

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Fighting in the shadow of slavery



by S. Hamer

Workers in the South have been struggling for more than 200 years, from the backbreaking labor of the cotton fields to the noise and dangers of the factories. We have been trying to overcome the inhuman treatment of the racist landowners and bosses. We have been hoping to find an answer to the question: how can we find total freedom instead of this destructive capitalist society?

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was the beginning of the hope that we could banish out a hatred so deep in America. It seemed as if it was within our reach to change this society. But it didn't fully happen. And now, when we are about to enter the 21st century, it seems like the conditions for many Southern workers are heading back toward the 19th century. There is still a shadow of slave labor, a shadow of sharecropping, a shadow of prison labor over all of us.

LIVING WITH LEGEND OF 1960s

Why didn't the movement of the 1960s go on to total freedom? Many people say that the answer is the power of capitalism, the power of the state. I live in Mississippi. I know the power of corporations and the power of the state. They go hand in hand in Mississippi; both are together in keeping workers down.

But that isn't the only reason the movements of the 1960s didn't go through to total freedom. I believe that part of the reason is that the Idea of Freedom needs to go deeper than where the movement has taken it up to now. There are no more shackles around our ankles; the chains which bind us are mental chains.

Sometimes in a great struggle, like a strike, we can take big steps climbing up the ladder to understanding the Idea of Freedom and being able to tell others about

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Black World

40 years since Fanon's Dying Colonialism



by Lou Turner

It's been 40 years since Frantz Fanon's second and perhaps least examined work, *A Dying Colonialism*, was published and immediately banned by France's colonial-imperialist government of Charles de Gaulle. Recently, I shared a panel in Philadelphia at the African Studies Association Conference and the following day, in New York, at a Columbia University African Institute round-table with scholars discussing the significance of this most dialectical work on the Algerian Revolution.

Dying at the all-too-early age of 36, in December 1961, Fanon didn't live to see Algeria gain its independence, nor to witness its incompleteness regress into the fratricidal violence that presently engulfs it. The fate of such Third World revolutions was the subject of Fanon's last and greatest work on the dialectics of revolution, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

The one exception to the judgment that *A Dying Colonialism* is Fanon's least studied work is the book's first chapter, "Algeria Unveiled," on women in the revolution. At the other end of Fanon's book, which he originally titled "The Fifth Year of the Revolution" in homage to Karl Marx's *18th Brumaire*, the last chapter of *A Dying Colonialism* on the Minorities Question has received scant attention. And yet, in today's world of faddish multiculturalism, crises of multiethnic democracy and identity politics, let alone the near daily savagery of "ethnic cleansings," this overlooked chapter leaves no doubt as to Fanon's continuing significance.

In fact, what Fanon means by "minority" is political minority. He had written three sharply critical articles at the end of 1957 for the Algerian journal, *El Moudjahid*, on "French Intellectuals and Democrats and the Algerian Revolution." In them he takes the French Left to task for blackmailing the liberation movement regarding its conduct of the revolution. A year or so later, in *A Dying Colonialism*, his attitude is considerably changed.

The National Liberation Front (FLN) of the Algerian Revolution had, as had its nationalist predecessors,

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Welfare 'reform' deepens poverty, stirs resistance

by Anne Jaclard

What is the state of the poor in the U.S., three years after Bill Clinton joined with Republicans to dismantle the welfare system? It had provided a safety net, at least for most mothers with young children. A draconian new system is causing poverty to deepen, even though the growing economy has gobbled up some welfare-leavers into low-wage jobs. People who are trying to get or retain public assistance face enormous obstacles. While there have not been mass strikes or uprisings against the cuts, welfare rights groups are growing and fighting back.

New York City rocked with singing, stomping and hand waving during the final leg and rally of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign's "March of the Americas." Nov. 1. Participants ended their 32-day walk from Washington, D.C. to the United Nations by demanding enforcement of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights' guarantees of a living wage, food, education, health care and housing for all. It was truly a "March of the Americas," with participants from Canadian and Latin American poor people's organizations, as well as welfare rights, workers, homeless, community and deaf groups from all over the U.S. and some from Europe. About 100 people, speaking 11 languages, marched the whole 400 miles.

The march and other multi-organizational national demonstrations challenge the dominant ideology's acceptance of poverty. One former welfare recipient told us, "We are at a serious crossroads in human history, symbolized by the extreme gap between the haves and the have nots. At the March of the Americas, people were bringing their case before the court of justice."

WELFARE REFORM = WELFARE REPEAL

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 did not reform welfare so much as repeal and deform it. The law eliminated many kinds of grants, placed life-time time limits on receiving assistance, and mandated workfare for everyone—New York



March of the Americas activists at the Philadelphia rally.

City is starting to require it from recipients who are HIV-positive, as well as the disabled.

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As We Go To Press

Battles in Seattle

As we go to press, mass demonstrations of trade unionists, environmentalists and youth opposed to the unchecked power of the World Trade Organization (WTO) prevented its Third Ministerial Meeting from opening in Seattle, Wash. on Nov. 30.

The authoritarian crackdown of the Seattle police force on peaceful marchers in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle as they demonstrated in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal on the second day of the WTO protests (Dec. 1) has joined the two struggles.

Look for our full coverage and analysis of these and other developments surrounding the historic battle in Seattle in our Jan.-Feb. 2000 issue.

After East Timor, Aceh demands independence

Two million people came to Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, Nov. 8 to demonstrate in favor of a referendum on Aceh's independence from Indonesia. Following a statement by Abdurrahman Wahid, the new president of Indonesia, that he agreed in principle that Aceh deserved a referendum, nearly half the entire population of 4.3 million turned out to demand that a referendum be scheduled by Dec. 4. If it is not scheduled and held soon, student leaders say they will hold it themselves, no matter—"we are prepared to die."

Before now, little was heard internationally about Aceh—it is the northwestern tip of Indonesia, on the island of Sumatra—but it has a long history of Indonesian military repression and a short, new history of civilian mobilization.

Aceh was an independent country for centuries. From 1873 to 1942, it was at war with the Dutch, who colonized most of Indonesia. Occupied by the Japanese during World War II, it then continued to resist colonization, but the U.N. added Aceh to Indonesia when that state was created. Aceh initially supported the popular government of Sukarno, who promised it some autonomy, but he betrayed his promise. Aceh then suffered under the 32 years of Suharto's dictatorship, especially 1988-98, when it was designated a military enclave in order to combat the guerrilla independence force.

This year, the student movement combined with workers', farmers', women's, religious, ethnic and community organizations to build the demand for a referendum. Within two months after a student conference in February, the demand appeared on banners and graffiti in the streets of every village.

Just three months ago, Indonesia allowed such a referendum in East Timor, and when the population voted overwhelmingly against remaining a part of Indonesia, the military slaughtered thousands of people. The Acehnese understand very well that this can happen to them—in the past 10 years, the Indonesian army has inflicted almost 3,000 deaths, 2,800 disappearances, 4,663 tortured, 186 rapes and sexual assaults, and created 90,000 refugees in Aceh.

News & Letters interviewed a leading student activist, 22-year old Aguswandi, who visited New York after receiving a rash of death threats at home. Just before the Nov.

8 demonstration, he told us:

People outside of Aceh don't understand the extent of the grassroots movement there. They may have heard of the "Free Aceh" (guerrilla) movement, but the largest movement is that of civil society. The whole population is resisting the government of Indonesia. The motor of the movement is the pro-democracy groups: students, those Muslim clerics who are close to the people, intellectuals, and others. They are carrying out an unarmed movement. Their first target is to get a referendum on whether to remain a part of Indonesia or become independent. Whichever wins, the referendum must free Aceh from repression. We want the brutal activities of the army stopped, and the army out of Aceh. Another goal is to investigate human rights abuses and bring the perpetrators before an international tribunal. The civilian movement supports democracy and peaceful change.

My organization is Student Solidarity for the People, called SMUR. We are university students who do community organizing, helping grassroots groups that are resisting the military. One is called Victims of Military Cruelty. Others are composed of farmers, laborers, traditional (tribal) organizations, public transport drivers (of bicycles), middle and high school students.

We started holding community meetings. People were scared to participate in actions, but we told them the students couldn't solve the problem alone. The killing and kidnapping is still going on, so the villagers know they can't trust the government. SMUR planted ideas about how to fight peacefully by organizing the farmers, workers, everyone. The groups grew and reached every part of society. The ideas of what to do came from the villagers themselves. That made people radical and involved. Almost

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Poor women 'Making Ends Meet'

During the past 20 years, the prevailing social belief that people on welfare are responsible for their own problems has become more and more entrenched, to the point that "welfare reform" forces poor single parents into work without addressing the availability of decent-paying jobs or what else parents need to adequately raise their children. So pervasive is the myth that all social ills of poverty will be solved by making mothers work that there is little research on how poor single parents survive. *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*, by Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein (1997, Russell Sage Foundation), a study of 214 mothers who were either "wage-reliant" or "welfare-reliant" in 1991, is unusual in several important ways.

- The investigators selected their participants through trusted intermediaries within their communities. The standard "scientific" method — an impersonal random sample — did not yield mothers willing to reveal their sources of support to strangers, academic credentials notwithstanding.
- They designed the study to emphasize comprehensive interviews with mothers who had a good understanding of their lives.
- They recognize that the demands of good parenting motivated the survival strategies used by the mothers, who avoided activities that would have generated negative role models for their children.
- They demonstrate beyond doubt how the welfare and low-wage economy prevents people from "getting ahead."

One mother's story dramatizes this: She had worked for ten years and was a payroll supervisor earning \$8.00 per hour, when a new company came in and cut her pay to \$6.00. She had just bought a small house through a special HUD program. To keep it, she had to take a second job evenings and weekends. Her 14-year-old daughter began shoplifting, having unprotected sex and was truant from school. Mom tried to find a better-paying job so she could devote more time to her daughter, but after six months, 100 applications and several dozen interviews, she was unable to do so. Two years later, the daughter had dropped out of high school and had a child of her own.

Over half the families received financial help from the fathers or father-figures of the children. This reveals that "absent fathers" were absent and irresponsible only part of the time, and often because of the same economic constraints of low-wage and transitory jobs — or prison sentences — that the mothers confronted. It was also clear from the data that the "reforms" which permit a state to recapture its welfare costs from "deadbeat dads" only further burdens the families, because the man has that much less to provide directly to them. And criminalizing a father for back child support does not help him develop a marketable resume.

Daisy Bates remembered

When Daisy Bates died at the age of 84 in Little Rock, Ark., on Nov. 4, the world lost a powerful voice for freedom. At the same time that the nine African Americans, who in 1957 integrated Little Rock's Central High School, received from Clinton's hand the Congressional Gold Medal for "selfless heroism" in the face of racial violence, Daisy Bates — whose determination to bring quality education to Black children brought the "Little Rock Nine" together and helped them endure a year of hell — was buried.

Daisy Bates' work with the Little Rock Nine by no means exhausts her lifelong activism. Following in the footsteps of Ida B. Wells Barnett — who used her journalistic skills to expose the real nature and extent of the lynching of Blacks — Bates combined her activism against racism and her vision of a freer future in her work with *The Arkansas State Press*, a paper founded by her husband, the journalist Lucius Christopher Bates in 1941, the year before they married.

During the 18 years they worked on the press, it became "the largest and most influential Black paper in the state" because it was fearless in taking on police brutality, segregation, and the racism in the criminal (in)justice system. When, in 1942, the Bates' reported the horrible details of the murder of a Black soldier by a Little Rock cop, the white advertisers boycotted *The State Press*. In response to the merchants' demand that the paper stop reporting on racist events, the Bates' responded: "where the Negro interests were involved, there would be no compromise."

The press almost went under, but by working 16-hour days L.C. and Daisy Bates built up the circulation to 20,000. *The State Press* became known as "the voice of the people."

The work on *The State Press* led to Ms. Bates being chosen as president of the Arkansas state conference of the NAACP in 1952. From this position she led the campaign to integrate Little Rock schools. Daisy Bates put up with bricks through her windows, burning crosses on her lawn, death threats, arrest, harassment and the eventual closing of *The State Press* (which she restarted in 1984).

There is no danger that Daisy Bates will be forgotten. Over 700 people were at her funeral. But she was never interested in fame. What gives meaning to her death is our commitment to fight for a new human society. The struggle continues.

—Terry Moon

The authors conclude that unless the labor-market problem of too few living-wage jobs is corrected "welfare reform" can only create massive economic misery. They also predict that reduced time for good parenting will prove far more costly than welfare and will be felt for generations to come.

I am sure they are right. But we cannot look for any solutions in improving the labor market when in the entire world-wide system of capitalist production, machinery and automatic processes are steadily replacing workers and creating greater numbers of people in every economic sector who have no jobs, let alone living-wage jobs.

Making Ends Meet does not discuss possible solutions. But by presenting the ingenuity, creativity, and humanity of single mothers, it can help develop a notion of these same mothers as powerful agents who, understanding the capitalist system, when organized and allied with other forces in society, especially unionized labor and prisoner labor, could find ways to create a revolution in society that would be centered on humanity instead of on capitalist production.

—Susan Van Gelder

'Creating Change' conference

Oakland, Cal. — The twelfth annual Creating Change conference was held here this past November, bringing together over 2,500 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (lgbt) activists and thinkers from across the USA, from the 87-year old Harry Hay to homeless transgender youth. But for all the exhilaration of the event, the pull of retrogression was felt: workshops on spirituality were plentiful, while the word revolution was barely spoken.

The locus for radical organizing and thought, at the moment, is among those who are opposed to the so-called "Millennium March on Washington." This event, scheduled for April 30, has been organized by the Human Rights Campaign (a national gay/lesbian rights organization) and the Metropolitan Community Church (a gay/lesbian evangelical Christian church) without any grassroots participation. Furthermore, the organizers announced a thoroughly assimilationist theme of "Faith and Family!"

Opposition to the Millennium March has been voiced among members of the Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Process. The two meetings which they held featured strong critiques, by Black lesbians in particular, of capitalism's effects on the lgbt community. Black lesbian author Jewelle Gomez warned that lgbt visibility should not simply be translated into becoming a niche market. She challenged each of us to stay close to activism, and to resist the pull towards the corridors of power.

Mandy Carter — a southern Black lesbian who publicly resigned from the Human Rights Campaign when they endorsed misogynist, anti-immigrant senator Al D'Amato last year — spoke of the queer movement at a crossroads. Vowing "no more business as usual," she called for a "reality check on principles and values" around issues of race and class. A young Black lesbian from Washington, D.C., Carmen, reminded us that queer youth are coming out at younger and younger ages, and they "want to come out into something real," not into a replica of the mainstream society that oppresses them.

Queer homeless youth held a powerful session, which projected an indictment of the family. Many queer youth are homeless because their parents kick them out of the house if they dare to come out. But Christian, one of the youths, pointed out that youth are also rejecting the traditional household when they prefer the streets to a cruel home. The youth were united in their critique of the police: "Nothing can be done through the police; it doesn't matter how much 'sensitivity' training they've had, they don't like queer youth," Christian said. As if to underline this theme, the conference security had harassed the youth who were speaking on this panel. The security guard went up to the three homeless youth, and said "Get out, we're having a conference here!" to which one of them replied "We're the next act!" They were then told to keep quiet, though they had not been making any noise!

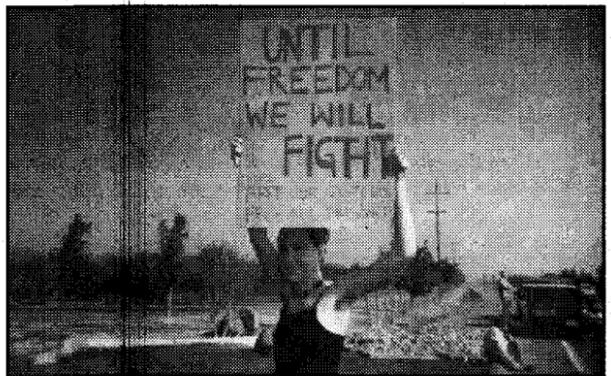
An even more serious incident occurred early Saturday morning in the streets of Oakland. A young Black transgender woman and Oakland resident was the victim of a hate crime, suffering stab wounds to her hand. When police arrived, one officer was contemptuous of her gender status, and complained about it being "too much paper work" to notate. When conference participants heard about this, they organized a march to Oakland police headquarters Saturday afternoon. Fifteen hundred people marched, chanting "Gender rights are human rights" and "We're not paper work, we are people." The march got the attention of the police and the mayor, but also revealed the contradictions of the conference: many of the youth and transgender organizers were not fully acknowledged, and the leadership of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), the organization which sponsors the conference) made themselves highly visible. But there was still tremendous power in having the conference participants stand as one for transgender rights — a subject that many shied away from in the past.

—Jennifer Pen

Protest at women's prison

Chowchilla, Cal. — About a hundred of us from California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), California Prison Focus, Women's Positive Legal Action Network (Women's PLAN) and other organizations demonstrated here Nov. 13 outside the two largest prisons for women in the world. We demand a stop to the murder of women prisoners.

We in the CCWP have been fighting the media silence about women prisoners, exposing conditions in California women's prisons in our publication *The Fire*



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Inside, and holding this demonstration annually for the last five years. The recent "Nightline" series about one of those prisons, Valley State Prison for Women, brought much needed attention to some of these conditions. And there was more media covering this year's demonstrations.

Yet, partly because the media ban prevents the press from talking to particular prisoners who have stories to tell, Ted Koppel did not capture the tale of systematic abuse in this prison. Cynthia Chandler, the director of Women's PLAN, spoke about Rosemary Willeby, an HIV-positive woman who was also infected with Hepatitis C.

Anyone familiar with these conditions, which are epidemic in prisons, would know that they put the liver under severe stress. Yet the prison doctor canceled Rosemary's HIV medications and, without so much as a tuberculosis test, put her on heavy doses of TB medications which are known to be extremely liver-toxic! Rosemary died on Oct. 22 from liver failure. She is at least the thirteenth to have died this year and the fifth since the beginning of September.

The importance of bringing attention to health care abuse was underscored by Toni who was just released from VSPW at 9:30 that morning. She came back to participate in the demonstration "to stand for all the girls in there." She said, "Girls are dying in there. You guys are a blessing." This solidarity between the women inside and outside is one way to break down the prison walls and create a more human society.

—Urszula Wislanka

Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

Over 27,500 public sector nurses struck in Ireland in October after the government refused to seriously address their demands for better pay and conditions — including improved compensation for long-term service and increased staffing — after a decade of cutbacks and low pay in the hospitals. The nurses, who provided emergency services without pay during the strike, held one of Dublin's largest strike marches. The strike also challenged the government's policy of suppressing wages despite Ireland's current economic boom.

—Mary Holmes

Students at the University of Michigan rallied in November to protest the sale of T-shirts boasting the slogan: "Freshman girls — get 'em while they're skinny." "There is so much societal pressure for women to be thin already, we don't need anymore," said graduate student, Michelle Bolek, founder of the Students Promoting Eating Disorder Education Awareness and Knowledge. U. of M. juniors Matt Berkowitz and Rob Gillman, the shirts' creators, called them "harmless" as they pocketed more than \$3,000 from the 330 pigs who bought them.

Black Women for Wellness sponsored a conference in Los Angeles in November addressing "Birth Stories: Black Infant Mortality, Closing the Gap," and attacking the "national travesty of Black infant health." California Department of Health statistics reveal that the infant mortality rate for Black babies is more than twice that of whites. Nationally, the maternal mortality rate (the number of women who die in childbirth or shortly thereafter) is close to three times greater for Black women.

Free Flora Brovina!

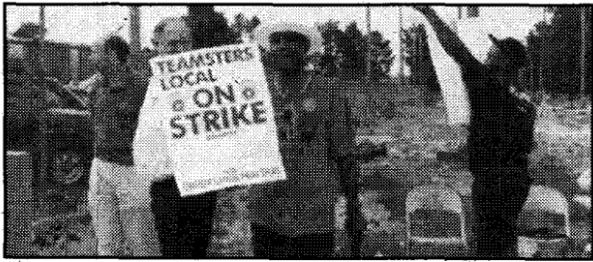
As we go to press, Dr. Flora Brovina is on trial in Nis, Serbia. She is one of over 2,000 Kosovar Albanians arrested during Milosevic's reign of terror in Kosova and still held in Serbian jails. Charged with "terrorism and conspiring to perform hostile acts," partly because she founded the League of Albanian Women in Kosova, she explained in court that the group was started because Kosovar Albanian women "are the worst-treated citizens of Yugoslavia and suffer a poor education, a high birthrate and frequently have to give birth without medical assistance."

Overnite strike for basic labor rights

Memphis, Tenn. — We have been on strike against Overnite Transportation since Oct. 24, and there is no doubt we are hurting them. We are picketing the Memphis terminal 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Overnite says they are still running normal service, but most trucks that cross our picket line are running empty or nearly empty. Before the strike we had 70 dockworkers on day shift, 45 on afternoons, and 40 on midnights. We can count the scabs they are bringing in, and they have no more than 20 on each shift. Even with that little crew, there isn't a full shift's work for all of them.

Almost all the dockworkers are on strike, and most of the city drivers are out too. Where we have a problem is with the over-the-road drivers. Some of them are making \$90,000 a year and are near retirement, and they won't back us. Part of it is a racial thing. Nearly all the dockworkers and the majority of the city drivers are Black, but about 90% of the over-the-road drivers are white. It's only in the last few years that they even hired Black over-the-road drivers. But you see white dockworkers and city drivers out here on the picket line, just like us.

People think we're on strike for more money. But



Teamster strikers at Overnite in Memphis, limited by injunction to four picketers per gate at a time.

that's not it at all. We're out here against unfair labor practices; we're out here for justice. They say Memphis is the "black hole" of Overnite. We voted for Teamsters Local 667 in 1996, but we never got a contract, just more harassment.

All we want to do is work eight hours and go home.

They work you like a dog in there, hard and fast, and yell at you to go faster. Then they tell you that you're staying another four hours, even six hours.

You would think with all those hours that we get a lot of overtime. But at Overnite, they refuse to pay time and a half until 45 hours, not 40. And you almost never go over 45 hours. You work 12 hours one day, and the next day

they might cut you back to six hours. They dog you about production standards too. You have to break down six bills an hour, even if it's loose freight. And they mark the side of the truck each hour to show how much you did. If you don't work fast enough, they make you stay overtime. I worked one night as a casual at Yellow Freight; they have a regular union contract. I didn't know how easy the job could be. They tell you to work safely, don't tear stuff up. If you work too fast, like the speed at Overnite, they say, "Slow down, don't hurt yourself."

They have so many ways to mess with you. At the shift meeting every morning, if you ask the wrong question, or too many questions, they put you on trucks where you can't make production. They work the hell out of you. And when you are almost topped out in pay, when you have seniority, they start messing with you. Most of all, if you are active in the union, that's the worst. They try everything to get rid of you.

We aren't going to just sit there and take it. We mess right back with them when we can. It's been this way ever since the union election in 1996. When it got near time to vote, they invited us all down to the Peabody Hotel for a steak dinner, and then we were supposed to sit there and listen to a speaker tell why we shouldn't vote for the union. Some of us ate dinner, and then we told them we weren't staying for the speech. They didn't like that.

One dockworker got fired after he kept wearing a Teamsters shirt or hat or jacket to work. Three years later, they ruled that Overnite had to bring him back to work with full back pay. They didn't want him back, so they made him a buyout offer. But he said he wanted to come back to Overnite in a union shop, and he's out here on the picket line now.

The national strike started right here at this terminal. Everyone needs to know the truth about what Overnite does here. We are not going to be abused and pushed around any more.

—Overnite dockworkers

HMOs still control MDs

Oakland, Cal. — A major HMO, United Health Group, announced it was giving back to doctors the final say on which treatments patients will receive. Doctors at the largest HMO, Kaiser Permanente, have supposedly always had this power. But we who work or receive our health care at Kaiser can tell you that the quality and accessibility of care has gone down despite the much bragged-about ability of doctors to make their own decisions.

The new procedure is based on "grading doctors over the long term, instead of on a case-by-case basis.... Those found to be practicing wasteful medicine will be dropped from United's network." This means doctors will discipline themselves according to the administrators' expectations. The administrators use a "bell curve" to keep doctors in conformance instead of costly policing of every decision.

Another way Kaiser controls access to care is through front line screening. A whole army of non-nursing personnel have been gathered together in Call-Centers. The patient's first encounter with Kaiser health care is a canned answer from a training manual. One Call-Center employee said, "If we don't follow the manual to the letter, we're punished. If we go by the book and something goes wrong we're still punished."

This is part of Kaiser's restructuring plan that the AFL-CIO enthusiastically embraced in their "strategic partnership." Local 250 SEIU is really proud of having these new union positions boosting their regular dues income. They are touting a recent "understanding" between Kaiser and the union that supposedly promises no layoffs.

Many downsized employees end up in the new Call-Centers, and many are now desperately scrambling to get out. As one employee said, "I've never been in a sweat shop before, but this sure feels like one. You have to get permission to go to the bathroom. Your bathroom breaks are timed. They're always monitoring your phone conversations to make sure you adhere to the manual. They treat you like a computer which is not supposed to think."

The doctors are now forced to discipline themselves according to the bottom line. Big Labor touts its friendship with management as a way to guarantee a paycheck, but employees are asking about the alienating character of the labor they are expected to do. The reality of today's HMO rhetoric is that the whole health care system is structured to withhold as much care as possible and, in the process, dehumanize both the patient and the health care worker.

—Htun Lin

Sears incites union boycott

Olive Branch, Miss. — Seven months after workers at Sears Logistic Systems (SLS) voted to be represented by IUE/Furniture Workers Local 282, contract talks have reached a stalemate. The union win on March 24, the first ever in this notoriously anti-union Memphis suburb, sent shock waves throughout Olive Branch.

SLS, a warehouse and shipping operation with about 260 workers in Olive Branch, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sears. Most workers are Black men, but white workers and women have also been active in the union effort.

Local 282 President Willie Rudd and Vice-president Ida Leachman were joined on the negotiating committee by many of the rank-and-file workers who led the union organizing drive. "SLS wants to grant a wage increase only to maintenance mechanics and janitors," Leachman said. "They are trying to split the membership, undermine support for the union, and it won't work. We want a wage increase for every worker." SLS is worried about the impact a general wage increase might have on a new Local 282 campaign at a Sears facility in Memphis.

SLS also refused to talk about the union health insurance plan. They insist that the workers have to stay with the current plan. The insurance package Sears offers now is one of the issues which got workers angry at the company in the first place. They say that the HMO abuses its power and gets in the way of good medical care. And when the union asked for a dues checkoff, Sears said that they were "philosophically against that" and would not talk about it further.

Local 282 and the IUE have asked the national AFL-CIO to impose boycott sanctions on Sears stores all across the country. Leachman said she expects the boycott to be approved. "We hope that every union member and supporter will join our fight against Sears' anti-worker, anti-union program by boycotting Sears stores and joining picket lines."

—Michael Flug

Jakarta union fights Nike

New York — The shoe factory in Jakarta that I worked in, a subcontractor of Nike, paid wages of about \$68 a month, which was insufficient to maintain life. We had no freedom to organize, were not paid overtime, had no health insurance or protection against injuries, and there was no equality for female workers.

My job was to make rubber soles. I had to insert the raw material at 113 degrees manually into the roller so that it came out the proper thickness and had only rubber gloves for protection. One day the material pulled my hand into the roller, and I lost two fingers.

This machine caused the same injury to seven other people because the emergency switch did not work. I received about \$150 in compensation, four months paid leave and a rubber hand.

The government-sponsored labor union was a voice for the company. I realized we needed to create another union, so I began talking with the workers in my factory and other workers in and around Jakarta. We formed a union for shoe factory workers called Perubpas. I intended it to be the voice of the workers and to fight for the rights of workers.

In my factory we began to monitor the Code of Conduct that Nike had agreed under pressure to abide by. Instead of complying, the factory intimidated and discriminated against Perubpas members. One by one, Perubpas leaders were fired or were refused raises and promotions. In 1996, the military police raided a workers' meeting and took union members into custody for a day. About 200 workers were fired. Yet union members at other clothing and shoe factories demonstrated against the firings and intimidation.

I hope to create good relations with union and student movements in the U.S. Boycott Nike, because their factories oppress workers in Indonesia. They say, "Just do it." We say, "Just do it justice."

—Haryanto, Perubpas member

New York cabbies organize

New York — The Barnard Forum on Migration sponsored "Taxi Drivers in New York: Labor Organizing and Immigrant Workers" in September, featuring Bhairavi Desai, a native of India and leader of the organizing committee of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance. The Alliance had led the May 1998 movement to unite taxi drivers in protest against punitive city regulations, which led to a 24-hour strike of 45,000 cab drivers.

"Enraged over horrible working conditions, worsened by Mayor Giuliani's 17 new rules, this was the first work stoppage of its kind in over 30 years for the taxi industry," said Desai. The drivers' situation has been exacerbated by overnight layoffs of thousands of workers due to mergers and shutdowns of garages and brokerages.

Desai passionately highlighted how racism is specifically directed toward drivers, who including livery drivers to outer boroughs are 95% people of color, Third World people forced to migrate. Drivers are predominantly from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Although the taxi strike achieved "limited gains," such as elimination of double ticketing, it galvanized driver involvement in organizing and strengthening the Alliance. It has gained significant health and legal benefits and support from important City Council members, which cuts down on the mayor's power to act against taxi drivers.

—Sheila G.

Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

it. And then sometimes, when the excitement of the movement is over, we can slide backwards and find the shackles wrapping around our thinking. How can we break those chains? That problem is what is facing all of us. Let me try to explain what I mean by this.

In 1986 Black women organized a union in the heart of the Mississippi Delta at the Delta Pride Catfish processing factory in Indianola. We won our first contract, but it was not a good one, not a strong one. So we had to organize ourselves again, and we had to look at what we really wanted as workers, as Black women. That is how the 1990 Delta Pride strike began. It is very hard to tell exactly how the Idea of Freedom develops. Sometimes, just when you worry that workers will not be able to throw off the mental chains, they rise up and show that they really can make a whole new world.

ORGANIZE IN SPIRIT OF FANNIE LOU HAMER

But those moments are precious and hard to reach. In the South today there is a lot on the other side of the picture. Last month, just 22 miles away from the Delta Pride Catfish plant, in a little town called Ruleville, we tried to organize a nursing home. Even though this company harassed and mistreated the workers, paid them poverty wages and often fired them on false charges, we lost the vote. The workers couldn't take a step on the road to freedom.

Ruleville is known for a great woman, Fannie Lou Hamer, who led the voting rights movement in the state of Mississippi. She was a great speaker and inspired people to think about the meaning of freedom. Her gravesite lies one-half mile from this nursing home. Why didn't the workers at Beverly Nursing Home organize in her spirit? Why weren't they able to see that they had power and worth in coming together instead of depending on handouts from the white man?

As I see it, the "plantation mentality" is so powerful, and the climate of fear is so oppressive, that every workers' movement, every freedom movement, needs a philosophy of liberation to help us develop ourselves. This philosophy is not something outside of workers. It is part of our being. It is what really makes us human. But it is not always easy for us to see. The reason is that this racist, sexist, oppressive society makes us think that we are powerless and ignorant. That is why it is important to spell out a philosophy of liberation.

Karl Marx was the first one who really laid out the whole basis of this philosophy of liberation. In *Marxism and Freedom* Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, explains what Marx's philosophy was all about. She wrote:

"Our epoch has been characterized by 'a struggle for the minds of men.' Unless this struggle begins with a concept of totally new relations of men to labor and man to man, it is hollow. The todayness of Marxism flows from this: no philosopher has ever had a grander concept of humanity than did Marx, and yet no philosophic conception was ever rooted more deeply in the first necessity of human society—labor and production.... The problems he posed 100 years ago are battled out today as concrete matters in the factory and in society as a whole.... Communism to Marx was 'not the goal of human development, the form of human society.' Marxism is a theory of liberation or it is nothing" (pp. 21-22).

I like this paragraph so much because it shows how Marx could see labor as the key to a new revolution. Marx says that it has to be done with the workers. Some intellectuals still don't see this. Raya Dunayevskaya is showing us that for Marx the test of every idea is human freedom. That is why Communism is the opposite of Marxism. That is why you can't have freedom for whites if Blacks are still kept down. That is why you can't have freedom for men if women are second class. There has got to be a total change in this society to accomplish that total freedom.

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya
MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES

Grave contradictions of 1979 Iranian Revolution

Editor's Note

As Raya Dunayevskaya worked on her third book, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, she wrote a series of Political-Philosophic Letters about developments in the Iranian revolution of 1979, in which she initially saw "the specter of a full social revolution." We publish here at a time of renewed political activity in Iran, and on the 20th anniversary of the hostage crisis, one of those letters. The original can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 6013-6018. The Political-Philosophic Letters on Iran are collected in an English-language pamphlet, *Iran: Revolution & Counter-revolution*, and a Farsi-language pamphlet, *Raya Dunayevskaya's Political-Philosophic Letters on Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Iran*. Both are available from *News & Letters*.

November 27, 1979

Dear Friends:

Were it not for the Iranian Revolution that **was**—and **may** still resume and deepen, as it is by no means over, despite the counter-revolutionary stage now being carried out by the imam demagogue, Khomeini, whose insanities are being matched by [U.S. President] Carter's saber-rattling—this would be the time for saying one thing and one thing only: "A plague on both your houses."

I

Because, however, of the remembrance of the Iranian Revolution as it overthrew the Shah [of Iran's] barbarous regime backed by U.S. imperialism; because of the remembrance of Women's Liberation's refusal to wear the chador, challenging Khomeini's attempt to turn the clock backward and reduce women to a feudalistic state; and because of the continuing rebellion of the Kurds as well as the Arab oil workers in Khoozestan against Khomeini, along with the other minorities' struggles for self-determination¹—it is necessary to take a second look at the new form of the occult which is coming out of Khomeini's Iran and calling all others, and not only U.S. imperialism, "mussed fi ai-Ard" ("the corrupt of the earth"). It is imperative to practice dialectics, rather than to act on first reaction, as if tailending Khomeini's opposition to the U.S. is genuine opposition to American imperialism.

Of course the hatred of the Iranian people for that butcher, the shah, and their opposition to U.S. imperialism, which had put him into power and kept him there, is not only real and justifiable for Iranians, but was real and justifiable for the many Americans who both exposed the truth of the shah's tortures of the Iranian people and expressed their solidarity with Iranian revolutionaries. Of course the Carter administration was well aware of the opposition not only in Iran but in this country to granting any asylum to the shah, and for a while—a very short while—Carter was forced to resist the pressures of Nixon, Kissinger, and David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank to bring the shah to the U.S. But following the tune of the new Pied Piper, Khomeini, against "infidels" and "satanic domination" is anything but struggling either against U.S. imperialism or showing solidarity with the Iranian Revolution.

All one has to do to see the degeneration of the so-called Revolutionary Council in Iran is to see the new "left covering" given by the current acting foreign secretary, Bani-Sadr, who is trying to institute an Iranian version of Pol Potism. Listen to the interview Bani-Sadr granted to Eric Rouleau in *Le Monde* (11/10/79): "Teheran is a monstrous parasitic city, which absorbs by itself one-half of the national consumption...we will empty it of some of its people by creating in the country-side industrial and agricultural production units."

Unfortunately, even the more recognizable Left—Trotskyism—far from practicing any revolutionary dialectics, is busy tailending Khomeini's Iran.² The *Intercontinental Press (IP)* of 11/19/79 and 11/26/79 keeps talking of a "New Upsurge in the Iranian Revolution." It even sees anti-U.S. imperialism in Khomeini's phrase "satanic domination" in the arrogant message Khomeini sent to the equally arrogant Pope, telling the latter that the way the "Christian world (can) redeem itself" is by following Islamic Iran's fight against "infidels." It is impossible not to ask whether there isn't a coincidence between this and the one democratic gesture by Khomeini which allowed some of the banned papers to reappear, including *Kadar (Worker)*, the paper of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS). In any case, the very first issue, 11/17/79, of *Kadar* to reappear cited Khomeini's statement to the Pope as proof of "how anti-imperialist" Khomeini was.³ Furthermore, continued *IP*, the holding of American hostages by the Iranian students (who, not so incidentally, call themselves "Followers of the Imam") "re-emphasizes the people's historic demand for political and economic independence from world imperialism."

In what proletarian revolution, exactly, was the taking of hostages—and not the rulers, but some fairly low

embassy personnel—held to be a revolutionary tactic? Since when has war and revolution been made synonymous? Isn't it about time that Marxist revolutionaries labeled Khomeini's endless repetition of "we are men of war" "looking forward to martyrdom" for what it is by citing Marx, who wrote that Napoleon, the ultimate counter-revolutionary, "substituted permanent war for permanent revolution"?

But the Trotskyists continue with their fairy tale leftism, since they do support the Kurds' struggle for self-determination. However, what they play up is that some Kurds supposedly supported Khomeini, and what they cover up is that none less than the two most important ayatollahs after Khomeini—Montazeri and Behesti—called the Kurd leaders "agents of Savak [the Shah's secret police], Zionists and corrupt sources." Since it was just at the period when Khomeini was trying to claim that the whole of Iran was for him, he took to the air and said that this statement by the ayatollahs was a "personal view." But these "persons" are not just any persons. They hold the positions of president and vice-president of the Assembly of the Experts that has just completed the draft constitution to be shoved down the throats of the Iranian people on Dec. 2 and 3. Indeed, many believe they undoubtedly were the two who instigated the occupation of the [U.S.] Embassy by the students.⁴

II

What the media have not shown is that during the demonstrations in front of the U.S. Embassy, there was also a storming of the Ministry of Labor,⁵ in which the mass of unemployed—and there are no less than two million unemployed in Iran now—were demanding jobs. Nor are they reporting the continuing struggles of the Kurds, much less the fact that some Marxists have gone underground to continue a truly revolutionary struggle against Khomeini's usurpation of the fruits of their revolutionary overthrow of the shah.

Another of the many events unreported in the mass media at the time it happened (and still kept from the regional TV) is the bloody riots Khomeini instigated against the present rulers of the island of Bahrain in August, demanding the establishment of a "pure" Islamic government, the abolition of all "Western ways," especially TV, and the re-establishment of the separation of men and women in all public places. The riots were put down by the current rulers, but so worried are they about Khomeini's influence, his ability to foment rebellions against other Muslims who do not wish to unite "as one" against "the West"—and the East—and whom Khomeini then accuses of "crimes against God," that they have hushed up the August riots.

This is only part of Khomeini's own type of imperialism. Besides the claim to Bahrain, he has retained—despite a challenge by Iraq—the shah's 1971 occupation of the three islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb. Those islands are situated near the Straits of Hormuz, through which passes nearly half of the West's oil imports.

Furthermore, Khomeini has lashed out against any Iranian who dares to say that he is for Iran first and for Islam second. He calls that "blasphemy." At the same time, when the PLO suggested that the Persian Gulf be renamed as either the Islamic or the Arabian Gulf, Khomeini rejected the suggestion at once. His insistence that Islam—his interpretation of Islam—must always come first does not in any way mitigate his disdain for Arabs. Not only was he adamant that the Persian Gulf retain its name, but his opposition to the Arab oil workers and any claim for self-determination is total. Arafat was quickly brought down to size when he tried to intercede for the American hostages. That doesn't mean that either Arafat or all the Arab state rulers meeting in Tunisia had anything to say for Khomeini—with the exception of Libya, and even their pro-Khomeini stance did not take priority over selling oil to the West...

Hussein of Iraq has no intention whatever of bowing to Khomeini. Indeed, he has already once threatened an

3. Remembrance, historic remembrance, has a way of repeating itself as if it were an ongoing element in every crisis. Nothing seems more relevant now than Trotsky's analysis of the Big Lie Stalin perpetrated by staging the infamous Moscow Frame-up Trials, 1936-38, against the "General Staff of the Revolution," including Tukhachevsky, whom Stalin accused of nothing short of dealing with Nazi Germany. The needed revolutionary attitude when such a lie is perpetrated, Trotsky told me, is that it is not enough just not to believe the Big Lie. The fact is, he continued, that the reason the Big Lie is so much more monstrous than the ordinary lie is because its premeditation hides the sinister motivation that would have put everyone on the alert, had they known the truth. What Stalin was accusing Tukhachevsky of, he explained, might very well be what Stalin himself was doing or planning to do. The trial balloon towards that end, which directs hatred towards the accused, calls for a great deal more than just a defense of the wrongly accused. We must be prepared to fight some new "peppery dish" that Stalin was readying—perhaps a deal with Hitler. That was precisely what happened the following year, the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939.

4. See *Christian Science Monitor*, 11/16/79: "Constitution Gives Clergy Control in Iran" by Geoffrey Godsell.

5. *Christian Science Monitor*, 11/21/79.

invasion and is, at the moment, arming some Kurds to start a revolt within Iran.

III

And what, exactly, is being prepared for the Iranian people once this month of mourning, the Muharram, is over? Well, they are to engage in a referendum to approve the draft constitution which the Ayatollahs Montazeri and Behesti have drawn up. Anyone who has any illusions that this constitution bears any resemblance whatsoever to the one that was inspired by the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907, when the first shah was overthrown, or even as the mullahs amended that constitution when they brought the shah back, should take a look at the new institution of the Office of Religious Guardian, which has the **right to veto over everything and anything passed by the state rulers and is also the supreme commander over the armed forces.**

The point is that the constitution does nothing but try to legitimize Khomeini's usurpation of the victory of the workers who achieved the actual overthrow of the shah. It cannot solve the crisis in Iran any more than staged demonstrations before the U.S. Embassy and the sacrificial use of hostages can stay the hand of U.S. imperialism.

The greatest danger now lies in the momentum gained by Khomeini's demagoguery, which might trigger *Apocalypse Now!* That is the brink at which the world now stands. Khomeini and Carter may not flinch as they prepare for such a confrontation. But the world must do everything to stay the hands of both rulers.

In the imperative struggle against the savage racism in [the U.S.] against Iranian students, we must never forget that the underlying racism that has always been shown against the Blacks has actually been directed also against

revolutionaries and minorities, though in depth it has been differently expressed racially. What I am saying is that not only must we remember the horror of U.S. concentration camps against Japanese-Americans during World War II at the very time when no such atrocities were committed against Nazis in this country. The case against each white fascist was treated as an individual case. We must remember that the fact that American revolutionaries have long fought this, have long fought U.S. capitalism-imperialism and its wars, does not mean that we accept, as a revolutionary gesture, the opposition to American capitalism by another capitalist or religious fanatic any more than we accepted Nazism or Japanese military opposition to American capi-

talism as anything but an inter-imperialist fight.

Of course the mailed fist of Carter must be stopped, and his is also the hand that can release a nuclear holocaust, which would put an end to civilization as we have known it. Revolutionary opposition against American imperialism can be carried through only if we raise a banner of what we are for. And what we are for is **not** turning the clock back to some form of occultism.

Anyone who tries to gild a neo-fascist occultism, forgetting that the "masses" that Hitler mobilized were mobilized for counter-revolutionary purposes, anyone who tries to say that Khomeini's constant references to the "disinherited masses" is akin to Mao's "Cultural Revolution," should be made to remember that—though Mao was once a revolutionary and though Mao did labor under the illusion that making Russia "Enemy Number One" (like Khomeini's making the U.S. "Satan") was the way to fight for world socialism—Mao ended by rolling out the red carpet for Nixon.⁶ As we said then, the "revolutionary" Maoist apologists, who were willing to forgive Mao every crime on earth and leave a few blanks for those he might create later, were revealing that one and only one organic trait characterizes them all: tailendism to a state power. This is the exact opposite to what Marx's Marxism is—the struggle for a totally new, classless social order based on totally new human relations. Anything short of that spells out betrayal.

Yours, Raya

6. See both the chapter on "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung" in my *Philosophy and Revolution* and "Mao's Last Hurrah," Political-Philosophic Letter, Feb. 27, 1976, published by *News & Letters*. Since the designation of Russia as "Enemy Number One" is the one Mao legacy the post-Mao leadership is scrupulously following out, see also "Post-Mao China: What Now?" in *New Essays* (Detroit: *News & Letters*, 1977).

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Editorial Russia's war on Chechnya shadows 1989 anniversary

On Nov. 9, the very day Western rulers gathered in Berlin on the 10th anniversary of the breaking down of the Berlin Wall, Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin thumbed his nose at the West's ability to withhold credits to Russia's crippled economy and drew a new line in the sand: "Our territory from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea."

Putin was referring to a new siege of a whole population in Chechnya where hundreds of civilians have been killed, thousands were wounded and over 200,000 have fled the country to the neighboring republic of Ingushetia, creating scenes reminiscent of Kosova but without the same level of world indignation. Relying on bombs and rockets to shatter Chechen towns from afar and strictly controlling the flow of news from the front, the Russian rulers have learned from Milosevic's methods in Bosnia and Kosova.

The Russian army had already destroyed most of Chechnya when it lost the 1994-96 war in Chechnya which then gained de facto independence in 1997. The Russian army returned to the region this summer first to put down an attack by a small group of Chechen Muslim extremists in the neighboring republic of Dagestan. When terrorists then bombed apartment buildings inside Russia, killing 300 civilians, Putin, without proof, blamed Chechens and proceeded to rein-vade Chechnya.

Now over 100,000 Russian troops outside the Chechen capital of Grozny have instituted a blockade against the whole civilian population who, in any case, are innocent. The real stake in this new line in the sand is, according to Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev, whether Russia will be squeezed out of the oil-rich Caspian Sea region.

NATO has not only expanded in Eastern Europe but has received calls for military cooperation from a new regional security group, GUAM, composed of Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. GUAM wants to provide security for a new proposed pipeline which bypasses Russia and is to be built running from Baku in Azerbaijan through Georgia and to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

Because of the terrorist bombings inside Russia, opposition within Russia to the new Chechen war has been slower to emerge than the 1994-96 war. However, new revelations about mass dislocations caused by civilian bombardment made even the liberal Yabloko party call for a halt to the mass bombings and talks with Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov.

The West agrees with Russia that the military campaign in Chechnya is an "internal" Russian affair. Their protests are even more muted than they were in Bosnia and Kosova before they came to the so-called "rescue," only after years of killing, when mass dislocations threatened regional stability. The difference is that Russia still has a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons even though it is an economic cripple whose population is suffering through a Great Depression. The supposed end of the Cold War now means that whole populations are pawns in the ongoing capitalist game of big power economic and military competition in a region rife with neo-fascism and severely depressed economies.

This was not the result that masses in Eastern Europe fought for over several decades, beginning with the 1953 East German workers' revolt that demanded "Bread and Freedom" and culminating ten years ago with the pulling down of the Berlin Wall. Today's new Eastern European leaders who embrace market capital-

ism say their greatest contribution was coming to power, not through a revolution, but through a "negotiated transfer of power." Their biggest crime is that in their arrogance they left the masses and their aspirations for freedom out in the cold.

What unites all rulers, even as they compete militarily or economically and draw new lines in the sand, is their opposition to the aspirations for freedom of great masses in motion. Anna Walentynowicz, a crane operator whose firing sparked the 1980 Solidarity movement in Gdansk, recently said that in the 1980s workers were looking for a "Third Way," a true socialism, not "mass poverty, homelessness, selling off our plants and

[and] self-styled capitalists pocketing the money."

Though the Solidarity movement did set the ground for the overthrow of the old regimes, the intellectuals never responded with the needed



Russian troops patrol Gudermes, Chechnya after occupying that city, Nov. 12.

Democracy and revolution in Iran

The most massive struggles since the 1979 Revolution broke out throughout Iran on July 13, 1999. The large protests of students in Teheran University and 18 other major cities—like Tabriz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Mashhad and Yazd—were joined by a large number of non-students. The security forces and goon squads attacked these protests. They were later joined by the armed forces and the announcement of martial law.

The form of these protests and the way they were suppressed reminds us of the 1979 February uprising. There were many demands raised by the student groups. They denounced Khamenei, the supreme leader, and also condemned the Islamic republic. These struggles and student protests which were supported by a large section of the population contain within themselves the notion of uprooting the foundations of the Islamic Republic. Therefore I see it as a turning point in the struggle, a process that can separate the revolutionary from counter-revolutionary forces.

The causes of this struggle are clear: The economic bankruptcy of the regime which reflects the permanent crises of world capitalism; the lack of any serious attempt to meet the economic-political-social demands of the masses; the loss of credibility of the office of supreme leader (Velayat-e Faghih) and its attempt to export the revolution; the failure of President Khatami's economic plans in the last two years.

At first glance, it might appear that the students have been defeated. Yet in my view, one of the achievements of the movement has been the break-up of the illusions some had about the so-called moderate Khatami faction.

During the 1848-49 revolutions in Europe, Karl Marx supported the movements led by the bourgeoisie while they were fighting against autocratic rulers. It was through his participation in those movements in 1850 that he reached the formulation calling for "Revolution in Permanence": "The chief result of revolutionary movement is not what the people won, but what they lost, the loss of their illusions."

The July uprising in Iran also contained such elements of a loss of one's illusions about reformism. The fear of this movement has also brought closer together different factions within the government in order to maintain its power against the further development of mass consciousness.

articulation of the freedom idea to help workers realize their reach for a true socialism. Instead what passed for new theory was constant preaching to the workers, telling them to limit their revolution in order to avoid Soviet tanks. Reflecting on the 1989 East German New Forum movement of which he was a cofounder, Jens Reich now offers a self-critical view of the movement. "Politically," says Reich, "there is much I regret. We dreamed about a somewhat different society. But I wouldn't accuse only the 'colonialists' from the West for pushing us aside. We were ready to give away what we had seized."

Marxist-Humanism, which has based itself on the history of the East European freedom struggles, from the Hungarian Workers' Councils in 1956 to Socialism with a Human Face in Czechoslovakia in 1968, poses the need to confront the impasse in the mass movements' striving for freedom. Today's retrospectives on the 10th anniversary of tearing down the Berlin Wall show that the question that needs to be addressed now for the future is "what happens after the conquest of power?" A political/organizational expression of Marx's original humanism and its freedom idea was never more urgently needed. History continues to prove that Marx's idea of freedom is a standard which comprehends the new in terms of its unfolding in the self-active reason of the masses.

There are two very different attitudes toward the present developments in Iran. First, there is the attitude that limits the struggles for freedom to democracy and civil society. This attitude limits the struggle to one of defending President Khatami and the so-called reform movement against Khamenei, the conservative.

Of course, it is necessary to do what we can against the lack of any civil rights and try to bring an end to the fascist tactics used by the goon squads and death squads in Iran. But how can the Left and radical groups which know the long struggles against this regime forget about them and suddenly take up the banner of civil society alone?

The other view is one that defends the mass struggles and their demands for democratic rights but does not stop there, and seeks to go beyond this. It questions the whole of the regime and highlights the radicalism of the movement. This second tendency lacks a concrete, specific articulation of the many dimensions of the movement in Iran.

Here I will point out some of these dimensions: women's struggles vs. male domination, sexual discrimination in both legal codes and social behaviors, the struggle of women for control over their own bodies, and personal affairs; minorities' struggles for self-determination, especially the Kurds; urban and rural working class struggles; religious minorities such as Bahais and Jews who suffer discrimination and persecution; the struggle to separate religion from the state; ending legal persecution of gays and lesbians.

What must distinguish us from the reformists is that we do not want to limit the struggle to democracy and civil society or create new barriers for the mass movement. At the same time, we do not want to be like some on the Left who stay away from mass struggles for democracy. We want to have a specific analysis of specific conditions and to seek to concretize a philosophy of revolution for our times. We do not want to separate a philosophy of revolution from concrete struggles for freedom.

As Marx wrote to Arnold Ruge, "Nothing prevents us from making criticism of politics, participation in politics, and therefore real struggles, the starting point of our criticism, and from identifying our criticism with them. In that case we do not confront the world in a doctrinaire way with a new principle: Here is the truth, kneel down before it! We develop new principles for the world out of the world's own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle. We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and consciousness is something that it has to acquire, even if it does not want to."

In another place Marx wrote, "We can formulate the trend of our journal as being: self-clarification (critical philosophy) to be gained by the present time 'of its struggles and desires. This is a work for the world and for us. It can be only the work of united forces. It is a matter of a confession, and nothing more. In order to secure remission of its sins, mankind has only to declare, them for what they actually are."

If we want to respond fully and creatively to the movement, our attitude toward mass struggles must articulate these demands and not take an administrative approach towards them from above.

In Iran at this moment, freedom of speech and press has become a major part of the struggle for freedom. Take the latest attacks on four students and a teacher for publishing and performing "Wave", a play that is said to insult Islam, and as such, they will be sentenced to prison for heresy. We need to find ways to express our defense of speech and press freedom. This can be done through holding meetings and conferences and contacting others to create a network of support, and organizing protests.

— Ali Reza Ardebili

Philosophic Dialogue

After East Timor, Aceh demands independence

(Continued from page 1)

every village is now opposed to the government.

We have been holding strikes, boycotts and demonstrations. We had a general strike Aug. 4 and 5. No one went to work or school for two days. It was 90% effective. The only people who didn't go on strike were the military and high officials.

Because I am secretary-general of SMUR, I've become a target for the military. In May, a military commander in Aceh said publicly I was an enemy of the state, and soon after my life was threatened for the first time. More threats followed. The government said we were Communists and enemies of the state. This actually gave us legitimacy and our organizing efforts became more successful. One group conducted a poll to see who the Acehnese would most like to represent them, and I was number one!

The Indonesian government may try to coopt the radical elements of the movement. For example, knowing that most people are religious, they may offer a status within Indonesia that allows Islamic law to apply. They are appointing a few Acehnese to high government positions and spreading propaganda to create fissures between groups.

The East Timor struggle was important to our development. We've learned from it to be aware of how the Indonesian government tries to split a movement. We have to make sure that doesn't happen in Aceh. East Timor is

receiving so much attention from the international community, whereas the human rights violations in Aceh have received very little. The crimes against humanity in both places are the same.

We have relations with some of the student groups in Jakarta. We're all pro-democracy and want to get the military out of the government. But we don't share their views on elections. We boycotted the recent elections, because it was not safe in Aceh to conduct a fair election. The boycott was a way of showing we are for a referendum rather than electing new officials. Only 30% of the people voted, and we think the army forced a lot of them to vote.

On Nov. 12, Aguswandi and members of the International Forum for Aceh met in Washington, D.C., with Indonesian President Wahid, who was visiting President Clinton. He refused to set a date for the referendum, saying it will be "when the time is right." He admitted that the military's presence in Aceh is a problem, but again refused to set a date for its withdrawal.

Jakarta also faces growing independence movements in West Papua (Irian Jaya), the Moluccan Islands, and other areas as well. Recently, thousands of West Papuans from all over the country met to organize mass demonstrations for Dec. 1. They will demand independence, which they were supposed to get from the Dutch on Dec. 1, 1961.

—A.J.

Nov. 27, 1999

MOBILIZING INTERNATIONALLY TO FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS

The International Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal has chosen Jan. 12, 2000 for an international delegation to assemble in Washington, D.C., to demand justice for Mumia. Our goal is to bring together leaders, luminaries and well-known personalities who support the demand for a new trial. We need to assemble members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanic Caucus as well as other legislators, clergy, and trade union leaders from this country and abroad. The initiative grew out of the rally of close to 10,000 unionists and activists in Paris on Oct. 15.

U.S. endorsements and proposals should be sent to: Open World Conference, c/o San Francisco Labor Council, 1188 Franklin St., Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94109.

International Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal Paris

Two different demonstrations were organized recently here to protest the death penalty in the U.S. One was organized by Amnesty International, the other by a coalition of several groups directly in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The Norwegian prime minister said he took up the death penalty during his recent discussions with the President of the U.S., but never made it clear whether he took up the case of Mumia. What is certain is that there are 47 parliamentarians who have registered their protest in Mumia's case and some are members of his party. Whether or not President Clinton was confronted with Mumia's case, he should know that there are strong feelings here in Norway about Mumia.

Activist Oslo

Several hundred people demonstrated in front of a fancy Beverly Hills Hotel to protest the honoring of Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Ridge, who recently signed Mumia Abu-Jamal's death warrant. Across the street on the roofs were about ten police in civilian clothes with their cameras and a birds-eye view of the demonstrators. On the ground in full view of the demonstrators were motorcycles and patrol cars as well as half a dozen police in rank formation at the hotel entrance.

Two activists attended the event inside the hotel and rose at one point to ask why there was such a hurry to execute Mumia. They were charged with disturbing the peace and taken to the police station where 75 demonstrators followed to protest the arrest. The two were released on bail after a few hours. The movement would be much stronger if organizations like NAACP, SCLC and ACLU joined in the fight.

Participant Beverly Hills, CA

The Editorial on Mumia Abu-Jamal in the November issue of *News & Letters* was very different from many statements distributed by the movement over the years. It was unique not only because it invoked the legacy of urban revolts from the 1977 New York City blackout through the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion, but because it also demonstrated the maturity of our age in showing that these revolts have found a voice in a Black revolutionary who is condemned to die. It showed what it means to be a Marxist-Humanist by not letting us forget about Mumia, the human being.

The Editorial was deepened by running in the same issue with John Alan's Black/Red column on "History in the present." Mississippi's turn of the century "pig law" has been reborn as mandatory sentencing for crack offenders. We are facing a new nadir of the African American experience, and the forces of revolution can see themselves in the face of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Jim Guthrie Chicago

As someone who has marched and rallied many times on behalf of Mumia's release, I was glad to see you devote a front-page Editorial to this. Yet some of it seemed to border on fantasy. Do you really think the nation has been brought "inexorably to the brink of civil war"? The tragedy is that we are very far from the level of mobilization and clarity of ideas that will be needed to free Mumia, much less to challenge capital in a civil war. To chalk this up to "jack-boot government repression" is to conceal the movement's internal contradictions and the responsibility of revolutionaries to work them out.

A. Anielewicz New York

FIGHTING RACISM

The persistence of racism in Cuba has been under discussion recently, but I have not seen much awareness that this persistence has something to do with the state-capitalist character of its economy. Nationalization of major industry and the elimination of some of the personifications of capital, Marx long ago pointed out, does not by itself constitute anything resembling "socialism." Revolutions that "stop dead" at nationalized property and single-party dictatorships are ill-equipped to deepen the revolutionary process to the extent needed to eradicate racism and sexism.

Marxist-Humanist Illinois

Readers' Views



VOTING FOR MARX

BBC News Online readers from across the world took part in a millennium poll and found the revolutionary writer, Karl Marx, to be the greatest thinker of the millennium, despite the way dictatorships throughout the 20th century have distorted his original ideas. He certainly has my vote.

Observer Illinois

With the threat of Mumia being put to death now imminent, I have been trying to rally others here in Britain to his cause. May I ask that you print an excerpt from Marx's article on Capital Punishment that appeared in the *New York Daily Tribune* of 18 February, 1853. This is where Marx writes:

"Now, what a state of society is that which knows of no better instrument for its own defense than the hangman, and which proclaims through the 'leading journal of the world' its own brutality as eternal law?"

Richard Bunting Oxford

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

United Nations death toll figures released in early November have been taken by some to "prove" that Serbia didn't engage in crimes against humanity. In *The Nation* we read that "there was and is no hard evidence of a genocidal program." The U.N. reports that so far they have found 2,108 full corpses where 4,266 had been reported. Partial corpses were not counted, and prosecutor Carla del Ponte noted "tampering with a significant number of sites" including bodies ploughed under fields or burned. As the Kosova Crisis Center has noted, "the Serbs have some experience getting rid of corpses."

Whatever the final figures, the truth is not about numbers. What does it mean when those who have taken such a pathetic stand on this conflict are now cheering on those who would bury the truth?

John G. San Francisco

An item in "Our Life and Times" in the October *N&L* mentioned Laura Secor's article in *Lingua Franca* which outlined the betrayal of some Praxis intellectuals, including Mihailo Markovic, who abandoned their humanism to support the fascism of Milosevic. Despite the value of Secor's exposure of these intellectuals, her perspective is decidedly anti-Marxist, including a contemptuous dismissal of Marx's 1844 Humanist Manuscripts. It increases the responsibility for what it means to be a continuator of Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism.

Jennifer Pen California

WHAT'S NEW WITH WELFARE?

Since 1996 they have been trying to cut the welfare rolls by any means necessary. They blame a missed appointment or non-compliance with required work hours, or whatever they can find. I got a letter from the welfare office this summer dated June 16 saying my grant would be discontinued in July because I supposedly failed to submit a report form by June 23. How could they send a letter on June 16 telling me I haven't submitted a report by June 23? Isn't that evidence they're just trying to cut people off, no matter what?

When you're poor you are always going somewhere to prove something. You almost need a copying machine because you have to make copies of everything to keep them from cheating you.

Rose Chicago

Human life in the industrial world without basic shelter and food is a growing problem. The statistics are difficult to interpret. The British government is

attempting to stamp out the distribution of bread and soup by charitable organizations on the grounds that they are creating a problem by encouraging it! The victims are blamed because they show up the lies that are part of their everyday life.

With the price of homes rising and the availability of accommodation appearing to fall, the pressures simply to have some shelter are immense. The matter is not adequately discussed in the press or by any of the political parties—including the so-called "radicals." *The Big Issue*, the magazine here that deals with homelessness, has a creditable history in not only raising the issue but attempting to find practical solutions with the people most concerned. More truth and honesty in British political life is long overdue.

Pat Duffy Britain



VOICES FROM WITHIN THE WALLS

I wish your paper could have a legal section about groups willing to help prisoners (no pen pals). Many prisoners are totally in the dark about their legal rights. Many are innocent and searching for help. Yes, for the most part they are indigent. The numbers are huge and continue to grow. What a waste!

Prisoner Arkansas

An associate showed me a copy of D.A. Sheldon's *Voices From Within the Prison Walls* and said I could read it, but there are so many others ahead of me waiting to read it, I don't know how long I will have to wait. From what I have heard from those who have already read it, it is very informative and addresses all of the issues we are facing every day in these warehouses/concentration camps. Is it true that you send copies of the book to prisoners who can't pay for it? I would like to order it, but the little bit of money my family sends me isn't enough to do that. I would like to have any material you can send me about News and Letters Committees.

Prisoner Pennsylvania

Editor's Note: Over the past year we have been able to send hundreds of copies of *Voices* to prisoners who have requested it, thanks to our readers' donations to the special fund established for that purpose. Readers: Can you buy a copy for a prisoner for \$8 or send a contribution of any size to this Special Fund?

ROSA LUXEMBURG POSTER

Hot off the press, beautiful 23" x 35" posters of Rosa Luxemburg created by IWW artist Carlos Cortez are available in black ink printed on your choice of red, blue or tan stock. Posters are \$15 each or 3 for \$30, shipped in sturdy poster tubes postpaid. Checks should be sent payable to:

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WE ARE MOVING!

To all our readers and friends

News & Letters is being forced to move from the building which has been our home in Chicago for 15 years, to make room for the conversion of the building into higher-rent condominiums. This kind of "condo-ization," which has been sweeping Chicago, has sent rents sky-high and has forced countless small offices like ours into competition for whatever affordable office space remains.

We are determined not to allow this blow to divert us from our work with all the forces of revolt—in particular, our urgent work at this moment with the Chicago Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, which has been using our offices for its meetings. While we have found an office we can move into by the end of the year, the extra expenses that suddenly confront us for moving and for meeting our new rent are formidable.

As we have done ever since our birth, we are turning to you, our readers, to help us make sure we will not have to skip a single issue of *N&L* to meet this emergency. The January-February issue will come to you from our new home. To guarantee that, **YOUR HELP IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER! PLEASE SEND WHATEVER YOU CAN TO:**

**NEWS & LETTERS
36 S. Wabash, Room 1440
Chicago, Illinois 60603**

WOMEN'S LIBERATION STRUGGLES

I escort women who come to the clinic so they can get from their car to the clinic without too much harassment by anti-abortion fanatics. You can't believe the damage these so-called Christians do. There was an incident just this week. A young woman came for her after-abortion checkup. The zealots got to her before she got in and when I saw her she was in tears. I think she's going to need professional counseling.

The worst thing about escorting is that the women coming to the clinic feel they must be polite and take the lying anti-abortion literature not to be rude. What made me feel good was the story of one woman who came in unescorted. When I asked her if she had any trouble she said: "No, I just told them that I'm an educated voter, and that seemed to scare them away."
**Clinic escort
Tennessee**

* * *

There have been a rash of schoolgirl rapes and attempted abductions here since school opened this Fall. Students at several high schools attempted a walkout over the issue, only to be threatened with punishment by school administrators and teachers. The next day hundreds of students marched to the School Center Building shouting, "No safety, no school."

The lack of safe passage for school children has been kept quiet for years. Now there is even more vacant land in the city, parents formerly on welfare are now required to be away from home at work, and a large backlog of abandoned houses still stands. Now the Mayor has finally mobilized volunteers and city workers to patrol school routes.
**Susan VanGelder
Detroit**

* * *

Every year, during October, which is National Violence Against Women Awareness Month, the Women's Action Coalition here stands on busy street corners wearing black, with an upright coffin and holding signs that give statistics on brutality against women. I consider it a uniquely Southern experience because here in the "buckle of the bible belt" this particular brand of violence is taken by many as simply business as usual.

Memphis may be known as the home of Elvis, or of the Blues on Beale Street. But for women, this is a place where abuse is rife and all those churches on all

those street corners don't do one damn thing to stop the violence women encounter every day because we are women.
**WAC member
Memphis**

POLITICS IN ITALY

If there is any term that can sum up the present Italian political situation it is the word "restoration." The parties of the right headed by the media "czar" Silvio Berlusconi are attempting to defeat the left-of-center government and "turn the wheel" so they would regain the power they had in the "first republic," in the post-war years until the 1980s.

The government is presided over by Massimo D'Alema, leader of the Party of Democratic Left (PDS) which is the former Communist Party. Ten years ago, in November 1989 at its congress in Bologna, it changed not only its name but also its ideology and policy. After this turn-around it split and a minority formed a new party calling itself Rifondazione Comunista. They split again last year and Armondo Cossutta, a veteran Stalinist-type CP official, founded a group with the name of Party of Italian Communists.

Now both of these groupings are giving their "critical support" to those government measures they regard as "socially acceptable"—mostly because they fear that should the present government fall, it would be followed by a coalition of centrist and rightist parties.
**Stephen Steiger
Prague**



STRUGGLES OF REVOLUTIONARY ENVIRONMENTALISM

Franklin Dmitryev's Lead in the November N&L on both the accidents and the revolt that arise from the "Drive for global nuclear domination" was one of the finest articles I have seen in any newspaper. Far from falling into the kind of empty abstractions that characterize bourgeois thinking, he lays out the death-dealing drive of capitalism for profit, and always he emphasizes the significant movement from below. It is such a great

contribution that I'd like to see it expanded and widely distributed.

For that I'd like to suggest that the philosophical implications of the movement from below be brought forward. We need to show that the humanism of Marx and Dunayevskaya is the philosophical rendering of the unity of theory and practice so we can speak in concrete practice-theoretic language to those in these movements and join with them as they with us. In short, I wish the article had been more explicit in pointing out that all of the protest movements it details are covered up so their inherent commonality of goal does not stand forth in a way that it could garner the interest of people not currently involved. Hope is what capitalism has to stifle in order to persist. If we unduly emphasize the hegemonic power of capitalism and its ideology, we defeat our revolutionary purpose.
**Philosophy professor
Illinois**

* * *

I remember when Three Mile Island "went nuclear" because I wasn't far from the place up-wind. All of us really paid attention to the weather patterns like we never did in our lives before. One of the things which is amazing is that it was so quickly placed into the realm of ancient history and forgotten. The same with Chernobyl.
**Prisoner
Tennessee**

* * *

A number of environmental movements call for the dismantling of capitalism, seeing the gross waste of human lives and health today. The problem is that environmentalism is so divorced from trade unionism.
**Activist
Chicago**

TOO MUCH PHILOSOPHY?

I find you over-emphasize the importance of philosophy in the class struggle, and that you display a tendency toward a Raya Dunayevskaya "cult." That doesn't mean that I don't find a lot of value in N&L, though!
**Council Communist
Norway**

* * *

I read Raya Dunayevskaya's 1957 letter on "Mao, Hegel, and dialectics in China" printed in the Archives column of the November issue, with close attention. Frankly, her philosophic writings are well beyond my grasp but I keep trying to

follow her reasoning. What strikes you in this letter is that it came years before the "official" split between Mao and Khrushchev, and a decade before the Cultural Revolution, about which so many have written so much. But none appears to even want to analyze matters objectively as she did.
**Prisoner
Texas**

THE AFRO-ASIAN STRUGGLE

I would like to clarify a point in an article on the "Asian-American Struggle" in the October issue of N&L. The Japanese and Filipinos essentially immigrated as laborers for capitalist production in the late 1800s after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, some going to Hawaii to work in the sugar cane plantations and some eventually becoming farmers as they were originally in Japan. Blacks are the only group of people that did not immigrate, but were forcibly shipped here as slaves to serve capitalist production.
**Asian-American
Los Angeles**

REPORT CARD FOR BARAK

Although Barak has been a slow and reluctant partner, he is gradually complying with the Israeli commitments in the signed agreements with the Palestinians. Among several other hopeful new policies, some government ministers have talked about ending the policy of demolishing Palestinian homes, an excellent sign. In response, however, Ehud Olmert, the right-wing mayor of Jerusalem, where hundreds of homes are slated for demolition, has expressed his determination to destroy all "illegal construction." He is gunning to be the next prime minister.

I did regard as positive Barak's decision to evacuate 10 of the 42 new "outposts" that were established since he took office, as it establishes the principle of removing existing settlements in the territories. This is critical. Finally, we have to see if the new budget will reflect the "change in priorities" the electorate was promised—support for education, health, the elderly, and addressing the huge problem of unemployment. On this, we have no good tidings yet whatsoever. On balance, I give a C+ to the new administration. There's lots of room for improvement.
**Gila Svirsky
Jerusalem**

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS

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** (1996 edition)\$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

- Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study**
First full-length treatment of Lenin's studies of Hegel. \$15.95

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

- NEW! Voices from within the Prison Walls**
by D. A. Sheldon. Prisoners' views of (in)justice system and organizing from within\$8
For pamphlet plus donor copy for a prisoner\$16
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by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya\$2
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- Dos ensayos por Raya Dunayevskaya**\$2
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- Marxist-Humanist Literature Catalog**
A full list of publications (includes many not listed here) available from News and Letters Committees...\$5c postage

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Voices From Within The Prison Walls

The implementation of the concept of control unit prisons (or supermax), administrative segregation and other innocuous-sounding special housing units (SHU) has progressed at an alarming rate. Since the early-1980s lockdown at Marion, Ill., which set the tone for the supermax concept, nearly every state in the U.S. has completed or begun a supermax project. All states use some type of administrative segregation to incapacitate prisoners above and beyond general segregation time.

Unlike segregation, which is used for supposed infractions of prison rules and is subject to a modicum of due process, segregating prisoners administratively is considered to be a "non-punitive" punishment by prisonrats and, as such, not subject to the general due process requirements. A prisoner does not have to violate a prison rule to be placed in administrative segregation or a control unit facility. Simply the prospect of a future rule violation is sufficient.

It is ironic that the same isolation and abuse suffered by prisoners in this alleged "non-punitive" status in such facilities as Pelican Bay (Cal.) and Tamms (Ill.), to name but two, were once deemed "cruel and unusual punishment" in the mid-1800s in the U.S., a time when the electric chair and the gas chamber were just starting to come into fashion as "humane" alternatives to hanging. The theory behind a supermax or SHU is that it will somehow re-educate or modify the behavior of a prisoner who is deemed a security risk.

Now called "correctional adjustment" or "behavior modification," it is a concept which finds many parallels in history when specific groups in power wished to silence anyone daring to challenge or question the authority of the ruling class. The Inquisition, Nazi concentration camps, and the gulags and sanitariums of the former USSR

were all designed with the re-education process in mind, a process accomplished by brutal isolation, torture—both physical and psychological—or death.

The U.S. has a sordid history of confinement and segregation based upon such factors as race and political affiliation. Seven percent of the U.S. population is Black males, yet almost half of the prison population is comprised of Blacks. Cultural bias and disparity does not stop at the prison gate. Over 90% of the prisoners in the control unit of the MCAC in Maryland are Black.

It is not hard to see the parallels between COINTEL-PRO of the 1960s and '70s, and the use of control units in the 1980s and beyond. Pre-emptive "non-punitive" action to segregate suspected gang leaders or members, prison activists, prison revolutionaries and prison paralegals is much like the racial and cultural profiling which is promulgated in the community.

When pre-emptive "collective punishments" are meted out and ignored because of the status of the recipients, we have taken the first step to a totalitarian culture. In the 1930s first it was the prisoners, then the insane, then



Black World

(Continued from page 1)

sought the support and solidarity of French democrats, workers, students and the Left from the beginning of the revolution in 1954. However, as Fanon noted, "Other things being equal, it can be said of Algeria's European democrats what has been endlessly repeated of the French parties of the Left: for a long time history is made without them." Though the Left is unable to prevent the imperialist adventures of France, "Nevertheless," Fanon adds, "their existence has forced the neo-fascists of Algeria and France to be on the defensive. **The Left has done nothing for a long time in France.** Yet by its action, its denunciations, and its analyses, it has prevented a certain number of things."

It is precisely this political duality of the Left, unable to act but having prevented a certain number of things by its denunciations of French imperialism, that reveals France's vaunted democracy being shed, even as its neo-fascism was being exposed in Algeria. Left support movements, Fanon informed his French democratic audience (the chapter on minorities having been published originally in *Les Temps Modernes*), both elicit and expose the social fascism of so-called democratic governments when it (the Left) denounces the imperialist-militarist foreign policies of its own government. Left forces in Algeria and in France were in this way "constantly forcing the extremists to unmask themselves, and hence progressively to adopt the positions that will precipitate their defeat."

So crucial were political minorities for making the revolution and for the reconstruction of Algerian society afterwards that Fanon singled out two "minorities" in particular to demonstrate his dialectical approach to both of these historic tasks. Of Algeria's Jewish minority Fanon wrote that "Even today, the Jewish lawyers and doctors who in the camps or in prison share the fate of millions of Algerians attest to the multiracial reality of the Algerian Nation."

He described the broad mass of Algerian Jews (some three-fourths of the Algerian Jewish population) as "a floating, highly Arabized mass having only a poor knowl-

Supermax's new cruelty

Gypsies, then Jewish citizens, then the whole of Europe and the world which suffered the collective punishments and class repression of policies which profiled peoples and cultures, then subjected them to the most brutal treatment based upon a concept of superiority and the need to "purify" a culture and country of its "criminals."

Those who would reject the likelihood of such an occurrence need look no further than Rwanda, Kosova and East Timor. They need look no further than out their back windows to the sprawling complex of electronic wizardry which has replaced the rack and thumbscrew. Compare that complex to pictures of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany. The only thing missing? The gas chambers and furnaces, at least for now. —Prisoner, USA

An inside perspective

Tamms, Ill.—The treatment of the prisoners at Tamms Correctional Center, a "closed" maximum security prison, and in many prisons around the world, represents a major disgrace to humanity. Tamms prisoners are castigated as the "worst of the worst."

The initiatory procedures that I had to go through upon my arrival here in 1998 were the most debased and inhumane form of treatment I had ever endured! I was forced to strip off all my clothing in the presence of 15 to 20 different people. Adding to this humiliation I was directed by loud, indiscreet orders: "Hands, bottom of feet, mouth, testicles, open buttocks..." Everything I treasured was separated from me: my family photos, my writings, books and even hygienic items previously allowed by the Department of Corrections.

Every day I look out this red, perforated steel door and it's the same view. Nothing changes—not even the faces of the guards. As a segregated prisoner, I'm denied all access to educational

programs, all televised religious programs, all commissary privileges. I have been in **segregation for nine years**, and never have I suffered such offensive and intrusive isolation, I'm unable to sleep because the area where I'm confined has an echo that reverberates constantly and only serves to remind me of its emptiness. Life without meaning.

My so-called recreation yard is a dog kennel, an empty box devoid of an outside view, except the sky, and this view is segmented. I feel as if I'm inside a time capsule where no external stimulation enters and my tears for mercy stay inside. Today is so much like yesterday, I often confuse them.

This place is not designed to help, because I often find myself ruminating about vengefully hurting myself or others. I do pray people will see the futility in this place, go behind the words and look at the human aspect of it all. Would you place your own self in these sepulchers? If not, then why place me here? My failures have never been so great as to call them the "worst of the worst." Yet I have erred in life. Haven't you? —Illinois prisoner

Fanon's Dying Colonialism

edge of French, considering itself by tradition and sometimes by dress as authentic 'natives.'"

Fanon went further. He lets us hear the voices of Algeria's Jewish dimension. As one Jewish group in Constantine wrote in August 1956, on the eve of the Battle of Algiers: "One of the most pernicious maneuvers of colonialism in Algeria was and remains the division between Jews and Moslems.... The Jews have been in Algeria for more than two thousand years; they are thus an integral part of the Algerian people.... Moslems and Jews, children of the same earth, must not fall into the trap of provocation. Rather, they must make a common front against it, not letting themselves be duped by those who, not so long ago, were offhandedly contemplating the total extermination of the Jews as a salutary step in the evolution of humanity."

Fanon made common cause with another political minority, one which to our way of thinking today would appear extraordinary. He found that even a segment of European settlers had greatly aided and supported the liberation movement, allowing their farms to be used as "infirmaries, refuges, or relay stations.... and granaries." Not only would FLN weapons caches be located on settler farms, but, "in many areas, [FLN] meetings would be held on European farms."

Fanon's point, which was also his original point of departure for this last chapter of *A Dying Colonialism* on minorities, is that "Algeria's European minority is far from being the monolithic block that one imagines." There are twin aspects to the point of Fanon's essay, aspects that are as practical as they are dialectical, namely, that being a revolutionary under the whip of counter-revolution or, as in our own day, in a period of retrogression, makes one a political minority. It is a political reality that makes it more imperative than ever to practice a dialectical approach to reality that digs deep for the other, revolutionary dimension that lies in every country, in every oppressed minority. From Rwanda to the Balkans, to right here in the U.S., we see that Frantz Fanon was a practicing, thinking dialectician who continues to speak to our age.

Black/Red View

Philosophic task remains

Editor's note: This column is the second of two retrospectives on moments in 20th century African-American history.

by John Alan

African Americans were engaged at the dawn of the 20th century in a permanent struggle for freedom against holdovers from the barbarism of slavery—peonage labor, lynchings and segregation. Years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of Reconstruction, the unresolved "Negro problem," as it was called, gave fuel to the politics of white supremacy at a time when the U.S. took on the "white man's burden," going to war with Spain to take over Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

Segregation and discrimination at the same time created a racist ideology that was comparable to that of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Books appeared with titles such as *The Negro is a Beast* and *The Negro: A Menace to Civilization*. Popular anti-Black literature and films portrayed African Americans as inferior to the white race. Blacks could never catch up with white civilization, and freedom had caused them to revert to barbarism. The only solution, in this view, was extermination or colonization.

BLACK MASS OPPOSITION

At no time did African Americans stop organizing to oppose those oppressive social conditions. T. Thomas Fortune, the secular and militant editor and owner of the *New York Age*, called a convention in 1890 in Chicago to organize the Afro-American National League. Fortune had written in an editorial "that this country has determined to leave the colored man to fight his own battles... There is no dodging the issue; we have got to take hold of this problem ourselves and make so much noise that all the world shall know the wrongs we suffer and our determination to right these wrongs."

Fortune, in his address as the temporary chairman of the convention, told the 141 delegates: "As the agitation which culminated in the abolishment of African slavery in the country covered a period of 50 years, so we expect that before the rights conferred upon us by the War Amendments are fully conceded, a full century will have passed away. We have not undertaken child's play. We have undertaken a serious work which will tax and exhaust the best intelligence of the race for the next century."

The historic significance of the National Afro-American League was that it was an expression of the new self-consciousness germinating in the minds of the newly urbanized African-American masses. By organizing their own migration movements from the South to the Northern urban areas, they had created a collective social power, a subjective will and confidence to begin their own battles for liberation.

THEORIES OF BLACK LEADERS

Booker T. Washington opposed the migration of African Americans from the South. It violated a principle of his philosophy which required that the masses of African Americans remain a rural people. He advised them to "cast down your bucket where you are" and "make advantage out of disadvantage."

W.E.B. DuBois' concept that a "talented tenth" of "college-bred Negroes" was needed to lead the Black masses automatically exempted him and his colleagues from playing any role in this migration organized by ordinary Black people. Thus, in the first decades of this passing century Black masses had moved ahead to change an oppressive racist society without a theory or a philosophy in agreement with their self-organizing practice.

In one sense Booker T. Washington can be exempted from the problem of not developing a philosophy of Black liberation. From the beginning of his illustrious career as the principal of the Tuskegee Institute, he let it be known that he was not committed to any struggle for Black civil rights. On the other hand, the development of a philosophy of Black liberation was clearly the aim of the young intellectual, W.E.B. DuBois, who was Washington's opponent and chief critic. He did not develop that philosophy because he was burdened with his idea that the Black intellectual was the vanguard of the movement. Developing that philosophy is a task that remains to be completed for the 21st century.

Toxic explosion

Memphis, Tenn.—There was an explosion on Oct. 30 at the Defense Depot, a highly contaminated Superfund site in the middle of the Black community of South Memphis. I felt the explosion in my house over a quarter mile away. The fire department came out, put out the fire and kept going. They said it was a transformer. The electric utility, MLG&W, said that there was no transformer over there and that they had had no reports of a transformer going out.

When I went there the next day to videotape it, I got a strange taste in my mouth. Later I got a headache so severe I had to go to the emergency room. There were five different places on the Depot that were burned. The most severe section was up by the fence.

This is serious because the federal government is supposed to sign that land over to the city very soon, if they haven't already done that. When they signed the Millington naval base over to the city, they found napalm about 30 minutes later. The city has to clean up the contamination. The Pentagon isn't responsible after the transfer, unless the city can prove that in court it is. —Environmental justice activist

Welfare 'reform' deepens poverty, stirs resistance

(Continued from page 1)

The maximum life-time period one can receive federal assistance is five years, but some states have instituted shorter time periods; it is two years in Massachusetts, and people are already being thrown off. The Boston area welfare rights group Survivors, Inc., told *N&L*, "The women we meet at the welfare offices are hanging on by their fingernails, many of them homeless or almost homeless, many of them having been kicked off welfare because of time limits and having no other source of income." The new law also prohibits assistance to pursue full-time education or training, so that now the average recipient—a young woman with young children—in order to have any chance of a decent-paying job, must try to squeeze in schooling along with workfare and other welfare requirements.

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a leader in instituting workfare, has imposed more and more harsh and humiliating requirements on welfare recipients, while removing 400,000 people from public assistance since 1995. As much as 35 hours a week of workfare (called WEP) are mandatory for some recipients, leaving them no time to search for a job or go to school. On Jan. 1, unless stopped by the courts, Giuliani will institute a policy of refusing beds in shelters to homeless people who have not complied with workfare and other requirements. Of course, being homeless, they are likely not to receive mail advising them what they are required to do, but the shelters' computers will know how to keep them out. "His Honor" even threatened to take away the children of parents who lose their shelter rights, on the grounds that the children no longer have shelter!

New York City has been rebuked by the federal government for interfering with people's right to apply for food stamps, Medicaid and SSI (federal programs, but you apply for them at local welfare centers), and for failing to supply translators for the city's large foreign-born population. Maureen Lane of the Welfare Rights Initiative told us, "There has been some relief from Giuliani's changes in welfare through suing him, but that is the only way."

Giuliani continues to cut the city's unionized work force and replace it with recipients, who do the same work, mostly as janitors, sanitation, and parks workers, but receive only their old welfare benefits. WEP workers, who number 40,000, began extensive self-organizing campaigns about three years ago, and won a few improvements in working conditions. But the push to unionize WEPs (against the law) has fallen flat. Labor unions are not even trying, although they are supporting some of the WEP workers' demands, including two bills in the City Council, one to give WEP workers a grievance procedure and the other to create 10,000 "real" jobs for welfare recipients.

WEP Workers Together! sponsored one of the bills. They told us, "We go to work sites and speak to people. We push their grievances with the site supervisors, and we form neighborhood groups that meet monthly. WEP workers' main complaint is that they are not paid. The second is that the regular employees let them do all the work. They are sent on job interviews where 60 people

are sent for two positions, and the positions require skills they don't have. It's a backward circle."

ACORN in Brooklyn also organizes WEP workers at about 100 work sites. On Nov. 23 ACORN conducted a bus tour of four WEP sites, asking the supervisors to sign a workers' Bill of Rights and ending up at City Hall to lay wreaths for the WEP workers who have been killed on the job. Another group, Make the Road by Walking, in Bushwick, Brooklyn—mostly Latino recipients—filed a federal complaint and a law suit to obtain translators at the welfare centers, and started a "Campaign for Respect" at one center, with ten demands ranging from cleaner centers to real job opportunities.

Michigan's harsh laws—it recently imposed a requirement, temporarily halted by a federal court, that recipients be tested for drugs—have also generated their opposite, a group called Welfare Warriors. Their recent campaigns include sending bills to President Clinton for their unpaid labor in raising children, and sending smashed clocks to Congress to dramatize the need for a moratorium on the five-year lifetime limit on welfare. Dottie Stevens of Survivors, Inc., told *N&L*, "The changes in the welfare system since 1996 make it much more punitive. Welfare was never sufficient income for an adequate standard of living. The effects of these regulations are more homeless, higher malnutrition rates, more violence, suffering and death. But the welfare rights movement in Massachusetts is growing now in spite of the obstacles to receiving welfare. It includes students and community organizations as well as individuals who are homeless or about to become homeless, joining organizations to fight for their survival."

LEAVING WELFARE FOR WHAT?

President Clinton and the states are bragging because the welfare rolls have dropped from five million families in 1994 to 2.7 million at the end of last year. The politicians imply that these people left welfare for decent jobs. Clinton recently toured "pockets of poverty" around the country to assure the residents they will be helped by increased investment in those areas. The big lie in both cases is that poor people benefit from the low-wage, no-benefit jobs they are forced to take. The only beneficiaries are the capitalists, while the people who are cut off welfare, unable to get on it, or forced into workfare while on it, end up as bad or worse off than they were under the old system.

Whether or not they are employed (and "employed" loses meaning when those receiving public assistance must work full-time for their benefits), many poor people are sinking more deeply into poverty. The 1996 changes in the law have not caused the expected increase in the number of people living below the poverty line, only because we are in a period of economic upswing, so a portion of the people leaving welfare are able to find jobs, ranging from a third in New Jersey to 75% in Florida. But getting off welfare into paid work is nothing new. Despite all the racist, sexist propaganda about lazy recipients, most recipients always went in and out of the job market, depending on the state of the economy as well as their personal circumstances such as having small children.

The expanding economy lifted some people above the government's poverty line last year, but there are still 34.5 million people below it, and many experts believe the real rate is higher. Regionally, the only drop in the poverty rate was in the South. The poverty rate for African Americans is 26.1%, over twice the U.S. average. The percentage of children living in poverty is 18.9% nationally—13.5 million children. The number of people below the poverty line does not tell us the depth of poverty. The evidence is that the poor are getting poorer. Welfare rights groups all over the country report that private food pantries are unable to meet the demand, and homeless shelters are bursting at the seams.

Nationally, half the families kicked off welfare recently have become homeless, and a third of former recipients report that within a year after leaving welfare, they do not have enough to eat. Former recipients who are forced to take minimum wage jobs often become poorer because they lose Medicaid, food stamps, and child care benefits (for those on workfare), while their expenses increase. A national study of women with children who left welfare in 1995-97 showed that those who got jobs were no better off than other low-wage women, that is, still poor. Moreover, a third of the leavers returned to welfare, and a quarter lacked any means of support.

THE FACE OF POVERTY

Poverty has a female face. Two-thirds of poor adults are women, and an estimated 88% of homeless families are headed by women. The vast majority of low-income mothers experience severe physical and/or sexual abuse and assault in their lifetimes. Gwendolyn Mink discusses the 1996 federal welfare act in *Whose Welfare?* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1999, p. 171): "Flouting the ideal of universal citizenship, the act distinguishes poor single

mothers from other citizens and subjects them to a separate system of law. [They] forfeit rights the rest of us enjoy as fundamental to our citizenship—family rights, reproductive rights, and vocational liberty—just because they need welfare."

Moreover, if they find jobs, women can expect to earn just 73% of men's salaries. These factors have spurred some feminist groups, including the National Organization for Women, to take an active part in welfare rights struggles.

Poverty is more prevalent among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans than among whites. And most statistics on poverty and wages do not even include undocumented immigrants, who may work for less than minimum wage, and are excluded from nearly all forms of public assistance.

What keeps people in poverty or plunges them deeper into it, are low wages. We are in a period of sustained economic growth, but neither the increases in national wealth nor the demand for workers is reflected in higher wages. With labor unions broken or coopted and welfare no longer an option, working people lack the power to withhold their labor in order to force wages up. In fact, real wages (what you can buy with your pay check) have fallen for the past 25 years by about 12%. Household income has risen

only because so many more women and students are working than previously, and so many wage-earners are forced to work two jobs.

What can we do to re-organize this anti-poor, anti-worker society?

The demands of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, like those of other groups who advocate the redistribution of wealth, strike us as abstract and ineffective rallying points. Moreover, the Campaign's analysis of poverty is quite wrong, treating the gap between rich and poor as if it were caused by the rich refusing to "share the wealth." We mislead people if we reinforce the idea that there is a fixed "pie" to be shared, or that capitalism can be permanently reformed so as to eliminate poverty. In fact, capitalism's drive to expand and increase profits makes it inherently at war with working people. Reforms last only as long as workers' movements (including the unemployed) are strong enough to force them on the system. (See Betty Reid Mandell, "Falling through the Safety Net: Women and Children First," *New Politics*, Winter 1999.) The only real solution is to destroy capitalism and replace it with a worker-controlled system of production for human needs.

These issues belong in discussions of welfare rights. Appeals for fairness within an anti-human social-economic system will not win "human rights," and the next economic or political crisis can wipe out whatever we do win. To reform the law—to keep people on welfare a little longer, to raise the minimum wage or obtain grievance procedures for workfare—is only one aspect of fighting poverty. In order to transform this society, we need to understand how it functions and to explore the possibility of a new human one.

No more border deaths!

Los Angeles—MacArthur Park in Central L.A. was the site where two to three hundred mostly Latino men, women and children recently attended a press conference, march, ecumenical ceremony and a festive program of popular theater, food, live music and dancing.

The gathering was to protest the INS policies that lead to violence and killing of hundreds of Central American and Mexican immigrants annually at the Mexico/U.S. Border—300 deaths per year and countless other acts of violence.

The event was sponsored by CHIRLA, "Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles," along with labor and religious groups. CHIRLA has been active in supporting the organizing of 22,000 day laborers and the Domestic Workers Association who are overwhelmingly Latino.

Two of the protest signs read: "No more deaths at the border" and "Immigrant rights are Human Rights"; there were also many crosses with names of individuals who died trying to cross the border. There were also testimonies from those whose family members have disappeared.

Ms. Imelda, coordinator of Latino Services in Los Angeles, presented testimonies of assault and violations against immigrant women by immigration and border patrol agents and immigrant smugglers.

Victims that died were commemorated and respected within the traditional, indigenous/Catholic "Day of the Dead" ceremony.

Those that attempt to cross the border are among the poorest of immigrants arriving in this country. The drive to immigrate is the drive to escape mass hunger and poverty created by NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), and today's world economic crises and the capitalists' perpetual drive to invest and profit abroad at the expense of living human beings. It must be stopped.

—Participant



Worker-activists of Brazil's MST (Landless Workers Movement) along route of the March of the Americas.



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Chomsky ignores lessons of wars in Kosova

The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosova, by Noam Chomsky (Monroe, Maine: 1999, Common Courage Press)

There once was a time when the radical critic, faced with rape camps and mass killings against an ethnic minority, could be counted on to attack the offending regime, expose the complicity of the Western powers, and extend solidarity to the victims of oppression. But no more—at least judging from Noam Chomsky's latest book on the war in Kosova.

Chomsky debunks the myth that the U.S. went to war over Kosova for "humanitarian" reasons. He is right that this wasn't the first time U.S. imperialism tried to justify a military intervention through ideological double talk. As he shows, the U.S. bombed Serbia to bolster the prestige of NATO, not to aid the victims of "ethnic cleansing."

The problem, however, is that not one but **two** wars were fought in Kosova this year. One was the U.S. war against Serbia. The other was Serbia's war against the Kosovars. Reading Chomsky, you'd barely know the second ever occurred. Neither the nature of Milosevic's regime nor the struggle of the Kosovars receives any serious discussion.

A 'NEW HUMANISM'?

Chomsky does the imperialists one better by not only debunking what they say, but attributing to them what they never claimed—namely, that the bombing of Serbia represents "the New Humanism of the New Millennium." (The phrase was actually first used by the German intellectual Ulrich Beck.)

This is an incredible choice of words. Far from having anything to do with the actions of imperialist commanders, the quest for a "New Humanism" has been integral to the freedom struggles of our time, from the East European revolts against statist "Communism" to the African Revolutions to the Black freedom struggles in the U.S. By attributing to the rulers the opposite of what they are about—a "New Humanism"—Chomsky manages to purge from his purview the **actual** humanism which comes from mass struggles for freedom. This is most of all seen from his callous treatment of the Kosovars.

He first of all denies that genocide was ever at issue, since "only" 2,500 Kosovars were supposedly killed by Serb troops prior to the start of NATO's air war. Most of the killing of Kosovars by Serbs, he says, occurred after the bombing started. Serbia is therefore not to blame for the mass killings and expulsions; it's really the fault of the U.S.

He does mention that before the U.S. bombing Milosevic made plans for a massive invasion of Kosova, code-named Operation Horseshoe, but he dismisses it. After all, he says, the U.S. probably has contingency plans to invade Canada but that hardly means it's planning on taking imminent action. Chomsky doesn't mention that Operation Horseshoe was named after the tactic used by Serb paramilitaries in Bosnia of surrounding a village in a U-shaped formation, killing and raping those caught in it while forcing the rest of the populace to flee. Nor does he mention that Milosevic sent 40,000 troops into Kosova **before** the U.S. invasion replete with veterans of the paramilitaries in Bosnia who knew very well what was expected of them with "Operation Horseshoe."

The one time he mentions genocide is by citing Miranda Vicker's comment about "genocidal tactics of Albanian separatists." Since he has told us that the killing of "only" 2,500 Kosovars prior to the U.S. bombing did not constitute genocide, one is left wondering how the killing of a few dozen Serbs by Kosovars up to then constituted genocide—especially when most of those killed were Serb policemen.

For all his acumen in criticizing the media, Chomsky's critical reasoning comes to a dead stop when it comes to considering the Kosovars. He accepts with-

'Punitive Damage'—a film of East Timor

The Oct. 28 New York premiere of "Punitive Damage," a documentary about 1991 events in the East Timor independence struggle, was followed by discussion by the film maker and four of the "stars." Made by New Zealander Annie Goldson, the film includes wonderful footage of young people in Dili planning and carrying out a public demonstration in the midst of severe repression and shocking footage by Max Stahl of the ensuing massacre by the Indonesian army. Two hundred and seventy-one people were killed on Nov. 12, 1991, but instead of killing the movement, the massacre brought international attention to East Timor for the first time since its annexation by Indonesia in 1975.

"Punitive Damage" is the story of a 20-year-old New Zealander murdered that day, Kamal Bamadhaj. It features his mother, Helen Todd, who becomes an insightful analyst. Her persistent investigation revealed that Kamal was singled out for killing because he was known to the security forces for helping the independence movement. Through the Center for Constitutional Rights, she sues the generals responsible for the massacre in a Boston court and is awarded a judgment for \$22 million, \$16 million in punitive damages. If she ever collects any of her judgment, she will give it to the families of the other people massacred, who could not do what she did without themselves being killed.

The "stars" of the film who spoke afterwards were

out criticism *The New York Times* writer Chris Hedges' statement that "between 1966 and 1989 an estimated 130,000 Serbs left [Kosova] because of frequent harassment and discrimination by the Kosovar Albanian majority." The revocation of Kosova's autonomous status by Milosevic in 1989 comes out sounding like a benign act of a man trying to protect the Serb minority. Chomsky either doesn't know, or doesn't bother to tell us, that Milosevic used such exaggerated tales about the suffering of Serbs to consolidate his hold on power in 1989 and then launch a genocidal war against Bosnia.

Incredibly, Bosnia hardly figures in the book at all. It's as if the massacre of hundreds of thousands through a carefully orchestrated genocide were a historical trifle without relevance to what Milosevic was doing in Kosova.

ONE-SIDED ANTI-IMPERIALISM

The gist of Chomsky's approach is seen when he draws an analogy to the U.S. in explaining why Serbia responded harshly to attacks by the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA): "We need scarcely tarry on how the U.S. would respond to attacks by a guerrilla force with foreign bases and supplies, seeking, say, independence for Puerto Rico" (p.31). No one need be told what would be the response of the U.S. But what would be the response of those opposed to U.S. imperialism? Obviously, to support the fighters for Puerto Rican independence. But when it comes to Kosova, Chomsky uses the analogy to **attack** the KLA's fight for independence, on the grounds that it provoked the Serbs!

Though an anarchist, Chomsky suffers from such

Revisionist 'death counts' in Kosova

Editor's Note: The following report by Bob Myers of Workers Aid for Kosova is adapted from a piece which will appear in the English Marxist-Humanist journal Hobgoblin.

In August I traveled to Mitrovica, the Kosova miners' town. I found my old friend, Shashivar Begu, a member of the miners' union committee. Two years earlier he stayed at my house in Manchester as he toured Britain speaking to trade unionists about the eight-year lock-out of miners in Kosova. Now he greeted me with the traditional kiss and a smile but his whole face spoke of anguish. Another miner quietly told me that Shashivar's brother had gone missing when the whole town was ethnically cleansed in March. The family hoped he would turn up, as many people were doing, but the day before his body had been found in a nearby mass grave.

In the last few weeks this and other wasted lives have been "resurrected" as part of an argument about how many people died in Kosova. All kinds of people have seized on reports that the number of Albanians murdered by the Serbian regime is far less than the 100,000 which was being put about by NATO leaders during the bombing.

The International War Crimes Tribunal on ex-Yugoslavia has so far exhumed 2,100 Albanians after

tunnel-vision anti-imperialism that he becomes a virtual apologist for Milosevic: "Serbia is one of those disorderly miscreants that impedes the institution of the U.S.-dominated global system" (p.13).

This statement leaves one speechless. He has apparently forgotten that Serbia was a virtual ally of the U.S. during 1995-98, following the signing of the Dayton accords—which **rewarded** Milosevic by dividing Bosnia into distinct ethnic cantons.

Chomsky's failure to support the fighters against genocide in Bosnia and Kosova, after writing eloquently for years in defense of the victims of "ethnic cleansing" in Guatemala, East Timor and elsewhere, shows that the power of U.S. militarism has become so total that even anti-statist radicals are being drawn into making apologies for any force, no matter how reactionary, so long as it can be considered a bulwark against U.S. dominance.

It isn't that Chomsky actually **supports** Serbia. He knows the regime has committed unspeakable crimes. But that just doesn't matter that much to him. He instead wants to expose the hypocrisy of U.S. foreign policy. The inevitable result of such a one-sided approach when a **total** view is needed is that the **human dimension**—those struggling against Serbian policies in Kosova—drops from sight.

Last spring some of Chomsky's writings on the war were circulated by the Tanjug press—Milosevic's state-run propaganda bureau. No doubt this book too will be used by those out to defend Serbia as the "lesser evil." It's a sad commentary that Chomsky allows himself to be used in this way.

—Peter Hudis

examination of one-third of the 529 mass graves so far discovered. Over 11,000 people have been reported missing by Albanian families but they may not all be dead. There are reports of hundreds or even thousands of Albanians having been taken to prisons in Serbia by retreating troops. Since NATO troops entered Kosova in June, 379 people have been murdered, about half of them Serbs and Roma and the other half Albanian. Roughly 164,000 non-Albanians have left Kosova since March.

No one disputes the 2,100 bodies exhumed by the war crimes investigators. They argue over how and why they died. How many more bodies will be found in the unopened graves? How many bodies will never be

found because fire and time removed all traces?

Many from the "Left" are now excitedly waving around the Albanian death toll as "proof" that they were right to denounce NATO's bombing. Clinton and Blair, they say, justified it on the basis that up to 100,000 had been killed. Therefore the bombing was a fraud, just an

act of imperialism inventing "horrors" to hide its brutal intent.

Of course, NATO uses reports of suffering to justify its actions, just as it ignores them when it chooses. Amnesty International reports that 4,000 Albanians were murdered, mostly by Serbian police, in Kosova between 1989 and the end of 1998. NATO certainly wasn't shouting out about this. The West now demands that Milosevic be put on trial. They weren't saying this last year. On the contrary, in 1995 the U.S. and British governments hailed the Serbian leader as a great "peacemaker" and "statesman" as he signed the Dayton agreement. Albanians were being killed then and the bodies of up to 8,000 were in pits around Srebrenica. It's the same in Iraq, East Timor and many other places. Despotism and mass murder are ignored when it suits and "vile human rights abuses" discovered also when it suits, but what about the truth beyond this cynicism?

What is the intent of those from the "Left" who have triumphantly held up the "low" death toll? To understand the truth? To bring out the criminality of NATO? In truth they are revealing the almost inhuman morality that is today passed off as "internationalism" and "socialism." Their only interest in the 2,100 dead is that it contradicts NATO's claims. The 2,100 are no longer people who lived, had families, whose only crime was to resist Serbia's efforts to deny them a human existence.

The murders of Albanians do not compete with the murders of Serbs or Roma, they are not mutually exclusive sets of figures. To admit the one is not to deny the other. It is only if the totality of injustice and inhumanity is acknowledged and comprehended that any sense can be made of the Kosova crisis and, even more importantly, a way forward for humanity be found in the nightmare of violence.

—Bob Myers



Constancio Pinto, an underground organizer of the 1991 student movement who had to flee East Timor; Allan Nairn, one of the brave journalists who exposed the massacre to the outside world after having his skull fractured attending the event; and two of the lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights, Michael Ratner and Beth Stephens, who are creating new international law in suits against political mass murderers.

Nairn explained that the Dili massacre was meant to finish off the Timorese resistance. As he hid out after the shooting stopped that day, he learned that "all over Dili, soldiers were breaking down doors and taking people away. Many of the smartest and bravest East Timorese were killed. But it turned out that the massacre was the beginning of the end of the military occupation. The U.S. supplied Indonesia with the very best weapons and training, yet it lost." Little by little, international and U.S. public opinion caused this country to pressure Indonesia to stop.

Constancio Pinto cautioned that "now independence is here, but the East Timorese are not yet free." He said all the suffering since 1975 is not easy to forget, and the whole country must be rebuilt. "We rely on the international community. Let us work together to build East Timor so that we can all enjoy it."

"Punitive Damage" should be shown widely to make it clear that the East Timorese struggle is not over.

—Anne Jaclard

Youth Leonard Peltier's words from prison

by Kevin Michaels

ongoing movements such as the Jericho campaign the international effort to free journalist and death inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal have contributed greatly rise in awareness of the existence of political pris- in the U.S. Perhaps second only to Mumia's case the level of international recognition is that of Leonard Peltier, the Native American activist wrongfully convicted in 1977 of the murders of two FBI agents. A number of highly questionable elements in Peltier's arrest and trial, he was sentenced to two consecutive life terms and over 20 years later remains incarcerated in the harsh conditions of the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan.

Peltier's numerous supporters include international human rights figures as well as college and high school students, indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, the youth of U.S. native reservations—the people like Peltier himself, are rooted in the hard life of "rez." The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee organized November Leonard Peltier Freedom Month and organized a series of events in Washington, D.C., to publicize his case and to increase pressure for a review of the U.S. Parole Commission's repeated denials of parole or a presidential clemency similar to the one recently granted to 11 Puerto Rican independence activists.

A powerful tool for understanding Peltier's case and the life of struggle for the dignity of native peoples has recently been placed in the hands of all those moved by his experience. *Prison Writings: My Life is My Dance*, published by St. Martin's Press, is Peltier's account of his development and the terrible events which ended in his long and unjust incarceration.

Peltier was born in North Dakota in 1944 and spent his early years on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation near the Canadian border. Like many of his generation which founded the organizational foundation of U.S. native struggles known as the American Indian Movement (AIM), Peltier grew to love both the city and the reservation. He was living in Bismarck, Wash., in 1969 when native activists occupied Garry Island in protest against government policy towards native peoples. Peltier took part in a similar occupation the next year of an abandoned military base in Seattle.

Peltier officially joined AIM in 1972 and devoted his life to native struggles. He participated in the "Trail of Broken Treaties" which ended in the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Washington, D.C. This

effort marked him as a dangerous figure in the eyes of the FBI and police surveillance became a routine part of his life. Peltier was arrested on a spurious charge of an attempted murder not long after. He was in jail during the AIM standoff with the FBI on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in early 1973.

This event, a watershed mark in the native struggle in the U.S., grew out of the invitation of AIM members to Pine Ridge by residents weary of the corruption and brutality which characterized the official reservation government, as well as their readiness to sell off reservation land. AIM members and the residents opposed to the corrupt leadership took over the reservation and held off the FBI and National Guard for 71 days.

The immediate resolution of the Pine Ridge siege did not bring to an end the conditions which precipitated it however, and AIM members were invited back by residents in 1975. Leonard Peltier was one of those who responded. Harassment from the FBI and paramilitary forces of the corrupt reservation government provoked a gun battle on June 26 which resulted in the deaths of two federal agents and one AIM member. Peltier sought refuge from a fierce manhunt in Canada as the U.S. government tried to construct a case against him.

A coerced statement from a Pine Ridge resident gave the government pretext to have Peltier extradited from Canada and he soon found himself in a hostile courtroom facing murder charges. He was convicted on April 18, 1977.

As much as Peltier details his life prior to his conviction, he spends an equal amount on his life behind bars. He has experienced first hand the "Marionization" of the federal penal system—the increasing prevalence of lockdowns and sensory deprivation as everyday features of prison life as well as the substandard level of medical care available to prisoners—he suffers from a painful jaw ailment which makes eating difficult. Despite these things, however, Peltier continues to struggle inside the prison walls for the dignity of incarcerated Native Americans.

Peltier closes his book with a statement which reveals the universality inherent in the struggle for which he has lived his life: "I believe our work will be unfinished until not one human being is hungry or battered, not a single person is forced to die in war, not one innocent languishes imprisoned, and no one is persecuted for his or her beliefs."

Prison Writings is a great contribution to that struggle and will hopefully serve to bring new layers of people into the fight to free Leonard Peltier.

Sexism in campus paper

Memphis, Tenn.—I rarely find anything of interest in the *Daily Helmsman*, the campus newspaper at the University of Memphis, but I was in the mood for some easy reading recently. I was shocked by what I read.

The *Daily Helmsman* had an article by Marcus Matthews detailing why men are the greater sex. His reasons are: men were made first, men are not in need of an "out of order" sign once a month, men can't get pregnant therefore women were given birth pains by a higher being because of their inferiority, men can pee standing or sitting, the world of fashion is on men's side, women depreciate with age, men are more thoughtful, men don't have double standards in dating, and "lastly and most importantly, IT (sex) is over when we're done unless we really like you."

The worst part is for Matthews to say that men have the power to use women for sex. It shows the university is tolerant of sexism. Does this mean that the university is also tolerant of racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and hate crimes? How can an institution whose president states that the university puts an "emphasis on quality education and character development" allow such ignorance to be promoted by the university newspaper?

I contacted Matthews and the *Daily Helmsman*. They printed my letter to the editor but replied that what I expected out of them was censorship—that requiring non-sexist articles in the paper is the same as censoring articles on the Civil Rights Movement or the horrors of the Vietnam War. The editor said they were exercising free speech. Profanity is protected under free speech but the *Daily Helmsman* doesn't print it.

Matthews' following article, one week later, "apologized" to all who were offended. Apparently, he received several complaints. Yet, he went on to say that some people are just too stupid and insecure to get a "joke."

I'm not going to stand for this sexism. The *Daily Helmsman* is bankrolled by the state of Tennessee and student tuition. I'm not paying to be offended. We're planning a demonstration and maybe a boycott.

—Lee

Mumia teach-ins

Chicago—The Chicago Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal recently organized a series of teach-ins on the case of the award-winning journalist and Pennsylvania death row inmate. Events took place at universities, city colleges and high schools including the School of the Art Institute, Truman College and Prologue Alternative High School. Most of the teach-ins took place on Nov. 22.

Supporters of Mumia and family members of victims of police brutality volunteered their time to deliver talks and host screenings of the film "Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt." Among those participating was George Morris, whose son Kevin was killed by Chicago police.

The success of the Chicago teach-ins set a good example for the kind of activity needed nationwide to support Mumia at this critical time in his case, especially since the corporate media are virtually ignoring it.

—Committee member

Showdown with Decatur school board

News & Letters talked with Lorell Patterson about the recent struggle in Decatur, Ill. to reverse a school board decision to expel six Black students for two years following a fight at a September football game.

Decatur, Ill.—People from Decatur and surrounding areas like Champaign and Rockford are showing up to support the students and their parents. At the rally last Saturday (Nov. 14) there were 10,000 people. The Sunday before that there were 6,000. There have been meetings every night at the Church of the Living God this week. So many people have been involved in the rallies that the media have no choice but to report on these things are happening. Usually they try to make things like this invisible; but did that during the labor struggles here 10 years ago.

At the rallies, there were retirees from the UAW and other union locals like the auto workers, but the leadership has not been able to say "The UAW is behind you." However, the UAW retirees did show up with a banner. They came out because Jesse Jackson was a Black man marching for the UAW. The UAW work force on strike in 1994. The retirees remembered that.

The media has tried to make this into a racial issue which can divide people. Race is the issue. The rallies were trying to bring to the school board policy. In fact, you saw the parents of kids who were expelled at the rallies and the media kept playing that tape of the fight over and over. One of the white parents filed a lawsuit on her own against the school board for expelling a student.

Apparently one of the parents of one of the kids who was expelled first went to the school board and tried to get it settled that way. The kid was actually running away from the fight. The parents couldn't get anywhere. Jesse Jackson ended up coming to Decatur when the parents went to the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition which had formed recently in Decatur because the other organizations like the local NAACP weren't doing anything. The media picked up the argument immediately that Jesse Jackson came from the outside, but he was invited to Decatur because the school board would not let anything be resolved. In the past, if you were not a person who could stand up to the teachers and principal, they would simply harass you until you quit or got frustrated, then into a fight and were expelled. The teachers simply harass the kids until they don't want to be in school. The parents know that the teachers are going to ride them until they quit. The result is that the people who run the schools have them set up just the way they want. Let's take a look at what's going on in Decatur. What the people who run the city are saying is that "There are

only a few jobs, and we are setting up things so you don't get these jobs." They segregate students into second class status. They are saying, "The future economy is going to create only so many jobs. Not only are your kids not going to compete with our kids, but we are going to tilt the playing field."

The kids of lawyers and doctors who get into fights don't get kicked out of school. At the rally on Saturday (Nov. 13), there was a bomb threat made by a kid who got a five-day suspension. Another kid brought a weapon to school; they didn't expel him but gave him a ten-day suspension. The difference between those inci-



Thousands in Decatur, Ill. support expelled students on Nov. 14.

dents and the stadium fight was these were the children of parents who are professionals or who live in the right part of town. The issue is unjust discipline, not just Black and white.

When this started, I wanted people to know that the debate that was going on, whether kids were Black or white who were getting taken out of the schools, wasn't the right debate. Instead they should be fighting the school board for not following its own discipline policy which calls for 12 steps from warning to expulsion. The board can't have "no tolerance" for some kids and not others. The good thing about this blowup is that now the parents also know it's the law to offer alternative schooling and since the school board dug in its heels, it looks like it's in the wrong.

Leaders like Father Mangan got arrested with us during our labor struggles here and expressed the position that it was wrong to scab. Some of the other so-called ministers preferred to stay in the middle because some from their congregations were scabs. These are some of the ministers in photo opportunities with Jackson today. Once Jesse Jackson has faded into the background of the struggle in Decatur, then what? Are people ready to take on the power structure in this town on their own?

—Lorell Patterson, Staley lockout veteran

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Our Life and Times

U.S. hikes military presence in Colombia

by Kevin A Barry and Mary Holmes

The Clinton administration sent two high-level officials—General Barry McCaffrey, Clinton's drug policy director, and Thomas Pickering, the undersecretary of state—to Colombia in late August, where they proposed to President Andres Pastrana upwards of \$1.3 billion in aid over a period of three years. These funds are earmarked almost exclusively for the military and its war against guerrilla armies—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—which now control some 40% of the country. McCaffrey characterized the situation as a “growing emergency in the region.”

The U.S. already funds the training and equipping of a 1,000-man anti-narcotics army battalion; it already shares intelligence with the Colombian army; it already has some 300 U.S. military “advisors” in the country at any given time. In 1999, the Clinton administration has funneled \$300 million worth of helicopters, ammunition and military training into Colombia, which is now the third largest recipient of U.S. military aid, behind Israel and Egypt.

In mid-November, one of the U.S.-trained marine units was attacked for the first time during military clashes in a coordinated offensive mounted by FARC. It was report-

Mumia support abroad

While the mainstream press in the U.S., including *The New York Times*, has done a thorough “whiteout” on the Mumia case and the movement around it, the story has received far greater attention abroad. One recent example was an article that appeared on the front page of France's leading newspaper, *Le Monde*, on Oct. 23.

Entitled “The Case of Mumia, or the French Left versus ‘American Barbarism,’” reporter Ariane Chemin wrote that “since Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Ridge signed a death warrant that fixed Dec. 2 as the date of Mumia Abu-Jamal's execution, the movement in France to try to save this Black American has intensified.”

The campaign in France is being organized by anti-racist groups, by leftist parties including Communists, Trotskyists, and Socialists, and by major labor unions. Among the prominent individuals who have spoken out for Mumia are Julia Wright, daughter of Richard Wright, and Danielle Mitterrand of the Socialist Party.

In her article, Chemin concluded that Mumia's case has confirmed the view of many that the American justice system, especially in its treatment of Blacks, is little more than “barbarism with an American face.”

Ongoing bombing of Iraq

The Clinton administration announced in October that it will begin a military training program for a tiny group of anti-Saddam Hussein exiles. This is the type of Pentagon-CIA operation that in the past has been kept clandestine. In addition, this group will receive some \$2 million in “non-lethal” excess Pentagon equipment such as computers, as the first phase of an authorized \$97 million in funds to U.S.-selected opponents of the Iraq regime.

The U.S., along with Britain, is handling the lethal side of the campaign against Iraq, with near-daily bomb and missile attacks since the air war commenced last December. An August report counted over 1,100 missiles fired against 359 targets. Yet there has been little discussion of, or opposition to, the bombing, especially by the Left in either country.

The current U.S. hand-picked anti-Saddam subversives pose no credible threat, any more than the Clinton administration's concern for civilian casualties is believable. They have no roots in the Iraqi masses, who well remember how in 1991 the U.S. stood aside and allowed Saddam's military to crush the Kurdish and Shia opposition that rose up against him.

ed to be the heaviest fighting since FARC's mid-July offensive, which took them nearly to the outskirts of Bogota. The latest fighting seems to have been the final blow to the tentative government-guerrilla peace talks that reopened Oct. 24.

On that date, one of the most massive anti-war protests ever in Latin America was held across the country. At least two million people marched in Bogota, another one million in Medellin—altogether some five million in hundreds of cities and towns—under the slogan “No mas” (No more), demanding an immediate ceasefire, accelerated peace negotiations, and an end to violence against civilians perpetrated by the army, right-wing paramilitaries and left-wing guerrillas.

The Oct. 24 demonstrations were not tied to the government or political parties. Civilians have borne the worst of the fighting and the 35,000 deaths in the past

School of Assassins protest



More than 12,000 activists from around the country demonstrated at the U.S. Army School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga., on the weekend of Nov. 20-21, protesting the school's long, bloody association with human rights atrocities and massacres throughout Latin America. Many carried wooden crosses bearing the names of SOA victims.

Protests in France

This fall France saw several large demonstrations by high school students, two big labor demonstrations, plus the passage of laws establishing the 35-hour work week and limited rights for lesbian and gay couples.

On Sept. 30, 150,000 high school students demonstrated across the country for smaller classes, the hiring of more teachers, and the equalization of educational resources from one school to another. After the government agreed to hire more teachers the demonstrations continued, albeit somewhat smaller in size.

As Parliament debated the 35-hour law, some 50,000 workers demonstrated across France on Oct. 4 to counter pro-employer demonstrations and to demand the law's strengthening. One concern is that capital will use the “flexibility” clauses in the new law to schedule work at odd or unpredictable hours.

Two weeks later, on Oct. 16, another 50,000 people marched in Paris in a demonstration called by left-wing political parties around the theme “Against Unemployment, For Real Jobs.” Dominated by the Communists Party, this demonstration avoided direct criticism of the Socialist-led government in which the Communists participate. However, smaller far left groups in attendance managed to raise slogans criticizing loopholes in the 35-hour law.

Also in October, Parliament finally adopted the so-called Pact of Civil Solidarity (PACS), a law that had been blocked in last year's session. PACS gives limited social and civil rights to lesbian and gay couples, such as drawing on a partner's social security benefits.

three decades. Nearly one million people are now displaced internally within Colombia, forced to flee either from military battles or from actual coercion, particularly by paramilitary death squads who have increasingly taken over, with the cooperation of local military officers, the army's “dirty war.”

The Colombian masses are also experiencing the worst economic recession in half a century. Urban unemployment is now measured at 20%; the jobless grew by 400,000 in the last 12-month period and were mostly women and youth. Inflation has been brought “down” to 10%. Over half the populace lives in outright poverty. Trade unions have mounted over a dozen strikes so far this year, including a general strike of workers, peasants and community organizations held the beginning of September. But Pastrana says he will not alter his economic austerity program in order to obtain a \$3 billion IMF bail out.

Opposition has come from many sectors. Yanaco Indians are demanding the government allow them to manually destroy heroin poppy plants, instead of continuing to spray defoliant which contaminate people, crops and the environment. About \$30 million in current U.S. aid goes to narcotic crop eradication, primarily through herbicide spraying, but that will go up to \$114 million in the funding now being discussed in the U.S. Congress.

Uwa Indians have occupied land outside their state-designated “reservation,” on which the government has granted exploitation rights to the U.S. Occidental Petroleum Corp. The Uwa have fought to block the oil company through legal channels and, at one point, threatened to commit mass suicide in protest. They are demanding that Pastrana rescind the drilling contract and that Occidental leave.

As the U.S. Congress considers the proposed \$1.5 billion mostly-military-aid package, Democrat Clinton is getting support from Republicans who consider the countries bordering Colombia “front-line states.” One Republican senator warned that the conflict in Colombia is in danger of spilling over into southern Panama, “a mere 500 miles from the U.S. border.” These echoes of the “rationale” for U.S. intervention in Central America in the 1980s, especially in El Salvador, are ominous.

Unnatural disasters

The human suffering caused by Cyclone O5B that slammed into coastal Orissa state in India, Oct. 29, is almost beyond measure. Thus far, over 25,000 people have died. Thousands of acres of fields have been contaminated by sea water and rotting corpses. The survivors who have lost their means of living now face disease and starvation.

Official storm warnings were not broadcast to many areas in Orissa until one day before the cyclone hit. Most people did not know about the storm or its severity, with winds up to 180 mph, until rains began to increase in intensity. There was no early warning system of sophisticated satellites, mass media networks, or evacuation planning as in the U.S. The same hurricanes which strike the U.S. cause exponentially more death and destruction when they hit Cuba, Hispaniola, and Mexico. Parts of Central America are still devastated from last year's Hurricane Mitch.

In its 1999 World Disasters Report, the International Red Cross stated that 1998's natural disasters were the worst on record. More people—25 million—were forced off their lands by floods, drought, deforestation and degraded soil than were displaced by wars. The “environmental refugees” are often driven to the poverty belts surrounding large, fast-growing urban areas which have been constructed in earthquake zones. An estimated one billion people now live in these precarious communities. The Red Cross does not mention that these “refugees” are often at the core of grassroots organizations and urban revolts, nor does it highlight the expanding rural environmental movements in the Third World.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and 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.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

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

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject

what is, but to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery 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. This 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*.

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 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, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party “to lead.” 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*.