement. If they don't it will run the full two years.

They won't tell us much about the company, they just say that they have a lot of experience with fish production in Canada, and that they have other plants with unions in them there. Our contract runs out in October; we are getting ready to negotiate a new one. But we don't know who we will be dealing with when it comes time to negotiate our contract—Seafresh or Delta Pride. Seafresh is acting like they are the ones in charge.

About ten of the Seafresh people are here now, taking over, running everything. All the supervision jumps when the Canadians say something, even Darry Adams, the plant manager. The top Canadian seems to be a man named David Bolivar. He says, "From now on, any meeting with the union, I have to be in on it. There will be a lot of changes." The Canadians look at workers turning out production and say: "You all ain't working!"

We have been working constant overtime, about 50 hours a week, ever since they closed down the Belzoni plant, on account of "lack of fish." They moved all the production that would have been done at Belzoni over here. Yet still they have cut the workers here at Delta Main. We are down to about 600, instead of 900. And we have to get out near the same production.

Now they have started trying to mess with the contract we have on when you get breaks and when you get lunch. We fought long and hard in the last contract to be sure that your break was in the middle of the time between starting and lunch, and your lunch was in the middle of your shift. They used to switch us all around, whenever they felt like it. Last week the Canadians said there was oil on the conveyor belt, so they wanted to stop for break time early. Then they said we were going to run out of fish, so they wanted to make us go to lunch at 11 a.m. Well, you can do it if there's an emergency, but they lied to us. They didn't run out of fish; we worked a full regular shift. They just wanted to show they could mess with us. I can see we are going to have to get ready for a big fight on the contract.

—Union activist, UFCW Local 1529

Mississippi/Tennessee readers:
**Join striking workers
 at Taylor Chair**
 March and rally in Clarksdale, Miss.
Saturday, June 22, 12 noon
 Call IUE/Furniture Workers Local 282
 for more information at (901) 725-1332

Hood layoffs target 282

Jackson, Miss.—At Hood Furniture the company is still refusing to recognize our union, IUE/Furniture Workers Local 282. And now they are trying everything they can to scare workers into dropping our support for 282. On May 22, they had a second layoff. The first one was in April, when they laid off about 20 workers. This time they laid off about 40 people. They didn't lay off by seniority either. People with three years, even five years, got put out of the plant, and people with only six months were kept on. Most of the layoffs were in the mill room and the cabinet room.

Along with the layoff notice, they gave workers a letter saying that they had a right to bump other employees with less seniority, but only if they can prove they know that job. Most workers are locked into one department at Hood; you can't know a job in another department if you never worked there. They say they are following the contract with local 797, what we call the "slave contract" they signed three years ago behind our backs.

Everyone knows why they are doing the layoffs now. They never did any layoffs in all the time Local 797 was pretending to be the representative. They only started laying off workers when 797 gave up and we got Local 282 back. In fact, right before Local 282 came back they had just hired a bunch of new workers; we were up to about 350 in the plant.

About two weeks ago Warren Hood's son Jimmy came out to the plant. He talked to the workers for about two minutes. He said that the only reason he had come was to say that the rumors about the plant closing were not true. "The plant will not close." But the ones who had been spreading rumors for months about the plant closing were Hood's own supervisors. Very few workers are fooled by this.

We are still going through hell at Hood Furniture. It is still raining in the plant whenever it rains outside. There are many injuries on the job. One woman was injured trying to lift a table by herself, after the foreman told another worker that he wasn't allowed to help her. She is still out.

The only way we are ever going to get justice at Hood Furniture is if we keep sticking together. We have been fighting so long, it seems like we will never get justice. And the "point system" at Hood is always there to get rid of workers if they aren't very careful. But we are still bound and determined to have a real contract with Local 282 as our union. The workers I know, we will never give up.

—Hood Furniture worker

Chopping cotton at Dobbs

Memphis, Tenn.—At Dobbs Catering, where we prepare and load food on airplanes, things are getting so bad. It used to be that when not driving or loading flights, we were on "down time." Now, instead of letting a driver and loader team do their job and then go on down time, they cut that team altogether and pass their flights to a second team, giving them more work. They won't let the first team even start their job and utilize them anyway they want.

They're just dogging the people who went on strike and won last year. The people who crossed the picket line do whatever they want to.

Part of the problem is that we've got a rat as Exterior Manager. The only way that Bobbie Woodard got that job was the employees and union helped him because, at that time, they didn't have any Blacks in a higher position. Now he is so low down he treats us like slaves. He forgot where he came from.

They harass people on every level, even to having supervisors put their fingers in your glass of cola and tell you it's not yours anyway. One worker needed surgery and they told her she could come to work or quit, so she had to quit. It's so bad I've even seen men with tears in their eyes. Working at Dobbs is worse than chopping cotton in Mississippi!

You try and do a job and you're harassed about everything and when you try to tell the union leaders they don't seem to understand and say it's petty. They started calling overtime when it's 5:45 a.m. and you haven't even punched the clock yet. Each supervisor wants the job done his way, instead of what's in the contract. And if you complain to Bobbie, he defends the supervisor. They have taken people off the shift they bid on, that should be theirs, and told them they couldn't have it. They make their rules and then break their rules.

It's all focused on union members, and yet the new Teamsters president is no help at all. We were told when the new Teamsters president came in, we were going to do things by the contract. That's the only thing we ask. We have got to do something because they are skinning us alive. If the union would just stand on its feet, things could get a lot better. Otherwise, we're worried someone is going to get hurt here.

—Dobbs Catering workers

Staley fight in AFL-CIO

Decatur, Ill.—John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, wants to wash his hands of the Staley struggle. So we made a black coffin and carried it to Madison, Wis., April 27 because Sweeney was there to give a talk the day before Workers Memorial Day.

We had a sign that read "Staley workers didn't die on the job. They were left to die on a picket line." When Sweeney got up to speak, we got up to picket. At least a couple hundred people were there to remember all those who have been killed by their jobs. He was there to push the Democratic Party agenda. This time it was to back the mayor of Madison who is running for Congress. Even the city workers hate this mayor because he won't resolve a contract dispute with them.

Most of the people in the crowd were workers. The union business agents there were upset because we had a bullhorn to make our point. We said, "The AFL-CIO doesn't tell us anything. Why was there no task force like we were promised? Why didn't the support from Sweeney ever materialize?"

Sweeney did meet with us and said he would get back with us—but he never did. That evening, our supporters in Madison continued to ask him questions, drilling his ass at a banquet. He got pissed off and left.

—Staley worker

Sinai Kosher cover-up

Chicago—The same day people saw the News & Letters article about us getting hurt ("Injuries at Sinai Kosher," May 1996), Lou the Sinai Kosher safety man came around to see if we were wearing ear plugs. Lou is the one who gave out those wrist braces that didn't do any good.

The following Sunday, he showed us a movie about carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis. It just said that a job you do all day can hurt you, and that's why they have us rotate jobs. The film said if your wrists hurt to tell the supervisor.

You're working with your hands all day long. How are your hands going to rest? If you're rushing all the time, you're going to have strained wrists. Even if you rotate jobs, you're still going to break down—you're only human. It comes from repeating actions all the time, whether you've been doing it for 2 years or 11 years. And here we're always rushing no less than 8 hours a day, sometimes 10 and 12.

There's no chance to rest. Management is acting like they are concerned, but all the time they make you run. Every job is very fast-paced, and they never want to stop the machines or to slow down. Things can be done to make these jobs safe. If a person does the job, she knows what the problem is. If she makes a suggestion, though, management throws it away because they don't want to change. These hard jobs are done by underpaid women. They are the laborers at Sinai Kosher, but the men get the higher pay.

After we saw the movie, we had to sign and date something saying we saw it. They are scared about what people here really think about their injuries, and they wanted something on record to show the insurance company they are on top of it. Sinai Kosher management also doesn't want Sara Lee, which owns the company, to know about the problem.

—Sinai Kosher worker

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya
MARXIST-HUMANIST
ARCHIVES

Editor's note: As part of celebrating the forthcoming publication of a new edition of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* by Wayne State University Press, we here publish the final section of her 1985 speech, "Dialectics of Revolution and Women's Liberation." The section is entitled, "Unchaining the Dialectic Through 35 Years of Marxist-Humanist Writings Which Trace the Dialectics of Revolution in a New Work on Women's Liberation." In discussing how this collection of writings discloses the way Marxist-Humanism developed the dialectics of revolution for the specific realities facing women's liberation, it helps reveal the methodology of bringing dialectical philosophy to bear on all forces of revolution. The full text of the speech, given on Jan. 27, 1985, can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of its World Development*, microfilm #8348.

The title for my lecture today has reversed the title of our new fourth book into "Dialectics of Revolution and of Women's Liberation," not just as something needed for this lecture, but as what is the actual focus of the whole "trilogy of revolution"* as well as this latest philosophic work. Indeed, the Introduction to it—and an Introduction is really always also the Conclusion—is called "Introduction and Overview." It is that which I will try to summarize here as the unchaining of the dialectic for the post-World War II period, whether that is expressed in activities or books, in pamphlets or News & Letters, or as it is implicit throughout the Archives, as well.

It is this which reveals that, no matter what specific revolutionary force turns out to be the main one in any ongoing revolution, no one can know before time who it will be. Nothing proves this more sharply than Women's Liberation, because it has been an unrecognized and degraded force, rather than seen as a force that is simultaneously Reason. It is this which has made women question: "What happens after?"

In the main, Women's Liberationists refuse to accept anything which shows that "a man" decides. In actuality, what they are thereby rejecting is the dialectics of revolution. It is this burning question of our age which led me to subtitle this final section of my lecture: Unchaining the Dialectic.

First, let us look at the unchaining of the dialectic for our age by Marxist-Humanists. Our original contributions to Marx's Marxism can be seen in our first book, *Marxism and Freedom*, as the structure of the whole—the Movement from Practice. It is seen in our second work, *Philosophy and Revolution*, as the working out of the Absolute Idea for our age—Absolute Idea as New Beginning. In the third work, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, it is seen as the challenge to all post-Marx Marxists.

Secondly, let's see how Marx explained his return to the Hegelian dialectic in his very last decade: "My relationship with Hegel is very simple. I am a disciple of Hegel, and the presumptuous chatter of the epigones who think they have buried this great thinker appear frankly ridiculous to me. Nevertheless, I have taken the liberty of adopting...a critical attitude, disencumbering his dialectic of its mysticism and thus putting it through a profound change..." This is from the manuscripts for Volume II of *Capital* that Marx left, and that Engels left out.

Now let's look at the structure of our fourth book, still on the press, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*. What became obvious to me was that the four parts of this book turned out to be actual moments of revolution. Thus Part I, "Women, Labor and the Black Dimension," actually also includes Youth, as the four forces of revolution. I insisted in my Introduction that I was not presenting my writings chronologically because I wanted each topic to reflect, even if only implicitly, the totality of my views. Even that aspect does not tell the whole story about the relationship of the forces of revolution to the Reason of any revolution—i.e., how each one of the forces "reaches for the future." This was most clearly shown not only by the forces that actually made the revolution in Russia, but by those in Persia where the women in the revolution of 1906-11 had gone beyond even what they did in Russia itself by establishing a new form of organization, the women's anjumen (soviet). Today we spell this out as committee-form in place of "party-to-lead."

Part II, "Revolutionaries All," again shows the activists, the actual participants in revolutions. Whether or not they were conscious of actually being the history-makers, they were exactly that. And that section has the footnote which returns us to *Marxism and Freedom*, choosing the section that describes the milkmaids initiating the Paris Commune of 1871.

Part III, "Sexism, Politics and Revolution—Japan, Portugal, Poland, China, Latin America, the United States—Is there an Organizational Answer?" clearly illustrates both the positive internationalism and the very negative sexism in each country, whether East or West.

* The "trilogy of revolution" refers to Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*, from 1776 until Today (1957); *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).

Dialectics and Women's Liberation

Yet what the Introduction and Overview made clear was that the forces of revolution had to show their actual presence before the concretization of the dialectics of revolution would manifest itself.

Put differently, what the very first sentence of the first paragraph of the first page of the Introduction establishes is that first there must be a definition that is a concretization of the specific nature of your epoch. We had designated that as the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and we had arrived at that conclusion from the encounter with the Absolute Idea as being not just a unity of practice and theory, but a very new relationship of practice to theory. It is this which determined the whole structure of our very first major theoretical work, *Marxism and Freedom*. Only after this specific epoch and its historic content was grasped do we speak, in the second paragraph of the Introduction and Overview, about the uniqueness of one of the forces of revolution, Women's Liberation.

We now come to Part IV on "The Trail to the 1980s"—which is naturally the one that is key to any concretization of the present period. Our task is twofold: we have to catch the link of continuity with Marx's Marxism; and then make our own original contributions, which only the epoch in question can work out for itself. Marx opened the gates for us. Look at the way he treated his relationship to Hegel after he discovered his own New Continent of Thought and yet felt it important to return to the Hegelian dialectic. That was not to deny anything new. On the contrary—and contrary especially to all those who try to use the final decade of Marx's life to turn him into no more than a populist—the full 40 years of Marx's work, which saw the critic of the Hegelian dialectic become the philosopher of revolution and the author of *Capital*, prove that he continued his own very original development throughout his life, including the final decade, and that the new moments were no break with his very first new discovery.

Follow the dialectics of the development of Women as the new revolutionary force and Reason. Concretization, when it expresses a Universal that becomes Concrete, shows what Absolute Idea is as New Beginning. All the emphasis on "New Beginnings" pinpoints the task of an age. Absolute Idea is total, but it cannot be total as a quantitative measure. That is where the new in any epoch requires the living presence of that revolutionary force and not just a Promethean vision. That is not because Promethean vision and Reaching for the Future doesn't help the next generation to see its task. Quite the contrary. That is when discontinuity is not a revision of, but a continuation with, the original New Moment when there are all sorts of new voices and listening to them is quintessential.

It is only after the new world stage of practice is recognized that we get to that new revolutionary force of Women's Liberation, which has named the culprit—male chauvinism—as characterizing the revolutionary movement itself. That is to say, it is not only characteristic of capitalism, and not only of this epoch, but has existed throughout history. The point is not to stop there. But in order not to stop there, you have to recognize Women's Liberation as a force that is Reason and not just force—and that means a total uprooting of this society, and the creation of totally new human relations. Which is why Marx was not exclusively a feminist but a "new Humanist." The fact that feminism is part of Humanism

and not the other way around does not mean that Women's Liberation becomes subordinate. It means only that philosophy will not again be separated from revolution, or Reason separated from force. Even Absolute Method becomes only the "road to" Absolute Idea, Absolute Mind.

Let me end, then, with the final paragraph from the Introduction and Overview of our new, fourth book:

The Absolute Method allows for no "private enclaves"—i.e., exceptions to the principle of Marx's Dialectics, whether on the theoretical or the organizational questions. As Marx insisted from the very beginning, nothing can be a private enclave: neither any part of life, nor organization, nor even science. In his *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*, he proclaimed that: "To have one basis for life and another for science is a priori a lie."

And now that we have both the *Ethnological Notebooks* and the *Mathematical Manuscripts* from Marx's last years, where he singled out the expression "negation of the negation," we can see that that is the very same expression he used in 1844 to explain why Feuerbach was a vulgar materialist in rejecting it, and Hegel was the creative philosopher. As we concluded in the Introduction and Overview to *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*, on Marx's 1844 declaration on science and life:

The truth of this statement has never been more immediate and urgent than in our nuclear world, over which hangs nothing short of the threat to the very survival of civilization as we have known it.

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There an Organizational Answer?

Part IV
The Trail to the 1980s: The
Missing Link — Philosophy — in
Relationship of Revolution to
Organization

Essay Article

by Peter Hudis

Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition, by Istvan Meszaros (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995)

It is a rare occasion to come across a book which so directly and comprehensively confronts the central problem of our time. In this 1,000 page opus, Istvan Meszaros brings 30 years of theoretic reflection to bear on the need to combat the prevailing notion that there is no alternative to existing capitalism. He tries to do so by outlining a "theory of transition" which can help envision what happens after the revolution.

DEFINING THE PRESENT CRISIS

To get a handle on the thrust of this massive work, it may help to focus on two seemingly opposed statements of Marx, which Meszaros cites. The first is Marx's statement, "It is not enough for thought to strive for realization; reality must itself strive toward thought." This expresses Marx's view that the idea of freedom can be realized only on the basis of the material conditions and social struggles of present-day reality. The second is Marx's statement, "theory itself becomes a material force when it seizes the masses." This expresses Marx's view that ideas not only reflect present-day reality, but also play a key role in helping to transform it.

As Meszaros sees it, in Marx's day and through much of this century, thought strove for realization in the form of socialist movements which consciously sought to overturn capitalism. However, reality failed to strive toward thought in that the expansion of capitalism did not result in a worldwide socialist revolution. The reason for this, Meszaros contends, is that "the viability of capital is inseparable from its full expansion into an all-embracing world system. Only when this process is accomplished can the structural limits of capital come into play" (p. 485). So long as capitalism still had "hidden continents" to penetrate, he says, it was able to prevent its inner antagonisms from coming to the surface.

The situation today, on the other hand, is totally reversed. Capitalism is reaching the limits of its global expansion and its inner antagonisms are everywhere surfacing. As Meszaros shows, for the past two decades capitalism has been in a "depressed continuum" characterized by an "endemic, permanent, structural crisis" (p. 597). In this sense, reality is moving toward thought. However, he argues that thought is no longer striving for realization, in that the limitations of the radical movements have turned masses of people away from the very idea of socialism. The failure of Social Democracy and Stalinism to liberate humanity from the power of capital has created the impression that there is no alternative to actually existing capitalism.

Meszaros rightly argues that unless we overcome today's crisis in envisioning the abolition of capital, no effort to change society will bear fruit. Waiting for the crises of the system to deepen, or relying on the material conditions to bring about a turnaround, makes little sense given the present historic moment.

As he puts it, "It is not too difficult to point to crisis symptoms that foreshadow the breakdown of the established socioeconomic and political order. However, in and of itself the profound structural crisis of the capital system is very far from being enough to inspire confidence in a successful outcome. The pieces must be picked up and put together in due course in a positive way. And not even the gravest crisis or the most severe breakdowns are of much help by themselves in that respect.

"It is always incomparably easier to say 'no' than to draw even the bare outlines of a positive alternative to the negated object. Only on the basis of a coherent strategic view of the overall social complex can even a partial negation of the existent be considered plausible or legitimate" (pp. xvii-xviii).

Since "even the most radical negation remains in dependency on the object of its critique," the negation of existing society must now be defined "as a subordinate moment of the positive project" of spelling out the alternative to capital itself (p. 793).

Meszaros is well aware of the profound difficulties which this involves. The collapse of societies that called themselves "socialist," as well as the failure of a host of revolutionary movements in the Third World, clearly show that without the radical restructuring of every single domain touched by capitalism, the domination of capital cannot be overcome. As against putting issues of gender and race on the back burner, "capital must be superseded in the totality of its relations" (p.609). Otherwise, it cannot be changed.

He is also well aware of the folly of drawing up blueprints of the future or issuing moral imperatives about how the new society "ought" to be. He instead wants to conceptualize the "material mediations" needed to effect the transition from a revolutionary seizure of power to the abolition of capital. Most of his book, however, consists of a detailed critique of those who fail to conceptualize such a transcendence of alienation.

THE RETREAT FROM DIALECTICS

Of all the thinkers critiqued by Meszaros, none figures more prominently than Georg Lukacs, whom many consider the foremost Hegelian-Marxist of the twentieth century. He devotes several hundred pages to Lukacs, because Meszaros sees in his limitations an explanation for why it has proven so hard to conceptualize the abolition of capital.

The key problem as he sees it is that Lukacs posed class consciousness as the deciding factor in bridging the gap between the realities of the present and the social forms of the future. Lukacs so overstressed the con-

'Beyond Capital': Envisioning a new society

sciousness of the proletariat that he equated it to the Hegelian identity of subject and object. Meszaros correctly shows that this involved Lukacs in a thorny contradiction.

For if the proletariat equals the Hegelian identity of subject and object, how does one explain the gap between the workers' present-day consciousness and the idea of a new society? To answer this, Lukacs developed his famous theory of reification, which states that it isn't only labor which is reified, or turned into a thing; under capitalism your mind also gets reified.

Though Meszaros does not mention it, Lukacs' notion deviates from Marx. To Marx what gets reified at the point of production is not labor, or the laborer, let alone the human being's thought. What is made into a thing is the capacity to labor, or labor-power. This is fundamental to Marx, because in this way he shows that the process of reification is confronted by the subjectivity of the living laborer, whose mind and muscle resists this "process of suction."

By conflating labor and labor-power, on the other hand, Lukacs made it hard to see how reification can be overcome through the masses' self-activity. If even our



China: "postcapitalist capital-producing society"?

thought is reified, how are we going to free ourselves? Lukacs had a ready answer: The Party will free you, by serving as the "knowing" of the proletariat.

Meszaros sharply attacks this fetishism of the Party, by linking it to a deeper problem: the failure to envision the actual "material mediations" needed in order to surmount the hierarchies of class society. By laboring under "the illusion that theoretical illumination—the work of consciousness upon consciousness—can produce the required structural changes in social reality" (p. 360), Lukacs failed to spell out how the domination of labor by capital can actually be overcome. As a result, he ended up concluding that the reduction of concrete to abstract labor under the regimen of the factory clock continues to operate under socialism.

The real object of Meszaros' critique, however, is not Lukacs, but Hegel. For as he sees it, Hegel's concept of the unified subject-object "is fully committed to the standpoint of capital" (p. 350). On the basis of Hegel's political writings, he tries to show that Hegel "adopted the standpoint of capital as the absolute horizon of history" (p. 5). The failure of Lukacs to envision the pathway by which to overcome the domination of labor by capital, he argues, flows from Lukacs' deep-rootedness in the Hegelian dialectic!

Thus, instead of building on how Hegel's concept of absolute negativity contains (as Marx put it) an "estranged insight" into the transcendence of the capital-form, Meszaros retreats from Hegelian dialectics altogether. He instead calls on radical theory to obtain a "firmer material footing" by abandoning Hegelian philosophy in favor of a "strategic view of the social complex."

This marks a retreat from Meszaros' earlier position, as stated in 1983: "The speculative verbal supersession of philosophy by 'Theory,' 'Theoretical Practice' and the like, can only lead to a conservative rejection of the unity of theory and practice and to the sceptical dismissal of Marx's values as unrealizable dreams."*

So why does Meszaros now retreat from philosophy? Why does he so totally reject Hegel, when Hegel's concept that all forward movement proceeds through the "negation of the negation" supplies so much ground for grappling with "what happens after?" The reason is that he is so overburdened with the way even Hegelian-Marx-

*See "Marx 'Philosophy,'" by Istvan Meszaros, in *The History of Marxism: Vol. 1, Marxism in Marx's Day*, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). See also Raya Dunayevskaya's review of this in "Hobsbawm and Rubel on the Marx Centenary, but where is Marx?", in *News & Letters*, August-September 1982.

ists like Lukacs failed to envision a transcendence of the capital-form that he concludes the root of the problem lies in Hegel's idealism. On this basis he praises Engels' reflection-theory of knowledge, on the grounds that only by wedding thought to the contours of the actual material conditions can the alternative to the capital-form be posed.

In a word, instead of posing cognition that not only reflects the objective world but creates it as the key to working out the question of "what happens after the revolution," Meszaros turns away from dialectics of philosophy in order to secure a "firmer material base."

Herein lies the objectivity of Meszaros' approach. The failure of even those Marxists who did emphasize Hegelian dialectics to produce any significant results when it comes to answering "what happens after" the revolution, has now led to an effort to dispense with the dialectics of philosophy itself. Far from being true only of Meszaros, this tendency is deeply rooted in the terrain of today's objective situation.

TRANSITION? OR ABSOLUTE LIBERATION?

The ramifications of Meszaros' retreat from Hegelian dialectics, and indeed from philosophy itself, become especially telling when he takes up Marx's work.

His book creatively explores Marx, in showing that social change to him meant "an ongoing, consistently self-critical social revolution, i.e., permanent revolution" (p. 792). This is especially true, he says, of *The Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875), in which Marx critiqued his followers for narrowing social change to the mere political overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, Meszaros sees Marx's *Critique* as speaking directly to "the organization question." He writes: "Marx saw the organizational question as 1) remaining faithful to socialist principles, and 2) devising viable and flexible programs of action" (p. 695). To Meszaros, this calls for "a conscious strategic articulation of a socialist pluralism."

What Meszaros fails to draw out, however, is that Marx's insistence on the inseparability of "principles" and organization implies the need for organization to be grounded in a philosophy of revolution. He fails to draw this out, because Meszaros does not see the *Critique* as part of Marx's overall development of a philosophy of "revolution in permanence."

This is especially seen from Meszaros' rather curt dismissal of Marx's last decade (1875-83). He says "the intellectual production of his last 15 years bears no comparison to the previous decade and a half"—thereby skipping over such crucial works as Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*, in which Marx dug into indigenous societies, technologically underdeveloped nations, and the peasantry. As Raya Dunayevskaya has shown, Marx's deep probing into these issues in his last decade was part of his effort to project how deep, total and continuous must be the very concept of revolution.

Yet instead of digging into this fruitful ground, Meszaros singles out what he calls "Marx's missing mediations"—by which he means that Marx all too often failed to specify the many "material mediations" needed to effect the transition from the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie to the abolition of capital.

There is no doubt that the capital-form cannot be defeated in one blow in the immediate aftermath of a revolution. But how is one to work out the pathway to its abolition, if the depth and breadth of Marx's call for a total uprooting remains unarticulated?

It is hard to avoid the impression that by skipping over this, Meszaros narrows his own effort to envision "what happens after." For he actually rarely discusses specific forms of mediation needed to abolish capital. And even when he does, he has relatively little to say about transforming relations of production, stressing instead that, "The existing material articulation of production relations remains basically unchanged in the aftermath of any socialist revolution, even under the most favorable historical conditions" (p. 368). On the other hand, he has more to say about transforming exchange relations, which he calls "the 'archimedean point' of the whole complex of mediatory strategies" (p. 758). He even says that because of the "fragmentation" characterizing the working class, "for a long time after the revolution they will need a strong executive over against themselves" (p. 930).

When all is said and done, it is not surprising that the readers may feel they haven't gained much concrete illumination on the question of "what happens after"—and feel even further from having in hand Marx's concept of a total uprooting restated for our day.

What may well explain some of these limitations is

(continued on page 10)

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VOICES OF OPPOSITION TO PRISON WAREHOUSING

Gerard Emmett's lead on the "new voices of opposition to prison warehousing of the poor" (May N&L) powerfully connected the L.A. Rebellion and current racist beatings, as well as the anti-immigrant events in this country, to the prison phenomenon, in such a way that it shows what is new in this phenomenon today. While the comparison to the gulag is strong and true, the very fact that prisoners make up 2% of the labor force shows where the new phenomenon fits into high-tech capitalism.

John Marcotte
New York

There seems a hunger to lock people up now. Soon there will be ten times as many people in prison as in the 1970s and one in three Black men are in the justice system. The pamphlet written by prisoners that N&L is helping with, mentioned in Gerard Emmett's lead, is really important if there is some way to show what is going on today in an historical perspective. It's a question of mental oppression when prisoners say they can't believe in the good of all. That's what the idea of freedom can motivate, that something can be found or created that is for the good of all. The negativity prisoners feel against the system opens doors to the positive.

Jim Guthrie
Chicago

I am a 35-year-old African-American who by lack of the will to make a better "life choice" landed in prison for the second time. I was first arrested at the age of 26, and up until then I had been a model citizen who was upwardly mobile and a success against all odds. I like to write because it is the only means for me to keep my human spirit alive. I'm not a jailhouse poet or a big neo-intellectual. I'm just an average guy trying to heal the wounds (self-inflicted) and move on to better things.

One thing people don't necessarily understand is that just because you're in prison, it doesn't mean that rational abilities become nil. I can't speak for the whole prison populace, but I can readily state that there is something much bigger going on as far as the condition of prisoners is concerned.

Prisoner
New York

When I read the quote from the Kansas inmate on the mentality of the correctional system that views prison as business, I couldn't help thinking of the mentality of the university where I teach, where 250 are enrolled in the criminal justice program, without which the university could not survive. Other universities across the country have these same programs that employ lots of faculty and are competing for students to train them for correctional institutions. Nearby they are planning a \$60 million maximum security prison.

University professor
Illinois

On May 19, the strikers' paper, *Sunday Journal*, supported the Archer administration's plan to charge fees for vehicles entering Belle Isle Park. This is bad enough. But the same editorial that points out that Recreation Department (unionized) staff has been cut in half since 1990 states: "We'd like to see the city make use of the Wayne County Alternative Work Force as a regular Monday Morning clean-up crew." In other words, have slave labor replace union jobs! The "Alternative Work Force" is comprised of prisoners, parolees, and probationers working off their sentences in "community service" jobs.

A few city workers told me they don't support the newspaper strike because the newspapers didn't support theirs a few years back. And now we see a call to pit paid labor against unpaid workers.

Working woman
Detroit

The feminization of poverty, the refusal of women to see their children starve, the proliferation of drugs, and the deadly combination of racism and sexism has meant that the number of women arrested for felonies went from 12,331 in 1960 to 62,936 in 1992. Since 1992 the percent of women imprisoned is nearly double the increase in men jailed—275%. The damage this does to them and their approximately 167,000

children is unfathomable. These kinds of statistics and the lives they represent are graphic proof of the total failure of U.S. capitalism to care for its own population.

Terry Moon
Memphis

In our computer age, putting the prison contract lease system into private hands means prisoners don't even have to leave the prison to implement it. With data processing offshore, travel agency work can now be handled by prisoners in Oklahoma. JC Penney contracts credit department work to prisons. The great demand of the Northern labor movement was for no competition from slave or prison labor against "free" labor. Whatever happened to that principle?

Warehouse worker
Illinois

Explosive Thoughts
I feel as though I'm a dented cardboard box stuffed full of dynamite stored in a large dump warehouse surrounded by land mines waiting to explode on moments notice.

Just append a minutest of spark and watch our red hot rage become that devastating, sensational show nobody could possibly ignore in our plea for release.

D.A. Sheldon
Iowa State Penitentiary

A NOTE ON CHINA/TAIWAN

The recent moves by the Chinese government against Taiwan was no game. They are very serious about getting Taiwan back and they are willing to go to war over it if necessary. Inside China quite a number of intellectuals who supported the democracy movement are now saying we can't push so fast for democracy, because the primary objective has to be to reunify the country. The regime knows how deep-rooted are the Chinese people's desires for unification, and they are trying to make use of it.

Chinese exile
California



A WIN
FOR THE
UFW

It's heartening to have a "win" for the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO in these devastating times of increased worker exploitation and lay-offs, bureaucratic unionism, etc. Muranaka Farm, a huge vegetable grower in Moorpark, Cal., claimed workers at their Lamont fields were not covered by the UFW contract. The Agricultural Labor Relations Board ruled that the contract protects all farm workers at Muranaka, no matter where they work in California. So 45 more farm working families no longer have to struggle with sub-minimum or bare minimum wages. It's the first contract in the Lamont area in over 20 years.

Sheila
N.Y.

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

We have seen several issues of your paper and are interested in your work, especially your efforts to coordinate liberation philosophy with concrete revolutionary practice. We are a left social philosophy youth group and take an active part in our student union. We also support the self-defense workers' movement, which is, unfortunately, still very weak in the Ukraine.

In order to tell others about your experience, we have translated several articles from N&L which will be published in the next issue of a discussion magazine, *Zvit*. Can you send us more information about your activity and works on philosophy so we can share it with *Zvit* readers?

Libertarian group
Ukraine

Readers' Views

Thank you very much for the news and analyses regarding the situation and development of the working class struggle in various parts of the world. These have helped us gain a wider perspective on the problems and situation of workers. The workers in our country, more so within the sphere of services, are now actively pursuing solidarity among workers, although there are still barriers towards the development of labor unity in our country.

On the international level, we likewise note that worker solidarity is now being pushed through, particularly by some of the larger labor organizations. We would like to see more updates on the solidarity formations among labor organizations appear in your paper.

V.B.
The Philippines

LESSONS OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

I like what Maya Jhansi wrote on the Paris Commune in the March issue, that all relationships were re-defined, from man/woman to workers, as well as the relationships of the state and commodities. It is sad that this history isn't better covered in school. Not only do we have to worry about government crushing us, but about becoming co-opted ourselves.

Dan
Detroit

THE OTHER ISRAEL

Ari Shavit's powerful piece in the *New York Times*, "How Easily We Killed Them," was absolutely right in calling Israel's killings in Lebanon an outright massacre, and he was right in charging that it didn't fill the streets with protests. But the article by Gila Svirsky in your May issue allowed the admittedly small voices that did protest, especially of the women's peace movement, to be heard loud and clear in your pages. Those voices went unreported anywhere else that I could see, just as the protests by thousands of Palestinians against the suicide bombings, which she included in her report, were virtually unnoticed by the mass media. You were right to say in your Appeal that it is urgent to keep N&L alive.

Supporter
Illinois

I don't know why it was shocking to me that the Peace Now demonstrators made Gila Svirsky stand apart. It isn't that I haven't met such stupidity from the Left here in the U.S. But what, then, were they marching for? Why march for peace if you want innocent people's homes destroyed and parents shot for the crimes of their children?

I have often thought of the tenuous unity of Jewish and Arab women as the kind of Reason that can help create a different, human world. It is something I look for every March 8 when Women in Black demonstrate together.

Women's liberationist
Memphis

The last two issues of N&L were very helpful in presenting the "other Israel"—with Adam Keller's report in the April issue of the peace demonstrations by both Israelis and Arabs and Gila Svirsky's moving personal account in the May issue. These beautiful sentiments aren't coming out of nowhere. The Marxist-Humanist archives document a revolutionary history of that entire region, as well as the counter-revolutionary movement.

Urszula Wislanka
California

Editor's note: Selections from *Raya Dunayevskaya's Writings on the Middle East*, consisting of ten of her Political-Philosophic Letters from the 1960s through the 1980s, is available from N&L for \$2.50 plus \$1 postage.

Many of the writers in N&L are trying to work out an independent position. It is seen in the woman who wrote about

"bombs and revenge" vs. "hope." She shows tremendous dignity in keeping her humanity in a difficult situation. You have to work out what it means to be human. One of the main questions that has come out of the Bosnian events is what has happened to the idea of multiculturalism. How do you take a stand for that when the whole country has been torn apart?

Marxist-Humanist
San Francisco



BOSNIA'S
STRUGGLE

The same day I received your material about Bosnia, there was more front page news about increased Serbian hostility toward Bosnian Muslims. Yet I remain optimistic as long as organizations such as your continue to work for socially responsible action in Bosnia. The significance of Bosnia is an urgent question.

New reader
California

I hope your book, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles heel of Western 'Civilization'*, reaches a wide audience because the content is so important and the analysis will make sense to many. My only concern is whether the language might have been "translated" into more common expressions for greater appeal. If doing so risked violating your principles, ethic, and style it would not, however, have been worth it.

Bosnia supporter
Los Angeles

The Bosnia pamphlet is powerful. We need to get it known. It isn't just to take to Bosnia events — not because there may not be any more by now, but because Bosnia is not all that it is about.

Committee member
New York

WHO READS N&L?

I wish there was a way we could make a drastic change in welfare. It cannot be done by demonizing women on welfare. We need to talk about what people's needs are and why they are on welfare. I am not a socialist because I don't know enough about it. But the ideas of justice and fairness in your paper do appeal to me.

Black woman child care worker
Chicago

Your publication is magnificent. I especially like the first-hand reports from the shops. A little theory goes a long way, even if pertinent and relevant.

Academic dean
Lancaster, Pa.

The law of hate and punishment (law and order) is being pushed here. They are moving prisoners all over the place and the word is out that they are really going to turn this camp into a total "control unit." It means physical and psychological control over the prisoners. We know how it will come out. Hate and punishment can only bring more hate and open war between two sides.

Over the years I have received more information and knowledge from N&L than any paper or magazine I ever heard of. Thank you for showing readers who the real criminals are.

Prisoner
Illinois

N&L keeps me informed about events around the world which otherwise would remain unnoticed. Moreover, it gives me courage to face the reality in life. I want correspondence with women in America who are engaged in uplifting women's status.

Philosophy educator
India

HAVE YOU SENT YOUR CONTRIBUTION
TO HELP KEEP N&L IN THE FIGHT?
WE NEED YOUR HELP TO CONTINUE!

LIFE IN RACIST, SEXIST, EXPLOITATIVE AMERICA

I never heard about environmental racism and environmental justice before reading about it in N&L. It broadens the picture and makes me think about how everything is interconnected. That's the key. Until people are ready to pay attention to issues like toxic dumping in poor neighborhoods, as long as the environmental movement's tone remains the same, it will go nowhere. The mainstream movements are basically informed by capitalism. It's a very class-specific movement.

Long-time environmentalist Chicago

B. Ann Lastelle's column on supporting women at Mitsubishi (May N&L) was terrific. Lastelle put what happened to the women at Mitsubishi in a larger context and I thought it was brilliant the way she brought out the similarity between what happened to the women at Mitsubishi and women on welfare. Her columns are always thought out and thought through. Her last point about sexual harassment being the past and that what is at stake in supporting the women is nothing less than the future of the workers' movement is, I'm very sure, unique.

Women's Liberationist Memphis

I noticed on the news that a lot of white Americans are complaining about the Mexicans taking their jobs. It used to be just Blacks and whites fighting. Now the whites will be fighting Mexicans. My husband drives a truck and drops supplies at construction sites and he sees the contractors house the Mexicans in these little bitty trailers where the contractor gives them food and shelter. They don't have a car or anything. They hide their checks from my husband but always want to know what he makes. They aren't allowed to talk about their pay. They are using the same strategy with the Mexicans that they used with the Blacks years ago.

Black woman worker South USA

We have a new curfew law that now charges parents if it's violated. This was the same town that watched while Staley and Firestone went to rotating shifts, thinking it would be good for competition. I'm a single parent. I can't be at work and with my kids at the same time. It means I'm being penalized for being a mother and having to work.

Staley worker Decatur

It is not affirmative action which "divides." It is racism which divides. And so long as there is racism we must have programs like affirmative action which can aid those victimized by it. Many whites still do not understand that. Maybe even some Blacks don't understand it. The fact remains that class relations in this country have always been shaped by racial relations. We can't get rid of the first without transforming the second.

Feminist Illinois

The interview on "60 Minutes" with William Pierce, the author of the "Turner Diaries," was highly disturbing. The book is the "Bible" of the right wing militias across America and the American version of "Mein Kampf." It states openly that the author's aims are to get rid of Jews, Blacks, Mexicans and other "unwanted" elements of American society. What does it mean that an edition of 60,000 additional copies was just published (by a Jewish publisher)?

This program was being aired at the same time that "Nightline" was devoting a whole week to the horrible conditions under which the close to 30 million Blacks live in the U.S. (out of whom close to a million already live behind bars). Add to this the increasing ranks of the jobless, and those living in hopeless conditions below the poverty line, and you begin to see the need for an openly fascist-style dictatorship to keep the restless subdued.

Dissident Vancouver

There is a glaring contradiction in the way the workers produce everything and the capitalist nothing, and yet the workers receive only what is necessary to survive and the capitalist appropriates all the rest of the surplus value produced. These thieves just keep on blaming the irrationalities in their system on "feudal vestiges" or on governmental interference. The Republicans keep insisting that big government is what's causing welfare, hunger, youth killing each other. How long is it going to take before everyone is conscious that our miseries are caused by one thing: capitalism?

Revolutionary retiree California



INDIGNANT HEART

I cannot remember reading a book that left me with more knowledge and feeling than Indignant Heart by Charles Denby. I'm guessing that I learned about Mrs. Parks and the bus boycott, in Junior High School, but I'm not sure. After reading Denby I feel that not enough time was ever spent on the subject. I have received more information from this book than any classroom has ever given me. It showed me that if people are willing to stand together and fight for what they believe in, they are capable of achieving their dreams.

Student of labor economics New York

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Thanks for defending the rights of your correspondents to remain anonymous, if they choose. By the way, Mr. "Curious, proud and unafraid radical" failed to sign his name.

Ex-exile Canada



FIGHTING GLOBAL SEXISM

Some 200 mail order bride organizations operate in this country, especially in Texas and California, luring Filipina women to the U.S. with promises of TV-land lives. An estimated 2,000-3,500 wives come here through their catalogs each year. The women find themselves exploited, isolated or abused, and chained to their husbands by fear of deportation. A recent meeting of New York Gabriela Network discussed why the bride business has flourished: Filipinas appeal to the racist, sexist view of Asian women as docile, and also speak English. One woman said quite a number of white supremacists order brides! Many of the brides are desperately poor, and their government allows the companies to recruit there.

Gabriela supporter New York

After more than 20 years of political and legal controversies the German Bundestag (parliament) voted a law which punishes sexual violence in marriage. The bill had been proposed by the government and was passed by only a tiny majority: 318 votes for, 306 against, with two abstentions. It was immediately criticized because it contains a provision which allows the wife to retire her accusation and thus to block criminal proceedings against the husband. There are fears that the wife could be subjected to pressure by her husband.

It is this part of the law the Social Democrats and the Greens fought against without success; the chancellor's Christian Democrats and Christian Socialists have won. The majority is satisfied on one point: while the previous law regarded sexual violence in marriage as "enforcing sexual relations" which would punish the violator with only a minor sentence, the present law provides two years in prison.

Male feminist Prague

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BOOKS

BY RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

- Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 until today 1988 edition. New author's introduction \$17.50
Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao 1989 edition. New author's introduction \$14.95
Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution 1991 edition. New author's introduction. Foreword by Adrienne Rich \$12.95
Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future \$15.95
The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya \$8.50
The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya Contains "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," and 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes." \$3 paperback, \$10 hardcover

BY CHARLES DENBY

- Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal 1989 edition includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya \$14.95

BY KEVIN ANDERSON

- NEW Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study First full-length treatment of Lenin's studies of Hegel. Special offer extended \$14.50 includes postage

PAMPHLETS

- American Civilization on Trial, Black Masses as Vanguard Statement of the National Editorial Board. Includes "A 1980s View of the Two-Way Road Between the U.S. and Africa" by Raya Dunayevskaya, and "Black Caucuses in the Unions" by Charles Denby \$2
Harry McShane and the Scottish Roots of Marxist-Humanism by Peter Hudis \$3
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Black/Red View

by John Alan

In this post-Civil Rights Movement era the focus and meaning of civil rights has shifted far from the original reason African Americans took to the streets and courts in the 1950s and 1960s to break down two centuries of racial segregation and discrimination. In California the so-called "revolt of angry white men" has been able to get on the November ballot a "California Civil Rights Initiative" (CCRI). If approved by the voters, "race" could no longer be used as one of the reasons for admission to public institutions of higher learning, thus abolishing affirmative action and closing the doors of the universities to many African-American students.

The conservative backers of the CCRI tell the voters that their Initiative "draws its language from the Civil Rights Act of 1964." On the face of it this is true, but it's only a ploy. They call it a "civil rights" initiative to conceal its racist purpose and then they have it read: "The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting." This is the usual abstract talk about practicing equality without rooting out race and sex inequalities.

California's so-called civil rights initiative is a part of the new national movement to end affirmative action permanently. A number of state legislatures and cities have passed laws and ordinances to abolish it and the Supreme Court is expected to rule soon on the constitutionality of their acts.

Of course affirmative action was never a solution for the socio-economic crisis in the African-American community. But that doesn't mean that one can ignore the threatening power of a "color-blind" racism. For example, last June the Supreme Court struck down a plan to racially balance a school in Missouri. Chief Justice William Rehnquist told the district court that its goal was not to achieve racial balance because once the effect of legal segregation is over it "would be perfectly legal for the district to run schools that happened to be all black or all white." Justice Clarence Thomas supported the Chief Justice adding, "the Constitution does not prevent individuals from choosing to live together, to work together, or to send their children to school together, so long as the State does not interfere with their choices on the basis of race."

No longer management and proud of it!

Vicksburg, Miss.—My name is Sedrick Gardner. I'm a 35-year-old Black Man. I was raised by my grandmother and mother taught morals and a work ethic.

I started off as a supplemental cleaner in fast food to help put myself through college, and worked my way up to a general manager. I got married to a white woman, had three children, and we separated eventually. Later I got a job at Wendy's as assistant manager. Recently I got a retroactive raise. I was told by others it was because of an EEOC lawsuit against the company for discriminatory hiring.

When I extended my hand to the area manager, Mike Weimers, to thank him for the raise, he squeezed it to the point of pain. He's 6'2" and weighs 275 pounds. He caught me off guard even though that day he had remarked to another manager, "Y'all let anything walk into this store"—and he was referring to me!

I noticed that Mr. Weimers had a pamphlet that had been left for me by the Rainbow Society, a group that helps interracial couples and their children deal with discrimination. I found my personal life was being discussed when an employee said, "I didn't know you were married to a white female and had three kids!"

I was stocking the drive-through area and Weimers was coming down the hall. I lifted my head to say good evening, and before I could say it he kicked me so hard I lost my balance and had to catch myself to keep from falling on the floor. He never said anything.

I was furious, I wanted to jump him, but I suppressed it. It was so humiliating I didn't even tell my mother. In four weeks' time I deteriorated and got sick.

We had a stock problem they tried to blame on me. Then my ex-general manager said she got a call asking her had I been stealing. They threw my expense report from a trip to Memphis in the trash can. I had been waiting on my check and the accounting department finally told me they had never received the report. Then someone started a rumor that I had dyslexia.

The last four days I worked I had an enlarged prostate and a severe kidney infection. I didn't sleep for four days, I stopped eating, just kept drinking coffee. I worked 32 hours in two days, I worked nine days straight, worked a month and half with only five off days.

I didn't want to face the fact that this was about race. I tried to close my eyes and hoped it would go away. It ate at me and I had homicidal and suicidal thoughts. I took \$3,000 of company funds and spent it at one slot machine. Right was wrong and wrong was right. I was hospitalized for two weeks, given anti-depressants, and put on medication for the prostate and kidney infection. I didn't care about anything.

I haven't worked in seven months, I just try to get through each day. I had to tell Weimers what I had done, and asked could I pay it back? I know that money has been mishandled by whites and it was either covered up or they were given the opportunity to replace the money. I could have paid the money back, but they wanted to

'Color blind' racism posed as 'civil rights'

This opinion of Justice Clarence Thomas can not be simply considered a random statement from an individual member of the highest court in this country because it fits perfectly with the prevailing mood of white racism—a racism so subtly powerful that it has as yet to generate a serious force of opposition. The Clinton administration has capitulated to this new racism's "moral values" by attacking welfare and welfare mothers. The African-American middle class has treated this capitulation as just another conservative opposition to liberalism.

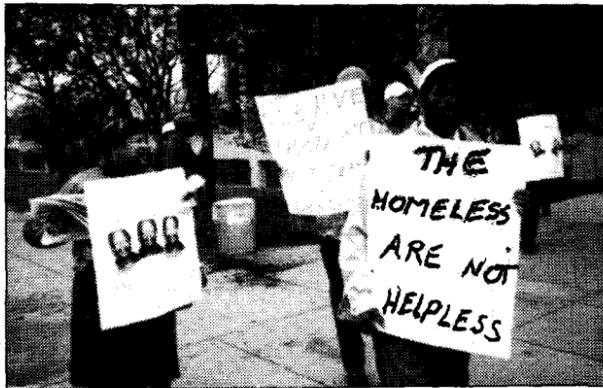
In less than four years, a new century will begin. It is appropriate to ask: will this new century see the end of racism? Or, instead, will the 1832 prediction of Alexis de Tocqueville prevail: "...the prejudice which repels the

Negroes seems to increase in proportion as they are emancipated, and inequality is sanctioned by manners while it is effaced from the laws of the country."

De Tocqueville's observations and insights have the obviousness of an historic truth, but it is still necessary to show that the intractability of America's racism is rooted in the super-exploitation of Black labor starting with slave labor, then moving on to sharecropping and then to unskilled mass production labor. And now it has reached this era of high-tech, where Black labor has become redundant labor, permanently unemployed, living in the decaying enclaves of former industrial cities. In a sense, the history of African Americans is a three century experience in a process that Marx called "the general absolute law of capitalist accumulation" and its various forms of racism.

Today, the struggle against racism is no longer an issue of sitting in the back of the bus, getting Black representation in government and in businesses, or seeing African Americans on television or in the movies. These "reforms," as superficial as they now appear, have created a mutual relationship between the Black middle-class leaders and the centers of white power. This has both confused and neutralized expressions of Black mass opposition to racism. If masses do engage in spontaneous protest there is always a Black politician or leader ready to intervene and neutralize it, i.e., bring it within the bound of proper political protest. In other words, there is no real unity of purpose and thought between leaders and masses that made the early days of the Civil Rights Movement so unique.

Justice for Joe Gould!



News & Letters

Chicago—Fifty homeless men and women, all sellers of *Streetwise* newspaper, demonstrated at the steps of the Cook County Circuit Court on May 9. The protesters demanded that the state not back off of prosecution of Gregory Becker, a white off-duty Chicago cop who witnesses say shot and killed Joseph Gould, a Black homeless man and *Streetwise* vendor, July 30, 1995. Police abuse activists also demonstrated May 16 at a fundraising event in downtown Chicago for State's Attorney Jack O'Malley, well-known for shielding Becker and other police involved in killings of Blacks and Latinos.

press charges.

I have a lawyer who is waiting on the outcome of an EEOC investigation of me being kicked which was seen by another employee. I'm still on anti-depressant medication and going to church every Sunday, and going to support groups. But now I want the public to know. I lost my dignity and I want to get it back.

I used to be against affirmative action, but no more. Now I feel we need laws to make affirmative action stronger. I've seen women, Blacks, youth discriminated against. When you get into management you have to keep your mouth shut because you're supposed to protect the company. I've learned the hard way how wrong that is.

Black World

(continued from page 1)

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, and former public relations liaison for the Clinton administration, Avis Lavelle, heading up its public relations office. Needless to say, none of the awards given at the "Gala" were for reporting on environmental racism.

More astonishing, however, was the presence of Shell Oil, the memory still fresh of its complicity in the savage hanging of the famous Nigerian writer and environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa, Nov. 10. In the case of Shell, the CABJ cannot claim its usual ignorance. The Association's president, local WNBC anchorman Warner Saunders, was made aware of the conflict of conscience and interest, regarding Shell's corporate sponsorship of the CABJ "Gala" in the face of a worldwide campaign against Shell.

But the CABJ is not the only, or even the most important, Black institution guilty of shameless complicity in the ecological genocide of Black people in Africa and the U.S. Recent issues of Louis Farrakhan's newspaper, *The Final Call*, have articulated the Nation of Islam's support of the fascist military regime in Nigeria. Moreover, in its May 28 issue, *The Final Call* reports on the current debate in the Congressional Black Caucus, Black America's highest political body, over imposing sanctions on the murderous regime of Gen. Sani Abacha. Apparently, Illinois Senator Carol Moseley-Braun is leading the opposition to any such sanctions against the Nigerian government, despite the demands of democratic forces in Nigeria fighting the military regime.

In a weak attempt to provide political cover for Nigeria's military fascists and its imperialist bank-roller Shell Oil, Sen. Moseley-Braun, other members of the CBC, and Louis Farrakhan have resorted to the "constructive engagement" argument that Ronald Reagan and George Bush used not so long ago to support apartheid South Africa, and which the Free South Africa Movement so vociferously attacked.

Death of Michael Taylor, revolutionary journalist

We mourn the death of Michael Taylor, Black American revolutionary and radio journalist who was killed in April in Los Angeles. Michael's life and works are a testimony to the new revolutionary consciousness that emerged after the 1992 L.A. Rebellion. His gruesome murder—while setting up a pirate radio station in South-Central L.A.—is also a manifestation of the disorientation that has set in since then.

For three years Michael's programs gave voice to the lowest and deepest layers of society. Countless men, women and youth were heard on his programs challenging unemployment and cutbacks in social services, homelessness and racism, prisons and police brutality. A turning point came last year when Michael returned with boundless energy from Philadelphia, where he reported on efforts to stop Mumia Abu-Jamal's execution sentence.

He spoke at every opportunity, pushed and prodded everyone not to acquiesce. Michael would often say he was a revolutionary, a freedom fighter: "fighting for my own freedom, as well as for my brothers and sisters." With such a spirit he broke down many barriers of class, race and nationality. Michael Taylor will be sorely missed by all those who knew him.

—Cyrus Noveen

So, at what moment are the Black bourgeoisie's material roots in capital accumulation exposed? At times when the despotic rule of capitalism is being challenged by the self-determination of the masses fighting for freedom from under it, and by the self-determination of the ideas of freedom that give the movement its direction. While the journalists of the CABJ may not deal in ideas but only with the small coin of concrete facts, Ken Saro-Wiwa's closing statement to the military appointed tribunal that sentenced him to death may give them an idea of what Black people here and in Africa are struggling for and are prepared to die for:

We all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, anxious to preserve their right to life and to decent living, and determined to usher into this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization, I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated....

I repeat that we all stand before history. I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. Shell is here on trial... The Company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come...for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war that the Company has waged in the Delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war [will] be duly punished....

On trial also is the Nigerian nation, its present rulers and those who assist them... I am not one of those who shy away from protesting injustice and oppression, arguing that they are expected in a military regime. The military do not act alone. They are supported by a gaggle of politicians, lawyers, judges, academics and businessmen, all of them hiding under the claim that they are only doing their duty, men and women too afraid to wash their pants of urine.

So too does America's Black elite stand accused.

Western Europe: Spring 1996 labor battles, intellectual ferment

(continued from page 1)

would "get nowhere." This was not only rhetoric. In response to the public sector workers' demands for a modest 4.5% increase, Kohl offered the following package: a raise of 0.0%, longer hours, and reductions in benefits.

By May 20, the warning strikes involved over 100,000 workers. In a reminder to capital which was also a dramatic gesture of international solidarity, workers frequently placed small French flags on their union banners, a reference to last winter's strikes.

On May 23, a final series of negotiations broke down, and the warning strikes were put on hold legally until mid-June, after which many expect an even bigger upsurge from labor. Despite the legal ban, however, thousands of workers spontaneously decided to continue their warning strikes for one more day, on the eve of the three-day Pentecost holiday weekend.

Of the world's largest capitalist economies, Germany has by far the strongest unions. So far, German workers have been able to maintain higher levels of social benefits and job security than elsewhere, including their having won the 35-hour week in many industries during the 1990s. But today they face their biggest challenge since World War II, as capital and the state are now determined to exact drastic concessions. As to the allegedly "overpaid" German worker, it should be noted that, as we go to press, the nationwide construction employers group spurned a proposal from unions to set the minimum pay scale at \$12 per hour even though it allowed a lower wage in the former East Germany.

OTHER CONTRADICTIONS IN GERMANY

On top of its labor struggles, other contradictions also tear at German society. First, thousands of students at Humboldt University in Berlin demonstrated this spring against cuts in education funding and scholarship aid. Second, battles continue over immigration, even as draconian effect-immigrant and anti-asylum laws have come into effect. Third, the anti-nuclear movement, largely dormant in the 1990s, suddenly reappeared in May, as tens of thousands demonstrated against a nuclear waste storage plan which was being implemented on the tenth anniversary of Chernobyl. Fourth, a new debate was launched in May by Social Democrats and Greens, who are calling for the revocation of 50,000 death sentences handed out by the Nazis to deserters from the army during 1939-45. Even today, 300 of those who managed to survive the war and who are still alive carry the stigma of a criminal record! For its part, the Kohl government refuses to revoke these convictions from Nazi courts, claiming that to do so would insult the overall reputation

German labor restive

Prague, Czech Republic—After the failure of the trade union proposals of an "alliance for labor" that should have allied government, unions and employers in a common effort for creating more jobs, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany went over to a counterattack. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government decided it has to save about 50 billion deutsch from its budget in order to find a balance as it is threatened by a deficit of 27.6 billion this year and 66.5 billion by 1997. The social expenditures (pensions, health, etc.) are endangered most.

This process is being repeated in other West European countries which must balance their budgets by 1998 if they want to participate in the creation of a unified European currency on Jan. 1, 1999.

However, the trade unions seem to be more rebellious this time than the chancellor may have believed. Among the first who radically opposed the government maneuvers is the union of state employees, OeTV. In Bavaria alone there were in mid-May work stoppages of employees in 30 institutions in 12 different cities. Its spokesman said: "We want to avoid a severe impact on the public, yet at the same time we wish to show how determined we are to follow with bigger actions."

The two public employees unions OeTV and DAG asked for a 4.5% rise of salaries for 1996, which has been refused so far. Since they have altogether 3.2 million members their strikes could be a strong blow to the economy. Ready to strike are also the service workers of the HBV union. Their chairwoman Margret Monig-Raan promised an opposition to the government until the next elections in 1998 "and beyond." Kohl, she said, "cannot be allowed to abolish the welfare state." Other unions—all members of the DGB trade union association—prepared a scheme of warning strikes for the week of May 20-25. As the chancellor repeatedly refused to change his austerity plans, Germany seems to be on the eve of a country-wide strike wave.

—Stephen Steiger

of the army.

Ever since December, labor and the government have continued to wait and watch each others' moves. When Prime Minister Alain Juppe, the man booed over and over again in December for his proposals for wage and benefits cuts, "bad fat," there was a storm of protest from labor, especially the powerful teachers' union.

Then, on May 23, over 10,000 demonstrated in Paris and other cities for a shorter work week. While labor claims this could cut the country's nearly 12% unem-



Kurdish youths in Berlin celebrate Kurdish new year in the face of government crackdown on immigrants in Germany.

ployment rate, the conservative government will have nothing to do with such proposals. It should also be noted that these May demonstrations, which also involved some disruptions of railway service in the Paris area, were nothing approaching the levels of last winter.

At the same time, anti-immigrant moves by the government are continuing, and, in one dramatic case were actually supported by Cardinal Lustiger of the Catholic Church. After a group of French monks in Algeria were killed by fundamentalists, Lustiger fanned the flames of racism further against France's heavily Muslim immigrant population when he appeared to hold Islam as a whole responsible. This touched off new protests by anti-racist activists.

Within labor itself, a new union federation, Unified and Democratic Solidarity (SUD), has been growing dramatically since the 1995 strikes. SUD takes a strong anti-racist and pro-feminist stance, and its leadership includes a number of people who have been involved in anarcho-syndicalism or Trotskyism.

NEW DISCUSSIONS OF MARXISM

While grass-roots movements continue to emerge, what has remained missing has been a philosophical vision which points beyond the limits of the given state of affairs. Since the 1980s, much of the Left has joined the Right in embracing the fetish of hi-tech, and has celebrated bourgeois democracy and the "free market," all the while moving away not so much from established Communism, but also from Marx, Hegel, and the whole tradition of revolutionary dialectical thought.

In the last three years or so this has begun to change, especially in France. Jacques Derrida published his *Specifiers of Marx* in 1993, and Gilles Deleuze, who died in 1995, had announced that his "next book" would be on Marx. Last September's international Marx conference in Paris drew hundreds more than expected. Surely it is no coincidence that when the mass labor upheavals were once again willing to march alongside labor in challenging the status quo. Still, there was fierce resistance from other intellectuals such as former *Socialisme ou Barbarie* editor Claude Lefort, who opposed the strikes, saying they were out of touch with the new reality of a modern capitalism.

In Germany and the Netherlands too, important debates over Marx and Marxism have taken place. German and Dutch intellectuals have secured continued funding for the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA)—Marx's Collected Works. This project of publishing all of Marx's and Engels' writings, including notebooks such as the *Ethnological Notebooks*, was first conceived in the Soviet Union in the early 1920s, and out of the first MEGA came the first-ever publication of the epochal 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. The first MEGA ground to a halt in the 1930s after Stalin had its editor, David Riazanov, arrested and then executed. Begun again in 1975 with an exclusively Stalinist editorial board in Russia and East Germany, the second MEGA published several dozen volumes until it too was disrupted, this time by the fall of Communism.

Today, a new, more independent group of editors in Amsterdam, Berlin, and Moscow has continued the project, and some new volumes are now to appear. One change since the fall of Communism is that they have moved away from the notion followed by post-Marx Marxists of a near-identity between Marx and Engels.

In Berlin, at the annual "Volks-Uni" (Peoples' University) held each spring, there was an informative public discussion by a MEGA researcher, Rolf Hecker, on the tragic history of this edition in the 1920s and 1930s. Hecker discussed how in the 1920s, Communists and Social Democrats, with the early Frankfurt School as the mediator, cooperated for a period in publishing Marx.

This years Volks-Uni, while smaller than in earlier years, still drew over 1000 people to hear a wide variety of presentations including ones on Chiapas, on fighting racism and sexism, and on labor. A particularly moving presentation was given by Liliane El-Hachemi, an activist who was forced recently to flee Algeria after being placed on the "death list" of the Islamic fundamentalists. While graphically and movingly showing the resistance of Algerian women to what she termed an out-and-out fascist movement, she also critiqued the severe limitations of both the government and the Left on women's issues in the post-independence period. She emphasized the retrogressive 1981 family law, which represented a major step back for women even before the rise of fundamentalism in Algeria.

The Volks-Uni, founded by Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Frigga Haug and others in the aftermath of the 1960s, continues to have a close relationship to *Das Argument*, the Marxist journal they also founded. In 1996 or 1997, Argument Verlag is planning to publish a German edition of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, the first new translation of Dunayevskaya's writings to appear in Europe since 1981. That book will surely add an important new dimension to the current debates over Marxism. Clearly, though we live in retrogressive, reactionary times, many workers and intellectuals are searching for an alternative.

Rage over clearcutting

A battle is raging in the forests of the Northwest. The month of May was replete with protests and occupations against the furious pace of clearcutting on public lands that was set in motion by Congress and President Clinton last summer.

The seeds of protest were planted by the "salvage logging rider" passed by Congress and signed by Clinton last year. It allows the Forest Service to give over national forests to logging while suspending all environmental laws and the public's right to challenge it in court. Attached to a larger bill, the rider has been little reported—as has the clearcutting it gave the green light to.

While the rider's rationale is a "forest health crisis," scientists' testimony backs up the Native Forest Network's claim that Congress's concern is "just the latest excuse to log our native forests," and the real crisis in the forests is one of "excessive logging and roadbuilding, overgrazing, mining and subdivisions."

Vice President Gore has promised to stop bad logging sales, but the administration doesn't use the legal powers it has, even when sales are flagrantly illegal. Many of the sales were previously suspended or withdrawn because they threatened critical habitat.

Since Clinton signed the bill last July, there have been dozens of protests in many states, in which over 1,000 people have been arrested, mostly for "trespassing" in public forests. Police have singled out Native American "trespassers" for especially harsh treatment, harassment and racist epithets.

The protests, in which high school and college students are prominent and small local groups play a key role, mushroomed as clearcut fell old-growth trees from the Olympic National Forest to Mt. Hood. Ancient Forest Week, April 14-21, with over 50 events nationally, peaked at Enola Hill, Oregon, where a Peace Camp was set up to protect this mountain held sacred by some Native Americans. On April 21, 700-1,200 people rallied there, with both Native American and environmentalist speakers.

More actions followed, including a week of protest May 6-11 on Enola Hill and Salvage Hoax Action Week May 10-17 in Montana and Washington. Most actions have been out in the forests, including occupations like the Peace Camp at Warner Creek and the Cultural and Ceremonial Camp on Mt. Hood in Oregon.

Protests have especially dogged the steps of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who gets financial help from the same Pacific Northwest timber companies that Congress gave \$100 million to subsidize clearcutting the taiga forests of Siberia. These rallies have led to the beginnings of informal labor/environmental and rural/urban alliances.

The rage over clearcutting of public forests has reinvigorated traditional environmentalism: the Sierra Club's members voted 2-1 for its most militant position in years, the Zero Cut initiative aimed at totally ending commercial logging in federal forests. Two years ago, Zero Cut was voted down. The Zero Cut Movement intends to follow up with a Zero Cow/Zero Mine/Zero Drill initiative for public lands.

While Zero Cut is seen as a repudiation of compromise and defensiveness, Patricia Mazza reports in "Cascadia Planet," an Internet magazine (www.tnews.com), that it is a movement "born of a vision" of "reconstitut[ing] public lands." It remains to be seen whether the new upsurge will go from opposing corporate exploitation of public lands to opposing the capitalist system that drives boundless ecological destruction, and develop a vision of new human relations that would allow a totally new relationship to nature as well.

—Franklin Dmitryev

Opposing the capitalist system that drives boundless ecological destruction, and developing a vision of new human relations that would allow a totally new relationship to nature as well.

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Editorial

The mighty \$5.15 minimum wage moved a step closer to reality when the U.S. House of Representatives approved it on May 23. Yet this accomplishment by Bill Clinton and the Congressional Democrats can only be viewed as a cynical attempt to take up space barely to the left of the Republican Party in an election year.

Clinton's State of the Union address in January promised to raise the wages of the lowest-paid workers. Yet his supposed commitment to improving workers' lives doesn't square with administration moves to corporatize health care, imprison youth, and press-gang welfare mothers into low-wage jobs.

The Republican Party of "citizen" Robert Dole and Rep. Dick Armey for its part has belatedly acceded to Clinton on this issue only to cut its political losses. Armey, a Neanderthal advocate of abolishing minimum wage laws, led his party in pandering to petty capitalists with his attempt to load the minimum wage bill with amendments to exempt small businesses, establish a probationary period, and to set-up a two-tier structure. Each would give employers a way to avoid paying even a puny \$5.15 an hour to their workers.

A LAUGHABLE MINIMUM

So low is the \$5.15 hourly wage that it represents no gain for minimum wage workers. On the contrary, as much as real income has fallen for blue collar families workers—real wages have fallen 20% since 1979—the real minimum wage has slipped even further.

For the two fifths of minimum wage earners for whom it's their only income, for the one tenth who are the sole

Clinton, Dole minimum wage scam

wage earners of their family, for the one third who are youth, for the one half who are women, and for all the 12 million who stand to get a raise if \$5.15 an hour becomes law—90¢ more an hour will not make up for lost ground and can do little to change their lives.

"I'm really doing a big favor for a big corporation for very little money," dryly explained one retail service worker who cannot get by with \$5.50 an hour, above both the current and the proposed federal minimums. He's not the only worker unhappy doing such favors for capitalists.

Many laborers do not earn even the legal minimum wage: undocumented workers driven further underground by new immigration laws; domestic home-workers, especially apparel makers, who toil in 3.4 million homes across the U.S., sweatshop employees, again many immigrant.

For those working in the regulated economy, a good example is the single mother, recently in the news, who was earning a full-time wage of \$4.25 an hour in Chicago as a home care worker for the elderly. Even with another paycheck from cleaning homes and her son's Social Security benefits, good fortune to her means bringing home \$12,000 a year. Food stamps and chores which reduce her rent don't add much. Earning \$90 more a week would knock down some bills, but not much.

What's a more realistic income? Using the actual expenses of a working family of three, Kathleen Shankman at Northern Illinois University calculated that a real livable income would be \$27,415 a year, or \$13.71 an hour.

KNOWING WHAT'S UNACCEPTABLE

Frustration is growing where the system exploits workers more and more. "Each time I lost a job, I had to start at the bottom and work my way up," the home care worker/house cleaner complained. "And when I get just enough room where I can breathe, that job is phased out and I have to start over again."

The desire to overcome such subjugation most often appears in attempts to get organized. Statistically, union wages are \$150 a week higher than non-union, a fact capitalists and politicians are well aware of. This, along with the need to control working conditions, shows why most workers want an effective union where they work.

Yet, just as Patrick Buchanan and Bill Clinton pretend to pay homage to the frustrations of the working poor, the AFL-CIO's drive for a livable wage rings hollow too. For instead of seeing new resources poured into local union drives, the union rank and file is getting the \$35 million "America Needs A Raise" campaign from the AFL-CIO. It barely conceals its purpose of supporting Democratic candidates, and the proposed drive to "organize the unorganized" is nearly forgotten.

A Chicago meatpacking worker brought home this frustration with the economy and the union bureaucracy: "The minimum raise as Congress is talking about it is not going to do any good. Anyone earning that will have to do a whole lot of overtime to make it. We bring home \$200 to \$300 in a paycheck. People go home saying 'this is a light check.' We get raises, but not cost of living raises. That went out the window in the Local 100 contract some time ago."

SELF-DETERMINATION

The wide gulf between a livable wage and the minimum wage, whatever its official level, only reflects the prime issue in the wage debate: the determination by workers to control their own lives. State and local movements, like that pushing for the Chicago Jobs and Living Wage Ordinance have taken on a life of their own, especially when joined by the homeless.

The Justice For Janitors project has brought new Latino immigrants into the Service Employees union, some 5,000 in Silicon Valley. Their campaign to win an industry-wide union contract erupted in Palo Alto recently where they sat in front of City Hall. Often the militancy of new, often immigrant union members embarrasses

do-nothing union bureaucrats.

In the low-wage bastion of the South USA, the vision of organizing the unorganized remains a legacy of the 1960s freedom struggles. Black women at Delta Pride catfish bargained, after a bitter strike in 1990, for a contract and livable wages not seen in the Mississippi Delta up to then. "A union contract helped us pass the minimum wage," explains one of the women.

But she adds, "What we're earning is just like the minimum wage. In Delta Pride, the money you're making will qualify you for [welfare] and food stamps. And a lot of workers are pulling two jobs." To overcome that kind of life, she sees no separation between organizing the rest of the industry and raising wages in her plant.

Recent news about "economic insecurity" shows that more and more workers think the system is broken and can't be fixed. Their struggles breathe life into the minimum wage debate, well beyond the limits of the politicians.

View from the West Bank

I grew up as a Palestinian on the West Bank under Jordanian rule. During my childhood, hatred towards the Jews was a natural ingredient of daily life. They did not seem to be real people. In fact, until the war of 1967 and the occupation I never saw a Jew with my own eyes.

For me, the big change came in 1972, when I started working in Tel-Aviv and got to know individual Israelis. I learned Hebrew quite easily and kept my eyes and ears open. During the war of October 1973 (when the Israeli Army was caught by surprise and suffered heavily), it was not easy to be an Arab in Tel-Aviv. I felt the hostility from the Jews around me. However, towards the end of that war I noticed that something was changing among them, too: they were starting to view Arabs in a new way.

In 1977 the late President Sadat of Egypt took his historic decision to visit Israel. Sadat and Begin made peace, and it held. Already then I felt it as a terrible mistake that we Palestinians did not join in this move. Our leadership was still too caught up in alliances with the radical Arab regimes.

I got to know a lot of ordinary Israelis, also many from the right wing. I often had debates with them, but I think I succeeded in getting through the message that we have our national identity, that there will be no peace until there are two states for the two peoples.

This was at the time of the Lebanon War. The government wanted to destroy our leadership and crush our people. But I think the result was to prove to the people in Israel that it is not so easy to destroy the Palestinian identity. I was myself in the giant 1982 anti-war rally in Tel-Aviv, and when I looked around me, at so many Israelis demonstrating, I felt that at last the change had started.

The moment of the hand shake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat aroused so many hopes on both sides, among people who had gone through the war, the occupation, the mutual terrorism! But after just a few months, the enemies of peace started acts of violence in order to sabotage this great process. First the Israeli extremists, whose attacks culminated in the Baruch Goldstein slaughter, then the Palestinian extremists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Nevertheless, the Palestinian Authority became a reality.

Meanwhile the Israeli extremists had Rabin murdered, and Hamas started its series of attacks. I saw on TV the place where the bomb exploded in Tel-Aviv. It is very near to the cinema where I worked for 15 years, until the closure. I knew every street corner when I saw it on television. I also know very well how Israelis feel when such terrible things happen.

At the same time, however, we suffered our own ordeal. The Israeli army imprisoned us in our village. During one night the army made a raid and arrested two people in our neighborhood. We had hoped such things would never happen again but, Dura is in the "B" area where Israel still has the right to arrest people, according to Oslo-2. So, during a whole week, I sat every night on my roof and watched out for the soldiers.

The big problem left is the closure. It is more tight than ever. Most of the people here are sitting at home, without work, without income: there are just no jobs for them.

The punishment if you are caught illegally in Israel has also become much more severe; even your employer can go to prison if they catch you at his place. The economic hardship of every household is not easy to describe. If only we could import flour from Jordan; everything costs here ten times more than in other Arab countries. When we have to pay in the shop we are part of the Israeli economy but when we want to work in Israel we are not.

If the Hamas thought that in such a desperate situation they will become more popular, then they made a big miscalculation. Most of the people I know, blame Hamas for the situation more than they blame Israel. We must hold on to the peace process, and not let go. I think that the enemies of peace are no more than 10% on the Israeli side and the same on the Palestinian side. We must not let this minority succeed. We must cooperate, there should be reconciliation and cultural exchange—not just political treaties. It's time to introduce to each other the beautiful aspects of our peoples. The ugly sides have already been shown far too much.

—Naif Alarjib

Naif Alarjib is an unemployed Palestinian worker whose views on Middle East peace were written March 15 from Dura on the West Bank and originally published in *The Other Israel*.

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'Beyond Capital': envisioning a new society

(continued from page 5)

Meszaros' view of Stalinism. He correctly insists that there was nothing socialist about the USSR, since it maintained the exploitative domination of labor by capital. However, he argues that because the "free market" and the old capitalist class were eliminated, it was not state-capitalist. He refers to the USSR as a "postcapitalist capital-producing society."

This definitely colors his entire analysis, for he is thereby introducing a significant time lag between the abolition of capitalism and the abolition of capital. No such time lag, however, was envisioned by Marx. For Marx the abolition of the capitalist by no means implies the abolition of capitalism. That can only occur with the abolition of capital as a universalizing social form. For this reason, in Vol. I of *Capital* Marx said not even the concentration of all capital in the hands of one entity would fundamentally change capitalist production; and in Vol. III he spoke of "capitalist communism."

By skipping over the theory of state-capitalism, Meszaros places all his emphasis on "transition" to the detriment of the critical issue for today—what Marxist-Humanists call the need for "a totally new revolt in which everyone experiences 'absolute liberation.'"

Marxist-Humanism's development of this concept flowed from a creative return to Hegel's concept of absolute negativity. Meszaros, in contrast, explicitly rejects the dialectic of negativity in favor of a "firmer material footing." Herein lies the crux of his limitations. By rejecting Hegel's concept of absolute negativity and skipping over Marx's last decade, Meszaros saws off the

branch he is sitting on, in that he is left with too narrow a philosophic base from which to work out the problem of "what happens after" which so concerns him.

The logic of an idea does take its toll on theory and theoreticians.

* * * * *

Meszaros has nevertheless provided us with an invaluable study. He is quite right to imply that the reason we are facing such an unprecedented political retrogression is that revolutionists have not provided ground for answering the question "what happens after the revolution." And he is quite right that we need to overcome the limitations of post-Marx Marxists which explain this defect.

Yet what is needed in order to achieve this is not so much "a firmer material footing," as much as a firmer philosophic one, as found in the unique contributions of Marxist-Humanism. To achieve this, however, requires penetrating the dialectics of philosophy as an organizational endeavor—a task that remains to be done.

**See "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes" of May 12 and 20, 1953, in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1989), in which Dunayevskaya quotes Hegel: "The pure Idea, in which the determinateness or reality of the Notion is itself raised to the level of Notion, is an absolute liberation, having no further immediate determination which is not equally posited and equally Notion. Consequently there is no transition in this freedom....The transition here therefore must rather be taken to mean that the Idea freely releases itself in absolute self-security and self-repose." (p. 37)

Youth

The maturity of our age

by Maya Jhansi

If you think for a moment that capitalism has a more benevolent face these days, you're wrong. Picture a nine-year-old child in an overcrowded, dusty, grimy factory—working continuously from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., except for the days when she works the night shift until 3 a.m. Do you think this is an outmoded practice from the nineteenth century? It is not. It is a common practice, around the world and yes, including right here in the good old U.S.

We used to think that the so-called "globalization" of capitalism and the rise of hi-tech means that brutal forms of sweated labor are a thing of the past. In fact, child labor is on the rise. The United Nation's International Labor Organization estimates that there are close to 200 million child laborers in the world today, and this excludes the growing number of children sold into prostitution or forced to beg and do odd jobs to help support themselves and their families.

While child labor is nothing new, what does seem to be new today is the growing consciousness and struggle of children and youth against it. Last April, the brutal murder of an outspoken 12-year-old labor activist from Pakistan, Iqbal Masih, brought the struggles of children in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh to world-wide attention. Sold into slavery at the age of four, Iqbal became a leading voice in the struggle against child labor by the time he was ten years old.

FROM SOUTH ASIA TO THE U.S.

In South Asia alone, there are over 60 million child workers. In the carpet industry, one of the region's largest exports, children are cramped together at looms for 14 hours a day, weaving exotic rugs to be sold to the West. Often these children are kidnapped or bought by the carpet factories from desperate parents.

Overall, children in the Third World work in hazardous industries, exposed to toxic fumes and dangerous equipment. Many children suffer from work-related physical ailments such as tuberculosis, stunted growth, and other health problems. A Pakistani landowner expressed the inhuman disregard for children best: "Children are cheaper to run than tractors and smarter than oxen."

Defenders of child labor in the Third World argue that it is imposing Western standards and morals to demand

'Land and Freedom'

"Land and Freedom," a recently released film directed by Ken Loach, an independent Marxist filmmaker from Britain, chronicles the experience of a British volunteer's participation in the failed 1936 Spanish Revolution. What is exciting about the film is that it transcends being a mere history lesson of the Stalinist betrayal of the mass freedom struggle against Francisco Franco's fascist coup.

The film speaks directly to today by giving a vivid warning of the almost inevitable emergence of counter-revolution from within the revolution when the ideals of those fighting for genuine liberation are not worked out.

Loach poignantly stresses this inter-communication between generations by allowing the grandfather to suffer from a fatal heart attack in his Liverpool housing project. After his death, the granddaughter digs through an old box and reads her grandfather's moving letters of how he joined and fought in the Spanish Revolution.

By briefly showing the anarchist symbol and fascist National Front graffiti scrawled on the walls of the housing project, Loach hints that all the contradictions that arose before World War II are still with us today.

The film flashes back to David, the grandfather, as a young unemployed worker and a member of the Communist Party who is determined to go to Spain to stop the spread of fascism. Once in Spain he is placed in an English-speaking international militia of women and men that is led by the POUM, a socialist group in the Spanish Popular Front.

At first he is disappointed not to be able to work directly with the Communists, which he views as the truly revolutionary party. And yet as his involvement deepens, and his militia liberates a town from fascist domination, he witnesses how the landless peasants are determined to collectivize the land immediately to take the revolution further than the Popular Front Government wants.

Even within his militia, tensions grow and factions form over the meaning of freedom and how to attain it. It is the American pragmatist character who foreshadows the final disastrous betrayal. This pragmatism is what pulled on the thinking of genuine revolutionaries and even pulled anarchists into working with a so-called alliance with the Stalinist state power.

The weapons supplied by Russia, which the Popular Front had to pay for in gold, came at an even heavier price: under the guise of creating a "professional army," Stalin was able to crush the revolution from within. The film depicts the counter-revolutionary nature of the Stalinist power grab very concretely in its early stages. The first freedom fighters to be disarmed are the women. The anti-feminism of the bureaucrats is exposed when the women, who are shown to be the most idealistic, militant and self-disciplined fighters, are demoted to nurses and cooks in the name of "professionalism."

This film comes at just the right time and reminds us of the importance of a generation of comrades who were the first, if perhaps a little too late to save revolutionary Spain, to fully recognize the state-capitalist counter-revolutionary nature of Stalin's Russia.

—Jim Guthrie

an end to child labor—a convenient argument for the capitalist. A very considerate spokesman for Disney Consumer Products, which exploits children all over Asia, was recently quoted as saying; "You can't completely impose Western perceptions on these nations. That shows a lack of respect."

But, what's worse is that the attitude that child labor is some inhuman practice indigenous to the Third World is shared by even those humanitarians fighting against it, activists who separate child labor abroad from the growing problem of child labor in the West.

Far from child labor being a phenomenon of the so-called "backward" Third World, it is endemic to the West and to the influence of Western capitalism around the world. In India, for example, child labor in the carpet industry has tripled since the 1980s with its growth as an export-oriented industry. As Kailash Satyarthi, head of the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, a coalition of 50 organizations working on child rights, told the Multinational Monitor: "In recent years there has been a tremendous growth in child servitude...There is a very clear correlation between the growth of the industry and the number of child laborers."

Bourgeois economists are noting the rise in child labor violations in the U.S. as well, proving that brutal child labor is not a "stage" that capitalism moves through before it becomes more humane. In 1992, the Labor Department reported 19,443 violations, twice the 1980 level. This is not to mention the flagrant (but supposedly hidden) practices of the U.S. garment industry in employing children starting at age 7 at minuscule, sometimes non-existent, wages; migrant children who work on farms from the age of 3; or children hired to do odd jobs like selling candy door-to-door at substandard wages and in dangerous conditions.

YOUTH IDEALISM WORLDWIDE

Children all over the world are not accepting these inhuman conditions passively, however. In the face of vicious threats of retribution, thousands of children have become outspoken activists for social change. Iqbal Masih's voice was an important one, and his work succeeded in closing down dozens of Pakistani carpet factories.

Iqbal's courage and vision sparked the imagination of another young fellow across the Atlantic, Craig Kielburger, a 13-year-old Canadian who started a group called Free the Children, made up of kids his age. When Craig visited Asia and Iqbal's unmarked grave, he decided that "the only thing that really matters now is to carry on his work."

The world has a lot to learn from these courageous youth. Craig perhaps said it best in a recent interview on "60 Minutes": "I believe that young people when speaking out have a lot of power. One of the best things about being young is that we still have our imagination. We still think we can fly. We still think we can go to the moon."

It is this kind of idealism and not the phony humanitarianism of politicians that this world needs more of. Child labor is a brutal reality organic to this capitalist world. Envisioning a better life, a new kind of society, is an imperative and a responsibility demanded by this growing generation of child activists.

Youth in Revolt

by Kevin Michaels



Seven graduating Barnard College students who showed solidarity with striking clerical employees had their diplomas withheld by the school's administration. The students took part in a sit-in with Barnard's clerical employees; who are striking over the issue of health insurance premiums. Administrators say that the diplomas will not be released until disciplinary proceedings have run their course.

The All Burma Students' Democratic Front has undertaken a boycott of Pepsi products, as part of their activity against the current repressive regime. Pepsi recently completed an agreement with the Burmese government for a joint bottling and marketing deal.

Efforts by the University of North Carolina to privatize its housekeeping services have been stymied by workers and students protesting together. Demonstrations both in Chapel Hill and Raleigh by the U.N.C. Housekeepers Association and the Coalition for Economic Justice, a student group, have forced the Board of Governors to back off from a move to replace its current work force with low-wage contractors.

Youth celebrate gang truce

South Central Los Angeles—The Gang Truce in Watts was celebrated on April 27 at Will Rogers Park at 103rd Street and Central Avenue. The event was a march and rally with a turnout of about 250 to 300 people. The crowd was Black and Latino as well as a few politically active whites. Overall the majority of the participants and speakers at the five hour event were youth.

Many different gang sets were represented on the stage including Bloods, Crips and Latino cholos. The Blackstone Rangers, a Chicago gang with an affiliation in L.A., came out from Chicago to show their respect for the truce.

Some of the Latino gangs present represent an attempt to end a bloody race war raging between Black and Brown such as in Venice, Cal., where many have died, assumed by many to be a drug war. The war has basically been stopped by a truce involving the three main housing projects in Watts, the truce involving Nickerson Gardens, Jordan Downs, Imperial Courts.

As the race war has intensified within the prison system, the rally of April 27 was a glimmer of light in the attempt to end this deadly warfare provoked by the prison guards in their role for the system. In a particularly violent month of February, 145 prisoners were injured during one week at Wayside County Jail during battles between Black and Latino inmates.

I felt that the creative energy that went toward the fourth anniversary of the Gang Truce was important; in a sense many felt "the greatness" of the moment but were not sure where history may be going or taking us. A Black woman at the event spoke in relationship to the overpowering retrogressive reality: "But I don't let reality overpower my thinking, I feel the Mind/Spirit is stronger. What you see going on around you can be changed by thought, you see Bosnia is reality not just for them, but also for us."

One Latino youth spoke from the stage on the importance of the L.A. Gang Truce: "The events that we are participating in today have had world-wide repercussions. The Gang Truce in Watts inspired and impacted a gang truce in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil."

In my neighborhood, a section of Watts (the gang set represented is not directly involved in the Gang Truce), three have been killed within the last month and last week one was shot on my street but lived; so the truce where it exists is history-in-the making for many and cannot be shortchanged. Even though the voice from the streets may not hold all the answers like a total philosophy of freedom, a growth in thought must take place among the masses in order to reach Freedom.

—Gene Ford

Haitian odysseys

Edwidge Danticat, Krik? Krak! (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

Imagine you are a young man, a political refugee, escaping Port-au-Prince and the brutal military regime there. You are in a small, leaky boat on the vast Atlantic Ocean. Lost and hungry, you and 36 others drift helplessly in choppy seas. Haiti is a memory and Miami is only a mirage. You may never see your loved ones again; you may never see land again!

That is the opening scene from "Children of the Sea," one of nine short stories by Edwidge Danticat, a young Haitian-American woman writer. The stories are from her new work of fiction, *Krik? Krak!*

The title, *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat borrows from Haitian storytelling tradition. In Haiti when a storyteller asks "Krik?" the listeners answer "Krak!" This call and response ritual begins a story.

But the vibrant heritage of peasant storytelling is not all Danticat brings from Haiti. She also draws from the rich legacy of peasant and working-class struggles for freedom. The Haitian people's historic struggles for dignity serve as a quilt. And each tale is a pattern sewn on top with the threads of her characters' lives. From Boukman to Lavalas, she interweaves history and the dialectic of struggle.

We can see this in "Children of the Sea." By reading the letters of two young lovers—the man at sea and the woman still in Port-au-Prince—the layers of their lives and their love for each other are poetically peeled away. Yet, their story also reveals the tragic demise of the Lavalas movement and the barbaric retribution of the counter-revolution. From this, we see, we understand, the circumstances that drove so many Haitians to become "boat people."

Or take "Nineteen Thirty-Seven." It is the story of a mother and her daughter. The mother, falsely put in prison for witchcraft, is visited by her daughter, who was born on the same day her grandmother was butchered by Generalissimo Trujillo's soldiers at a river dividing Haiti and "that other country whose name [her] mother can't say." The mother fights quietly to retain her dignity in prison. She also passes on to her daughter a legacy of strength and historical memory. Here, Danticat retells a part of the sad saga of the massacre of thousands of Haitian peasants in the Dominican Republic.

What is so interesting about *Krik? Krak!* though is that Danticat has placed her stories in the social context of "after the revolution has failed." This thread runs through each tale. The characters must deal with the lost revolution in their daily lives. We see its impact on ordinary people and we empathize with them. It pairs and hopelessness overwhelm her characters. It makes the overall feelings to her stories sad and lamentable.

But at the same time she shows the strength and courage of Haitian people. They are not just a voiceless Black mass, the "Wretched of the Sea." They are individuals. They are humans who reason.

—Robert Reed

Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Three different elections—India, Israel and Russia—have an influence on events reaching beyond each nation's boundaries. In future issues *News & Letters* will analyze these in greater depth; for now, it is important to give a brief summary of all three.

Indian politics in disarray

The parliamentary victory of the rabidly right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lasted only 13 days. Winning with barely one-third of the votes cast, the BJP's Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, had to resign when faced with dual opposition from the two other major contenders: the scandal-ridden and totally discredited Congress Party, and the United Front (UF), a coalition of leftist, centrist and regional parties.

After much maneuvering, the UF decided on H.D. Deve Gowda to head a new government. The brief ascendancy of the BJP, and the ultimate rise of the UF, were both predicated on climbing over the rubble of Congress, which had ruled nearly without interruption since India's independence from British colonialism in 1947. The UF was able to head a new government only with support from Congress, with which they have little in common except opposition to a BJP government.

The rapid parliamentary defeat of the BJP is no cause for celebration. More ominous is the party's rapid growth through espousing a retrogressive nationalist and religious fundamentalist ideology. Even without full state power, BJP became infamous for generating an anti-Muslim frenzy among Hindus five years ago, in which thousands were killed. Vajpayee is open about his long time membership in the R.S.S., a neo-fascist secret organization steeped in returning India to a pre-Muslim Hindu "motherland."

The BJP also calls for an openly nuclear-armed India (this directed mainly towards Pakistan), the curtailment of civil rights and protections for the Muslim minority, increased military repression in Kashmir. In the economic sphere, the BJP demands greater national control over foreign capital investment, protectionism for Indian state-capitalism, and promotion of the pre-colonial economic "self-sufficiency" ethos.

While the Indian economy grew at a vigorous rate after "free market" reforms were introduced by Congress five years ago, the results have exacerbated the hardships of life for the vast majority of Indians, who deserted Congress in droves. Many turned to the parties which now form the United Front, including parties which support the interests and rights of those on the bottom of India's oppressive, patriarchal caste-ridden society.

The multi-party United Front (called the National Front-Left Front during the election campaign) gained support from those who opposed both BJP and Congress. The question now, in the limited breathing space afforded by the defeat of both those parties, is what ideas will speak to the new human forces who want to change India and their own lives.

Israel moves to the Right

The razor thin victory of Benjamin Netanyahu over Shimon Peres says more about the similarities than the

differences between Likud, which exploited the issue of "security" during the campaign, and Labor, which did the same thing in terms of the "peace process" with Palestinians. When the election rhetoric is peeled off, the "peace process" itself and the current status of Palestinians shows how like-minded are Israel's rulers.

Since a series of terrorist attacks within Israel three months ago, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have lived in a virtual prison "lock down" which lasted for the duration of the election campaign. This amounted to a massive layoff, since many Palestinian workers rely on jobs inside Israel—a layoff administered by the "peace process" Labor government.

The Rabin-Labor government, followed by Peres after Rabin was assassinated by a far right extremist Jew, doled out "autonomy" in minuscule increments. This autonomy has meant little on the practical level for any except Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. Israel has maintained control over the West Bank infrastructure, especially roads and water rights. It has also left intact the rabidly fundamentalist settlers on the West Bank and in the Arab sections of Jerusalem.

The most damning step in the "peace process" occurred during the Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon in April, when an Israeli artillery shell killed over 100 civilians at the Qana refugee area. At least 400,000 new refugees were driven from the area by the Israeli bombardment which was designed to depopulate the region and make northern Israel "secure."

While anti-freedom religious fundamentalists within the Palestinian movement have used the tactic of civilian deaths within Israel to further their agenda, the Palestinian Authority headed by Arafat increasingly has exhibited its authoritarianism in repressing even the mildest internal opposition, and in following the wishes of the Israeli military.

The case of Dr. Eyad Sarraj, a Gaza doctor and psychiatrist who was arrested by Arafat's police, has been chronicled in the *New York Times*. Sarraj was arrested for making critical comments about the Palestinian Authority becoming an organization dedicated to its own security and perpetuation, using surveillance, torture and jailings.

But Sarraj's larger criticism was directed towards the hollowness of the "peace process" itself: "The kind of peace we have now is a total psychological surrender. It is far more damaging to the self than fighting a war." There is no doubt that in relations and dealings with Palestinians, Likud will be different than Labor was. But it is a difference in "degree," not in "kind."

Upcoming vote in Russia

The upcoming June 16 election in Russia has served to bring ominous developments to center stage. Although Boris Yeltsin made a grandstand play to put a cease-fire in place in Chechnya only weeks before the election—first meeting the Chechen leader Yandarbiyev in Moscow, and then flying in secret to a secure military post in Chechnya—the past record of such words and deeds has been worthless.

The March so-called halt to Russian military offensives was followed by some of the worst bombing and shelling in the war, specifically targeting the civilian population in schools, hospitals and mosques. Whether or not Russian military leaders are openly defying Yeltsin, or Yeltsin is simply lying opportunistically with hopes of

winning the election by denying the war still goes on, it is the Chechen people who are being killed—over 35,000 since Russia attacked in 1994.

Yeltsin is also saddled with the scourge of his "free market" reforms which have enriched a small elite and spread ever wider circles of corruption and crime. The



Despite the so-called cease-fire, a Russian soldier detained a Chechen civilian, June 2.

majority of Russians have been thrown out of work, or if still working, have been paid little or nothing. Yeltsin's dependence on foreign capital, especially the IMF, and the backing which the Clinton administration has bestowed, make him a prize target for his main opposition.

Yeltsin is running against a resurrected Communist Party, led by Gennadi Zyuganov, which has forged an alliance with Russian nationalists as reactionary as the Communists. One of the prime builders of this alliance is Aleksandr Prokhanov, an avowed anti-Semitic Russian nationalist reactionary, and advisor to Zyuganov. Zyuganov himself is an unapologetic admirer of Stalin, writing that Stalin died too soon: "Stalin needed five to seven more years to make his ideological perestroika irreversible and insure the revival of the groundlessly interrupted spiritual and statist tradition of Russia."

The election is of great concern because of the likelihood that a victory by the Communist-nationalist "Red-Brown" alliance will push Russia back toward its totalitarian past, and return the world to the global frictions characteristic of the Cold War.

Despite his obvious differences with Zyuganov, Yeltsin has moved much closer to his position by advocating continuation of his genocidal war against Chechnya. What underlines this move to a reassertive statism is the profound social instability and malaise being exacerbated by the introduction of "free market" economic reforms. No matter who wins the election, the Russian masses will confront a ruling class determined to strengthen the power of the authoritarian state at their expense.

No surrender in East Timor

Chicago—East Timor's foreign minister in exile, Jose Ramos Horta, visited the campus of Northwestern University on May 9 as part of a nationwide tour organized by the East Timor Action Network. Ramos Horta left his native island three days before its invasion by Indonesia in 1975 and has been active since then in representing the struggle of the East Timorese people for national self-determination to the world at large.

Ramos Horta began by underscoring the brutal nature of the ongoing occupation—only a few days before the talk, five students were killed by Indonesian troops for taking part in a demonstration against bus fare increases. He then went on to discuss the world political climate in which the Indonesian invasion took place, and the "organized international hypocrisy" which has confronted East Timorese aspirations for freedom since.

The proposal put forward by Ramos Horta for an end to the occupation is a fairly modest one comprising three stages. The first is the complete removal of Indonesian troops from the country and the demobilization of the small remaining guerrilla force in the countryside. The second is the stationing of UN specialized agencies to oversee elections for local representative officials. Only after these two stages are completed would the third discussion of the ultimate status of the territory, then take place.

Indonesia remains intransigent, but the resistance which "followed the people out of the mountains" after army resettlement campaigns, has taken on new, mass forms of nonviolent self-activity. "Our people will never surrender," Ramos Horta said.

The Saturday after the talk at Northwestern, Ramos Horta traveled to Charleston, Ill. with East Timor Action Network activists to speak at a press conference publicizing the lockout of workers going on at the Trailmobile plant there. Trailmobile is owned by the Gemala Group, a conglomerate with close ties to the Indonesian military.

—Kevin Michael

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 in 1957. Charles Denby (1907-83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works *Marxism and Freedom...from 1776 until Today* (1958); *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa. These works challenge post-Marx Marxists to return to Marx's Marxism.

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

rooted in her rediscovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a "new Humanism" and in her 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.

Coming in July N&L...

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